



## **Minutes of the Meeting**

**Date:** Wednesday, 12th June 2024

### **Attendance:**

- **Community Council Members (CC):**  
Denise Sommerville (Chair), Carol Fisher (Secretary), Michael Hitchon (Treasurer), David Connelly, Jim McKay (Vice Chair), Eric Armstrong, Rachel Borland (Planning Officer), Alan Roseweir
- **South Ayrshire Council (SAC) Representatives:**  
Councillor George Weir, David Porte (Link Officer), Craig Iles (Guest Speaker, Service Lead for Planning and Building Standards)
- **Minute Secretary:**  
Vivienne McCulloch
- **Public:**  
Alan MacKay
- **Apologies:**  
Councillor Bob Shields, Andy Seville, Forbes Watson, Robert Singer

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## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

The meeting was opened by Chair Denise Sommerville (DS), who welcomed attendees, including the public, representatives from SAC, and guest speaker Craig Iles (CI). DS acknowledged the importance of addressing pressing community concerns such as short-term lets (STLs) and ongoing planning challenges.

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## **2. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were noted from Councillor Bob Shields, Andy Seville, Forbes Watson, and Robert Singer.

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### **3. Declarations of Interest**

Eric Armstrong (EA) declared a personal interest due to holding shares in Wetherspoons, excusing himself from discussions or decisions where a conflict could arise.

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### **4. Presentation by Craig Iles on Short-Term Lets (STLs)**

Craig Iles (CI) presented on the regulatory framework for STLs, providing an overview of legislation, application processes, and enforcement measures.

#### **Key Points from Presentation:**

- **Background:**
  - SAC's initial interpretation (2017) did not require planning permission for STLs operating in flats, but legislation changes in 2022 clarified stricter requirements.
  - SAC now processes STL applications under the new guidelines, ensuring compliance with community and safety standards.
- **Applications and Outcomes:**
  - In 2023, SAC received 17 STL applications:
    - 13 were approved without objections.
    - 4 faced objections and underwent panel reviews, resulting in approval.
  - A total of 16 objections were raised against these applications, reflecting increasing community concerns.

#### **Discussion and Community Feedback:**

CC members and the public expressed strong concerns about STLs' impact on shared-entry properties, community dynamics, and housing availability.

- **Shared Entrances and Resident Impact:**
  - **Alan Roseweir (AR)** and **Carol Fisher (CF)** highlighted specific issues in shared-entrance flats, including increased foot traffic, noise pollution, and diminished quality of life for permanent residents.
  - **Denise Sommerville (DS)** emphasized the emotional and mental toll on vulnerable residents, particularly the elderly, citing examples of prolonged distress.
- **Regulatory Challenges and Licensing:**
  - CI explained the licensing framework, noting that planning permission can be revoked if STL operators fail to meet legal standards. He encouraged the CC to formally object to unsuitable applications as their submissions carry significant weight.

- AR advocated for stricter measures, urging SAC to adopt a universal licensing requirement for all STLs to address misuse.
- EA raised concerns about properties being exploited for illicit activities, including reports of brothels disguised as STLs. CI noted this as a policing issue but assured collaboration with law enforcement.
- **Tourism vs. Housing Concerns:**
  - **Michael Hitchon (MH)** pointed out the exacerbation of housing shortages as homes are converted into STLs.
  - CI acknowledged SAC's promotion of tourism, particularly through Destination South Ayrshire, influences the proliferation of STLs.

### **Actions and Agreements:**

- CI encouraged the CC to monitor weekly planning lists, flagging concerning STL applications for formal objection.
  - He committed to attending future meetings to provide updates and facilitate discussions on planning-related issues.
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## **5. Approval of Previous Minutes (8th May 2024)**

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and approved:

- **Proposed by:** Jim McKay (JM)
  - **Seconded by:** Carol Fisher (CF)
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## **6. Matters Arising**

1. **Code of Conduct Appeal:**
    - Updates were provided on Kenny McLeod's appeal process. Evidence collection is ongoing, with an emphasis on ensuring a fair and transparent review.
  2. **Place Planning Surveys:**
    - CF is coordinating with Audrey Gatt to gather community feedback from recent surveys. Results will guide the council's next steps in community engagement.
  3. **Police Station Visit:**
    - A visit to the local police station is scheduled for August. CF will finalize the attendee list and confirm the date with the authorities.
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## **7. Public Business**

Alan MacKay (AM), a local resident, voiced concerns about STL practices in Ayr, including:

- **Specific Examples:**

- Incidents of “hot-bedding” at properties such as those on Craigmuir Road.
  - **Policy Comparison:**
    - AM questioned why SAC has not implemented stricter regulations akin to those in Edinburgh, advocating for more robust measures to mitigate the negative impacts of STLs on residential neighborhoods.
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## 8. Updates from SAC Elected Members

Councillor George Weir (GW) provided updates on key council activities:

1. **Fire & Rescue Service:**
    - Presented the service’s annual report, highlighting safety initiatives and response improvements. Copies were made available for community review.
  2. **The Gaiety Theatre:**
    - The theatre continues to thrive, with recent successes in programming and plans for future community engagement projects.
  3. **Station Hotel:**
    - Repairs are ongoing, with efforts to recover costs through legal proceedings progressing steadily.
  4. **Consultations:**
    - Community feedback on brown bin fees and parking is being actively reviewed.
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## 9. Reports

### a. Police:

- Although no police representative attended, DS emphasized the importance of including STL-related incidents in future reports to strengthen community evidence against problematic properties.

### b. Treasurer:

- **Current Balance:** £565.
- MH noted the need for additional fundraising efforts to maintain the CC’s activities.

### c. Planning:

- CC members are actively reviewing planning applications, including Trenchard Court, where objection letters have been submitted.

### d. Licensing:

- No objections were raised regarding the Fort Bar’s license extension. The Common Good Fund continues to progress with support from community initiatives.

**e. Short-Term Lets:**

- AR is working closely with SAC representatives to advocate for legislative amendments and stricter STL regulations. Surveys for areas like Lorne Arcade are planned to collect resident opinions.
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**10. Any Other Business**

**1. Community Grant Spending:**

- Concerns were raised about funds spent on ZOHO software, with DS and JM tasked with reviewing its usage and ensuring value for money.

**2. Next Meeting Date:**

- The next meeting will focus on planning and community safety priorities, with CI confirmed as a returning speaker.