

MINUTES of a special Meeting of the Kinross
Community Council held at Kinross High School, on
Wednesday 20th February 2002 at 7:30 pm.

Present: Councillor Watson (Chairman); Councillor
McConnell; Dr Robert Semple, Construction manager for
Perth & Kinross Council; Peter Bing, Perth & Kinross
Leisure; Perth & Kinross Councillors Hayton, Robertson,
and Barnacle.

In attendance: Mr George Waddell; Perth & Kinross Councillor Doig; 200 members of the
public.

Councillor Watson welcomed everybody to the meeting and read out the agenda. He then
introduced the top table.

1. **Report on current situation**

Councillor Hayton expressed shock at the developments over the past months, we had lost
the town hall, library and museum, and a solution was needed. He summarised the history –
September 2001 the library was closed for dry rot eradication which proved more extensive
and had spread throughout the building. It was estimated to cost £450,000 to repair the
building, before allowing for any development. It was deteriorating faster than it could be
repaired. The following points were stressed:

The Hall occupies a major prime site in the High Street;

The Building performs several functions;

There is a need for a library;

Groups that currently use the Hall should be able to continue meeting;

The Museum should be housed in appropriate premises;

The current Town Hall appears to be unviable.

**Peter Bing confirmed that Perth & Kinross Leisure operated the Town Hall on an arms
length basis from the Council. Over several years there had been insufficient funds
made available to adequately maintain all Perth & Kinross Council properties, and
that major problems were now presenting themselves.** The funding situation was unlikely
to improve, with more resources unlikely to be available. The way forward was for existing
budgets to be concentrated on single sites, making use of education budgets where possible.
The Kinross Town Hall Association worked hard to develop resources, but with the budget
doubling there was not enough funds raised. Perth & Kinross Council's preferred solution
was to concentrate resources into the school campus. A departmental approach was no
longer possible, resources had to be combined. Auchterarder school campus was given as an
example of a school campus providing facilities for the community.

Ideally the Town Hall would be refurbished, but funds for this are unlikely to be available.

23 community halls were owned by the council, and a further 80 funded by the council

There is no budget for the repair of the Town Hall. The function of the Town Hall needs
support, not the building itself. The biggest issue was the library, which was the best used in
Perth & Kinross apart from the AK Bell library in Perth, and there was a clear need for a first
class library in Kinross.

Perth & Kinross Council's preferred option was to create a library within the High School campus.

2. Reaction and needs

Douglas Alexander stated that the use of the High School for the library was disgraceful. Kinross, as the centre of the County needs to be vibrant, and the High Street is the heart of the town. The library should remain where it was. Given a proposal for a £14m development in Perth, and the flood prevention scheme, it was clear that funds could be found when necessary, and the Town Hall should be refurbished.

The chairman raised the point that the plan to move the library to the school raised issues of security and space, the High School has little space as it is, and how could security be satisfied with the public having access to the school campus. Peter Bing responded by saying that security was important, but not insurmountable, with design and management solutions both playing a role. With a commitment to life long learning, schools were becoming the centre of the community. The best use of resources came from using a single site – the more sites, the more cost.

Peter Bing then listed the various capital investment projects in Kinross, including the swimming pool, all weather playing field, work at the Myre. It was pointed out to Mr Bing that the money for the pool was raised locally.

On the issue of space, George Waddell advised that a feasibility study looking into space and security was being carried out. If it was feasible, then the costs would be examined.

Councillor Doig advised us that the sale of the town hall was on the agenda for an imminent Perth & Kinross Council meeting. The Scottish Executive were encouraging the use of schools for other community uses. He pointed out that the Perth library was funded privately, and the proposed development in Perth was 75% funded by private money. The town hall was listed, and it would be a condition that the tower and frontage be retained.

A letter from Anne Robertson was read out stating that it was imperative that the library be kept at the town hall.

Ian Jack made the point that the time scale was too long, and immediate proposals were required. We were advised that consultants were currently looking into a short term solution, and a report from them was due in two weeks. It was possible that either the primary school or the leisure centre would be used to site temporary accommodation.

It was confirmed that there were no plans to dispose of the County Buildings.

David Colliar pointed out that the Town Hall was gifted to the people of Kinross, and any residue from its sale should come back to Kinross.

Councillor Doig advised that property proceeds go into the capital allocation fund, but he agreed that it made sense for the proceeds to go towards the new library and museum.

Lesley Cook of the Web project reminded us that space was required for a young persons

drop in centre. Mgt Martin pointed out that a Youth drop in centre had been promised for over 6 years, but had still not been delivered.

Euan Ferguson of Kinross Partnership was concerned that the decision to sell the town hall had been taken before all possibilities had been examined – perhaps the private sector could develop the site in return for part of the space being kept for the library. Councillor Doig advised that if such a proposal were made, it would be seriously considered.

The cost of the consultants reports were discussed, and it was confirmed that these costs would be met from a specific budget, and would displace other proposed feasibility studies.

A statement from Kinross Town Hall Association was read out, giving the background to the setting up of the association, and explaining that the association raised sufficient funding to finance the proposed development according to the first estimate received from Perth & Kinross Council, but with the increase in the budgets required both to bring the hall into a good state of repair, and also to develop the hall, their proposals are no longer feasible. The association thanked all involved in the town hall project.

A letter from Mr & Mrs Cathcart was read out, requesting that money be found to redevelop the town hall building.

A statement from the Kinross-shire Historical Society was passed around requesting that the rooms occupied by the former Social work department (including the steeple) be kept and used as a site for the museum.

Brian Reid, a local house builder, pointed out that in his opinion there was little value in the town hall building. The site was small, and it would be expensive to retain the façade. He predicted that if the site was put on the market, it would not sell, and would fall derelict unless grants were available to assist the developer.

Peter Bing confirmed that all avenues for grant, finance etc. including National Lottery, Historic Scotland etc. had been explored, without success.

Councillor Barnacle advised that the Town Hall would be recommended for disposal, but the tower must be retained, being the obvious place for a local museum and visitor centre. The County Buildings should be retained – a fine building but problems with disabled access.

A public meeting, hosted by the school board, would take place in a few weeks time to discuss plans for the High School. It was confirmed that the £1.5m additional borrowing facility would not be used to pay for the library, this would have to be a separate capital expenditure proposal.

It was confirmed that there were no plans at present to build a new High School in Kinross, although this may be reviewed in the future, within the context of a PPP proposal.

Councillor Willie Robertson advised that it was not realistic to consider holding onto the building. He suggesting keeping the north end and the spire. He requested that people give the Councillors some idea of what they want – should the school become a community facility, or should Ross2000 be involved.

The chairman called for a show of hands to gauge the support for the following suggestions:

(1) the town hall being sold with the steeple preserved – this met with a very weak response.

(2) if the library has to be moved, should it go to the school – this met with a very weak response,

or (3) if the library has to be moved, should it go to Ross2000 – this met with a stronger response, with approximately half the people present supporting this idea.

The chairman summed up by thanking all Perth & Kinross officials and Councillor's present for their time, and all members of the public for attending.