

Email correspondence related to the Community Council "Business Plan" for running the Harbour Toilets.

The Business Plan was finalised in June 2010 by Fraser Ballantyne and Marilyn Edwards for the Community Council with Harry Byers and Ken Duncan of Fife Council. This provided for the Community Council to run the superb Community Room on the upper floor of the building for a peppercorn rent and free of Rates at least for the first years. In return for a "Comfort Break" allowance of £2500/year, the Community Council would organise a contract for the cleaning and opening/closing of the toilets on the ground floor. The [Business Plan](#) is attached for information.

The Business Plan remained the key agreement document until April 2011, after the October 2010 Community Council elections. In May 2011 the new Community Council decided not to proceed with the project. Fife Council will now tender for a community group to take on the building but the generous agreement associated with the Business Plan is not now available.

There is one other Community Councillor who passed comment but did not wish to be included.

7th November 2011 from Liz Mitchell.

From: Liz Mitchell [<mailto:liz@cemitchell.co.uk>]

Sent: 07 November 2011 21:22

Subject: Kinghorn Community website

Hello

I have sent the following comment to the website <http://www.kinghorncommunity.org.uk>

*I would be grateful if you would remove the misleading and unfair statement on your News/Projects page where you state "Unfortunately **and after considerable delays** the new Community Council has **abandoned** the Harbour Toilets project, which would have provided an environmental resource and tourist information room at virtually no cost".*

As you know from being present at meetings of the Community Council when this matter was first brought to our attention there was an out-of-date Business Plan but no details of the type of lease and management responsibility it was proposed the Community Council were to take on. The Community Council made great efforts to establish this information.

By April it was clear that there was no group willing to take the lease on although there was one group willing to use the facility for some of the time. In May the Community Council decided it was not appropriate for KCC itself to take on the lease but was supportive to the only potential user to have come forward.

It is hardly "considerable delays" to take a few weeks (i.e. from March when details were received from Fife Council to May 2011) to investigate the implications and viability of such a commitment.

Pejorative terms, e.g. "delays", "abandoned", have no place in a community website and if they are the personal views of the writer this should be clearly stated. After all you state in your terms of use that you aim to be "unbiased".

I would be grateful if the statement could be removed within 7 days of this communication (dated 7th November 2011).

Liz Mitchell
Community Councillor

8th November 2011. From Ron to and Liz.

Dear both

The website is independent and intended to be unbiased and does not represent the viewpoint of the community council alone but is intended to inform the community.

The history of the community council's interest in the Harbour Toilets is described in minutes of the community council.

In June 2010, the Business Plan was accepted by both Kinghorn Community Council (the previous or "old" community council chaired by Fraser Ballantyne) and Fife Council as an agreed way forward. This provided for minimum risk to the community council with only the community council insurance to be extended as a revenue cost and Fife Council giving a substantial "Comfort Break" allowance for the running of the Public Toilets. This was agreed to represent a very suitable and generous way forward and was the finale of a long negotiating process. The intention was that when the current (or "new") community council was elected in October 2010 that the lease would be signed. This never happened.

On 19th April 2011, at a Special Community Council meeting, Harry Byers of Fife Council reiterated that the Council was willing *"to offer a one year lease at a peppercorn rent to the Community Council. This is on the basis of the June 2010 Business Plan"*. It was made clear by Harry that if the arrangement fell then the same offer would not be available to another community group.

At the May meeting the community council decided not to take up the lease for the upper floor. It indicated that *"This does not close the door on Amanda Bowler's proposal for use of the rooms but she would need to take it back to Fife Council"*. Effectively this action meant that the very generous proposition from Fife Council to the community of Kinghorn through its community council was dead, and any proposal from a community group would be on a very different and much less generous basis.

Given the sequence of events, I consider that the statement on the website is a perfectly justifiable and reasonable one and will remain. However, I am willing to print your comments, and those of Mick, in full on the web page so that people can judge for themselves and come to their own conclusion. I feel that this offers a reasonable and fair way forward.

Ron

9th November 2011 from Liz Mitchell to Ron.

Thank you for responding to my comments on the statement regarding the Harbour Toilets project on your website. I would like to take up your offer to publish my comments as submitted to your website.

There remain a number of concerns for me:

1. A publicly expressed view using the term "abandoned" in respect of the Community Council's decision not to take on the lease cannot be considered unbiased or unweighted. I would suggest the following alternative wording: *"Having considered the 2010 Business Plan for the Harbour Toilets project and reviewed the potential groups interested in using the resource, the Community Council decided not to pursue the option of taking on the lease themselves, leaving the option open for others. It is understood that one group is currently pursuing this"*
2. The approved Community Council minutes are very clear as to the sequence of discussions and decisions which, as I stated in my comments to your website, did not constitute "considerable delays".
3. Like Mick I too have concerns regarding the confusion felt by visitors to your website, many of whom think it publishes the views of Kinghorn residents rather than those of one elected member. This should be made clear especially when making weighted comments on any matter.

4. Your statement that your website ".....does not represent the viewpoint of the community council alone....." is telling - it does not represent the viewpoint of the Community Council at all and my understanding is that it only represents your personal views.

All the best

Liz

10th November 2011 from Ron to Liz

Thank you Liz

The email comments from you and from me will be published on the next update. Please note that these are your personal views not those of the Community Council, but the website is there to represent the situation as it is, and seeks to involve and promote the community of Kinghorn. Much of the content of the website is from a number of members of the community and not from me. The website quite deliberately does not represent my views as an elected member, but as an active resident of Kinghorn.

The arrangement allows people who view the website to form their own opinion on the matter.

Ron

11th November 2011 from Councillor George Kay

May I make an input to the Community website

" I do consider that any community communication which should be a means of bringing a community together finds that it is in fact doing the opposite then it should consider its whole ethos and in doing so its future"

Councillor George Kay

12th November 2011 from Ron to George Kay.

The website entirely satisfies your quote concerning the ethos of bringing the community together with some pride and promoting the village with informative articles.

Of seventy-one pages of text and pictures on the website, if the only contention is that two people object to one word, then it is doing extremely well. There are hundreds of people who are alerted to every update and some 4000 hits a year. Feedback has always been extremely positive and consider the site to be very informative, non-political and unbiased.

So I am very content that the right balance is struck, but the site must always be progressive. If you would like to do an article on Kinghorn Golf Club (history or otherwise) for instance, I would be happy to include it. Many people contribute to the articles on the website.

I think the discussion on one article has now run its course, and the relevant comment will be added to that page.

Ron