

Kingsbarns Community Council

Minutes of public meeting held 24th March 2018 at 10am in Kingsbarns Memorial Hall

Present: Martin Dibbs (Secretary), Eileen Brown (Treasurer), Sue Jenkins (acting Chair), Fiona Ramsay (Acting Minutes Secretary), Kate Holy (Planning Sub-Committee Chair) Shona McIntosh, Calla Cobb.

22 members of the public were present.

1. Apologies: Ulrike Weiss, Margaret Harkins, Cllr John Docherty, Cllr Linda Holt.

2. Introduction

Sue Jenkins opened the meeting stressing that this would deal with a single-issue, i.e. the affordable housing on Phase Two of the development.

3. Presentation

This was given by **Kate Holy**. She explained that two three-bedroomed affordable houses on the new development were to be built. The problem was how to keep them affordable if there are no local people interested? This was the case last time. Although the houses are not yet built, the developer has to agree with the local authority that they meet all the conditions laid down by central government before building can begin. It was crucial that our views are heard now as it is entirely possible that when the houses are completed, maybe 18 months to two years away, that there may be local people who want to live here. However, Kingsbarns needed to make its case to the local authority in order that these houses should be bought by the council – the only way that they can remain affordable.

She suggested at the last CC meeting that we should remind the council of the outcome of the Scrutiny Committee and the sell-off of the houses on Phase 1 and we should ask that FC buys the houses. Should there be no interest, Fife should be asked to allocate the houses to refugee families brought to Scotland through the government resettlement scheme - principally the Syrian family resettlement scheme. She felt that there would be benefits for these families through living in good houses, in a very welcoming village, near to the University, with good access to TEFL teachers. But there would also be benefits for us – children for the school and the opportunity to offer a safe haven and new life to people who had experienced unimaginable horrors we can't comprehend. In addition, they would enrich the village. The School has been approached. And there is significant help both voluntary and statutory for refugees in Fife and all Scotland.

The CC wrote to the housing chair of Fife with copies to the chief executive and the Head of Housing to say we would be having this is meeting to discuss this proposal and we would let them know the feeling of the meeting by 28 March. However, in response to this letter, the Head of Housing has said that he would be recommending the purchasing of these houses to add to the housing stock, so we feel we have had an effect. Kate suggested that, if everyone agreed, that KCDT be asked to consider fund raising for these families in order to furnish the houses to a high standard.

She stated that if the meeting was in favour, there will be a lot of discussions and enquiries to make. She had no idea how many families are waiting for accommodation – if any – and how long the development will take to build. She stated that she didn't trust Fife Council yet in terms of buying the houses and would like to do some more research and also write to Fife to confirm our proposals.

4. Questions from the floor

It was asked what investigations had been made into settlements of other Syrian Refugees and had any problems been found. It was also asked how they would manage without a car and adapt to living in a house.

Kate replied that many of the Refugees are professionals who had been raised in and lived in houses but their homes had been destroyed by war. There are already Syrian Refugee families in Fife who have adapted well and have settled into community life. A member of the public pointed out that a car was not essential as there is a regular bus service, which many local people use.

It was asked why, in particular, it was Syrian Refugees being discussed as opposed to Refugees from other war-torn areas.

Kate replied that a government scheme already exists for Syrian Refugees, and they are vetted, to ensure it is families who would be placed. If there are no local applicants for the houses, they could be left empty.

It was asked "How affordable is affordable"?

Kate replied that they would be not very affordable. They would be sold in a shared equity way, but if Fife Council do buy them, they would be rented at the rate for a Fife Council House rental.

A member of the public raised the point that Fife Council had denied to her family that they had any houses in Kingsbarns and that there are 3 people waiting on the list for a house before her.

Kate informed her that they could express an interest in these houses should Fife Council buy them from the developer.

A member of the public asked what the process is, and if this (i.e. the Syrian Refugees being placed in these houses) could actually come to fruition.

Kate replied that there is a unit specifically to help Syrian Refugees settle here and that there are some families already settled in Lochgelly. Once Kingsbarns has said we are open to having families here, in these houses, meetings will take place and discussions about taking things further.

It was asked if Fife Council does not have anyone interested in the houses, could they be offered to someone on another local authority waiting list in another area.

Kate replied that this would not normally happen.

4. Temperature of the Meeting

The public were asked to vote:

If there were no people on the Fife Council waiting list, would we be willing, as a village, to take in 2 families from worn-torn areas of the world?

An overwhelming majority voted that the village could take Refugees if there are no takers from Fife Council.

5. An update will be reported back at the next KCC meeting.