

Westhill & Elrick Community Council

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 10th September 2009 at the Holiday Inn, Westhill

Chair: Stewart Whyte, Deputy Chair: Ian Forsyth, Secretary: Beryl Menzies, Treasurer: David Ritchie,
Minutes Secretary: Heather Robertson

Present: **Committee:** Stewart Whyte (Chair), Ian Forsyth (Deputy Chair), Beryl Menzies (Secretary), David Ritchie (Treasurer), Heather Robertson (Minutes), Christian Allard, Audrey Findlay, Ian Knapton, Bill Loudon, John Menzies, Maureen Strachan, Iris Walker

A total of 34 residents in attendance

Councillors: Cllr. Ron McKail, Cllr. Gurudeo Saluja

Police: Chief Inspector Craig Blackhall, Grampian Police

Bancon

Developments: Harry McNab, Mark Taylor, Daria Byra

	Item	Action/ Attention
1	<u>Chairman's Opening Remarks</u> Stewart Whyte expressed his pleasure at having so many residents present at the AGM. He said how much he had enjoyed being the chairman of W&ECC, and how great a community Westhill is. Stewart Whyte announced that he is stepping down from this position due to increased pressures, but will remain on the Community Council.	
2	<u>Apologies for Absence</u> Heather Wood, Beryl Burbidge, PC Amanda Whyte, Julian Maude (Tesco), Cllr. Cullen, Cllr. Allan, Becky Menzies	
3	<u>Approval Of Minutes Of AGM</u> Proposed - Beryl Menzies; Seconded - Bill Loudon.	
4	<u>Co-Option of new members</u> No new members were co-opted.	
5	<u>Election of Office-bearers (Cllr. McKail to chair)</u> This item will be covered in the ordinary meeting to follow.	
6	<u>Treasurer's Report</u> The bulletin continues to do very well in Westhill. Stewart Whyte reiterated how proud he is of the Bulletin, and how much the community appreciates it.	
7	<u>Guest Speaker: Chief Inspector Craig Blackhall, Grampian Police</u> He thanked the Community Council for asking him to speak at this meeting, saying that he was delighted at this opportunity. The Chief Inspector then spoke about the changes that have taken place in Grampian Police Force recently. The North and South branches of the force have been amalgamated, forming one unit that covers from Banff to Laurencekirk, and out to Royal Deeside. This increases the force's ability to work with Community groups such as the Community Council. Each of the 6 areas now has its own Police Inspector. The one for the Westhill area is Inspector Bob Thompson.	

There are currently 1550 officers in Grampian Police. 376 of these operate in Aberdeenshire, with 77 vehicles.

The current priorities of the police force are controlling antisocial behaviour, improving community focus, tackling drugs, enforce standards, road safety, workforce modernisation, national security issues and combating violence. Out of these, Community Focus is their main priority. They will be making sure that all the communities become familiar with their local officers, who must be readily available in the community. They will be making use of partnerships with other organisations, and promoting communication with the media, including our own Bulletin, to ensure that the community are kept involved with police matters. They will also improve their consultation with the community. Some of the problems they are tackling within the force include the balance between immediate response work and ordinary beats, and between police attendance and over-the-phone advice. Large amounts of new legislation are currently tying up police officers. There is a Sergeant and 6 Community Beat Officers dedicated to Westhill. Statistically it is one of the safest places to live and work in Scotland, without trivialising the crime that does take place – any crime is too much crime. Crime trends are down, whilst detection is up. Especially for serious and violent crime, this is at its lowest for three years. Storm, the new control and command programme is working very well.

Questions from the Floor:

The topic of antisocial driving was raised – 35% of antisocial driving resulting in road traffic accidents in Aberdeenshire was found to be caused by under 25 year olds. Chief Inspector Blackhall was asked to comment on the impact of schemes such as 'Driving Ambition' and 'Pass Plus'. Although he did not have any figures regarding this, he said that it would probably be a few years before the impact became apparent, but that it could only be good.

There are no dogs regularly on patrol in Westhill, but there is a unit that can be called out from Aberdeen.

He was very supportive of the police cycle scheme, as it improves both speed and accessibility over that of cars or feet.

There are almost twice as many officers in the City as the Shire. The 1550 officers in Grampian are spread across many different specialisms. Almost all CBOs are also members of specialisms, so may have to be taken out of the community occasionally, but this will be avoided where possible. It was commented that other similarly sized towns have more officers; however, they are part of response teams that are frequently called out, whilst Westhill's will work within the community as far as possible.

The visibility of officers in Westhill was criticised, but this should improve with the new Community Focus policy. Policing should be preventative, so will involve more beats.

There has been a drop in reported crimes, but it was suggested that many people think that reporting crimes to the police has no effect, and that this might have affected the statistics. However, the police can only work with reported crimes, so everyone should be encouraged to report anything they feel necessary to the police.

The new call centres are trained to gauge whether a police presence is necessary for each call.

It was asked which department is in charge of speed limits, however, this is an issue for the Council. The speed limit in the Brodiach area was discussed, but as this area is not built up on both sides, the limit cannot be decreased for fear of undermining the effectiveness of other 30mph limits.

	<p>It was mentioned that this area is used by many residents for recreation, and by many drivers for a short cut, but the Councillors maintained that this policy would be upheld. Speeding was raised as an issue in Westhill – this has also been raised previously with the Committee. All Community Beat Officers are trained in the use of speed guns. The speed limit can be enforced in 20's plenty zones, as with any other limit. Chief Inspector Blackhall said that he would take these comments away and discuss them with the CBOs.</p> <p>Two 'slow, horses' signs have also been broken in the Westhill area. Stewart Whyte will bring this up with the Council. He will also raise the fact that the reduce speed signs before an incline have little or no effect, and Cllr. Saluja asked about the possibility of getting speed bumps in some residential areas.</p> <p>Chief Inspector Blackhall said that he was very grateful for the feedback from the Community, and reiterated that he will take all the information back to the CBOs. He was disappointed that phone calls to the police had been so unsuccessful, but had been otherwise encouraged by the community interest. Stewart Whyte thanked him for attending.</p>	
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Heather Robertson
Minutes Secretary