

Notes of meeting regarding Pittenweem Library Closure

2:30pm 12th December 2015, Pittenweem New Town Hall

Present:

Respecting online privacy, only those present at the meeting as organisers or public officials are noted by name. However, as a public meeting, a full set of minutes listing those attending or speaking is available on request

Ginny Mackie (Pittenweem Library Campaign), Janice Christianson (Pittenweem Library Campaign, Georgina Stutchfield (Pittenweem Community Trust), Councillor John Docherty (Fife Councillor) and:

Representatives from: Pittenweem Community Council (x1) Pittenweem Community Trust (x 5), Pittenweem Residents (x 5), Crail Community Council (x1), Others (x 1)

Apologies: There were 5 apologies, including representative from Crail, and from Colinsburgh Community Councils

Purpose of meeting: To discuss the decision by Fife Council (FC) / Fife Cultural Trust (FCT) to close Pittenweem and other local libraries, and to identify our next steps.

Notes of meeting ordered by theme, rather than in strict chronological order

Action to date (incl other groups):

GM outlined what had happened in Pittenweem to date, including the read-in the previous week.

Crail had put in a long letter in response to the decision, but had not had a reply, had to chase FCT to get an acknowledgement. Crail has done a leaflet drop last weekend to all households asking them to get in touch with Community council and asking for ideas.

What are other groups doing? GM has contact with some of them. Cllr JD recommends we meet with other groups. (*Action point: GM / JC to liaise with other groups*)

Challenging the decision:

GM – is there any way the decision can be overturned? Even if there were we should submit a note of interest in community running in the meantime.

Cllr JD outlined the work he had done to challenge the decision on the grounds of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) which assess the impact of changes in service provision, which should not disadvantage specific equality target groups such as age, disabilities or faith. FCT had only done a blanket EqIA over all the libraries due for closure, JD has done specific ones for each of Crail, Colinsburgh, and Pittenweem. Some of the adjustments needed to make existing libraries compliant with access needs are minor – eg just a ramp needed. Colinsburgh hosted a bible group, which may fall under the beliefs target group. FCT have acknowledged the receipt of his EqIA but have not responded to a request for a meeting. These may be used as part of a bid to get the decision overturned. JD also reported that MP Stephen Gethins has written to Fife Council to ask for a 1 year extension for communities to have more time for input and ideas. JD awaiting info on legal challenge.

Cllr JD – Asked FCT who was going to interpret the FC consultation responses and provide a report on them – it should be an independent consultant not an internal assessment.

JC – Bryce from Keep Fife Libraries Open campaign co-ordinating one legal challenge. GM also reported that a Pittenweem Resident has also offered to challenge Fife Council in court.

We should also feed relevant information to other groups & individuals who are mounting these challenges

Library building:

Pittenweem Community Council - confirmed that the Library and Old Town Hall in which it is located are Pittenweem Common Good assets, managed by Fife Council but any sale proceeds must come back to the community

PICT – should we register a community right to buy interest under the land reform Scotland Act?

Pittenweem CC pointed out backlog of maintenance work due on building. We should first of all consider a lease before buying

A Pittenweem resident confirmed the Library does have disabled access, it is the hall above which is not accessible.

Finance & logistics of community run library

GS – what are the current costs of running Pittenweem Library? – JD may have the information
(*Action point – GS to email JD to ask for it*)

PICT – could we provide some form of library service without any funding if the lease was low rent with voluntary librarians? There will be still be costs of utilities, insurance and eg PVG checks.

PICT – Could an approach from several libraries be a strength – eg one worker between several sites? How could we broaden the use of space and widen demographics

PICT – talked about the hub model of library as centre for other community information and services.

Expression of Interest in community library service provision

GS read out letter sent by FC to community councils. General agreement was to go ahead with expression of interest (EOI) in parallel with other challenges.

PICT – Should we vote to go ahead with local EOI? All PICT directors present (a quorum of the board) agreed.

GS – How should we go about submitting an EOI? What group should submit the EOI? Should it be CC, PICT or a new specific library group? Cllr JD advised to ask CC for minute of support - they meet on Monday. JC felt an established group like PICT would have more traction than a new group.
(*Action point, attend CC meeting to discuss and ask for support, then submit EOI*)

Funding and other support / advice

PICT – Is there a legal fund, do we need to crowdsource? It was noted that Fife council have a funding website, fife community support, and Voluntary Action Fife.

PICT explained the PICT study tour of community owned assets in North of England had also included libraries as well as pubs. Very small villages had received generous donations from tourist visitors.

A Pittenweem resident outlined the wider community groups of East Neuk Forum and COINEF (Community Initiatives North East Fife), who meet on Wednesday. They are looking at broadband provision and so may be able to help with provision of internet access PCs. Another resident kindly offered to pay for broadband for a voluntary library if needed.

Other groups that may be able to help – Community Ownership Support Scotland, Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS), Plunkett Foundation. Botanic Gardens in St Andrews has similar experience of coping with funding cuts. Crail CC has spoken to Alice Crawford in the University of St Andrews Library re advice about community libraries. GM mentioned Ian Copland from Cupar is a former librarian for NE Fife district council who may help. PICT suggested talking to Elizabeth Gordon in Anstruther who had great experience of community initiatives.

Next meeting: to be arranged in January. Also arrange a meeting of all local libraries affected (JC & GM to arrange)

Action Points

JC, GM & PICT members to attend community council meeting on Monday evening to ask for minute of support for expression of interest. GS will take forward submission of EOI

JC & GM to coordinate meeting with other local library groups.

GS to email Cllr JD to ask for information on running costs of Library

GS to set up email list to support ongoing communication - JC and GM to forward their contacts.

GS to put library page on community website

DS to raise issues of PC and internet access at next COINEF meeting

Appendix: Useful organisations

Community Ownership Support Service (**COSS**) <http://www.dtascommunityownership.org.uk/>

Development Trusts Association Scotland <http://www.dtascot.org.uk/>

Plunkett Foundation <http://www.plunkett.co.uk/>

Fife Council community group support & funding page
<http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/topics/index.cfm?fuseaction=subject.display&subjectid=31C9D369-AEBB-46ED-BABE-5AE516541980>

Fife Voluntary action <http://www.fifevoluntaryaction.org.uk>