

Ferryden & Craig Community Council Deputation to Angus Council Meeting wrt Agenda Item 11

Thursday 20th June 2024 at 2pm in the Town and County Hall, Forfar

First of all I would like to say thank you for allowing us to address you at this meeting. This is the first time that the Ferryden and Craig Community Council has sought leave to address the Council which serves to show the importance of this concern to our local community.

As a constituted body and the most local tier of representation, we see it as our role to represent our community and we have included in this deputation the concerns raised by many from the Ferryden, Craig and Rossie Island community as well as those from the wider Montrose area who regularly use the facilities at the Inch Pavilion and Bowling Green.

Four councillors were able to make themselves available today, but our deputation has been discussed by the whole Community Council and will be publicly shared after this meeting.

The action we request is that you vote against the proposed sale of this public facility to Montrose Port Authority and that the council initially carry out a meaningful and inclusive consultation with regard to the future use of the Inch Pavilion and Bowling Green ensuring a fully democratic outcome is achieved.

Our objections are not specific to Montrose Port Authority but to a commercial sale and loss of a well-used green space and amenity to the whole of the local community.

Local people have expressed a concern that due process has not been followed and there is a perception amongst some that the outcome was pre-determined by a questionnaire that was biased towards commercial interests. We understand that it was the Council that made an initial approach to Montrose Port Authority in relation to a potential sale.

Councillor Bill Duff informed us at our last Community Council meeting that the questionnaire was designed by the Economic Development department. We realise that commercial interests are important and need to be considered but quality of life of the local community is also important and without these spaces, we do not have community.

The Scottish Government Report on Green Infrastructure states that 'Well designed green infrastructure and creatively designed greenspaces offer lots of benefits and can support multiple agendas by helping to develop

communities and places that are sustainable, attracting residents and business, support healthy lifestyles and encourage the kinds of behaviour that contribute towards the success of places in social, economic and environmental terms.'

This is an extensively used public space with the flower pavilion holding regular workshops as well as providing a great service. The Bowling Green area is used by many to access the graveyard and as part of a circular walk around the area. Many using Roamer Coffee as a break on their walk and a place of social gathering. Regularly there are groups of families meeting in the space with children running and playing on the grass. Spontaneous events such as music during the Montrose Festival Weekend and carol singing have been greatly enjoyed by the local community.

Covid has shown us all how much we value our green spaces and there is no other green space in the whole of Rossie Island. The access to coffee and snacks is a bonus that has ensured that many people from across Montrose also use the facility.

We are taking advice from an environmental solicitor regarding the proposed removal of the only green space for this local community.

In November 2022 Councillor Kenny Braes responded to a local constituent stating that Angus Council had not yet made decisions on this area of Common Good land as it needed two consultations: one on whether the facility should be sold and, if this was agreed, another on the future use of the area.

We are opposing the sale at this stage as we consider that no meaningful and inclusive consultation process has been carried out by Angus Council. The consultation was finally conducted after commercial bids had been scored and a decision had been made. This was only one consultation, not two, and we consider that it was not an open, transparent and accessible process as it was only mentioned on the Angus Council website and Facebook which excludes a large section of the community who do not access social media on a regular basis. As far as we are aware, there was no notifications on local newspapers or noticeboards.

Our concerns were such that we formally raised this with the council who considered them as level 2 complaints. Our complaints were not upheld by the council. However, this has not allayed our concerns. Depending on the outcome of this Angus Council meeting, we are considering progression to the ombudsman.

We are all aware that we are approaching a general election. Regulations state that 'during the period between the notice of an election and the election itself, local authorities should not publish any publicity on

controversial issues or report views or proposals in such a way that identifies them with any individual members or groups of members.'

We believe that this issue falls under these regulations, and it would be beneficial to pause this process which would allow Angus Council to carry out a meaningful consultation which is inclusive of all the community.

The action we request is that you vote against the proposed sale of this public facility to Montrose Port Authority and that the council first carry out a meaningful and inclusive consultation with regard to the future use of the Inch Pavilion and Bowling Green before proceeding any further.

If no meaningful consultation is afforded, we will have to consider lodging objections to any ratification sought from the Court in relation to the proposed sale.

Our position, after consideration of the views of the local community, is that we would like to see the Inch Pavilion and Bowling Green retained as the sole green space for the Rossie Island and wider community.

Thank you very much for your time. We appreciate that, as elected councillors, you are willing to hear the concerns raised by the local community.