Findochty Community Council Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, 2 November 2026
Time: 7:00 PM
Venue: Findochty Town Hall

Attendance

Community Councillors:
Anne Braidwood (Chair), Paul Steel (Secretary), Paul Kerrison (Treasurer), Ron Dawson
Associate members: None
Members of Public: Five
Moray Council: None

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1. Welcome

The Chair, Anne Braidwood, opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees.

The Chair confirmed that a quorum was present and the meeting was duly constituted.

The Chair advised that the meeting would be recorded for the purpose of assisting with the preparation of accurate minutes.

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2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Warren (Moray Council).

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3. Community Police Update

3.1 Attendance and resident statement

The Chair advised that Sgt Lucy Cuthbert had been expected but that a different Police Scotland sergeant attended in her place. The Chair also advised that the Community Warden had been invited to answer residents' questions but had not replied to the request.

The Chair read a statement from a resident describing the effect of ongoing abusive and threatening behaviour on residents' enjoyment of their homes and the village, and asking what is being done to protect residents now and what residents can expect to happen next.

3.2 Police response

The sergeant advised that the police can act only on incidents that are reported. Each report is logged and given a reference number, and repeat incidents can be referred to the Procurator Fiscal. Non-emergency matters can be reported through the Police Scotland website, which reaches the same staff as the 101 line without the wait, and reports can be made anonymously.

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Charges require evidence, including witness statements, and the police are short-staffed, so attendance is not always immediate.

The sergeant explained that the police can advise only on criminal matters. For civil matters, including the condition and use of private property, he suggested residents contact Moray Council's Anti-Social Behaviour team and Environmental Health, and consider legal advice. Recorded incident numbers inform how resources are allocated, so continued reporting is important. He was not aware of the Community Council's earlier letter to a senior Police Scotland officer and encouraged the Community Council to keep seeking updates.

Residents present said they feel unsafe and worn down, and that some are reluctant to report incidents. Members noted that they had previously met Moray Council's Anti-Social Behaviour team and had not been reassured.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Community Council would raise the matter with the local MSP, to press Moray Council for action.

Action: Residents to continue reporting all incidents to Police Scotland (online or 101).

Action: Follow up with Moray Council's Anti-Social Behaviour team and Environmental Health.

Action: Secretary to write to the local MSP.

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4. Approval of Previous Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2026 were approved as a true and accurate record.

Proposed by: Paul Steel

Seconded by: Ron Dawson

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5. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

To note progress on actions recorded in the minutes of 5 October 2026.

5.1 Crooked Hythe Benches

A quote of £4,188 was received for repair of the benches, including materials, labour and disposal of waste. The figure is high partly because of the 216 stainless steel bolts required. Galvanised fittings would reduce the cost, but mild steel was not recommended as it rusts within a year. Other prices had been looked at and none was lower.

The Treasurer advised that, excluding the Admin Grant (which can be spent only on administration), the Community Council holds about £5,000, so the full quote would use almost all of its funds. Members discussed replacing the whole bench, and prioritising which benches need work now and which can wait until next year; two or three were described as most urgent. The Men's Shed had advised approaching local tradesmen first. Grant criteria are tightening, with greater emphasis on community benefit and support for children or disadvantaged people.

Noted: No decision was taken to proceed until funding is identified.

Action: Paul Kerrison to look for grant funding.

Action: Paul Steel to prioritise which benches need work now, and to take the tradesman's advice.

5.2 Seaview Road Picnic Area

The Treasurer reported that he has had no reply from David Greer of Seafield Estate despite several emails and telephone calls. Seafield Estate had initially suggested leasing the whole area between the KeyStore and the houses, and behind the houses. This was not feasible for the Community Council alone, so a development trust was approached, but it declined because of the liability risk arising from an unofficial footpath crossing the land. The Treasurer has since proposed leasing only the triangle where benches would be sited, and has offered to fence it to reduce the liability concern. Nothing can proceed without the landowner's permission, so the project is on hold.

Action: Paul Kerrison to continue chasing David Greer.

5.3 School-Area Grit Bin

The Treasurer reported that Moray Council has installed a grit bin next to the school and added it to its refilling rota, after about two years of pursuing the matter. This followed the Community Council's representations, including the copy of the original deed supplied by Seafield Estate and members' review of it. The Council's reply did not say whether it has formally adopted the road. The bin was sited next to the school rather than where the Community Council had asked, which members considered acceptable. The Chair thanked the Treasurer.

Noted: Grit bin installed; no further action.

5.4 20 mph Speed Limit Signage

The Treasurer reported a reply, received before the meeting, from Moray Council's Service Manager (Transportation). A list of locations where vegetation must be cut back before the larger terminal signs can be installed has been compiled across Moray, and a meeting was due on 3 November to agree how to manage this with inspectors and other teams. Letters have been sent to landowners reminding them to cut back vegetation, and where this is not done the Council will consider next steps, which may include carrying out the work and recovering the cost.

Members noted that only repeater signs are currently in place, so the start and end of the limit are not clearly marked and members remain concerned that it cannot be enforced. No timescale was given for the terminal signs.

Action: Monitor Moray Council's progress on installing the correct signage.

5.5 Dog Waste Bag Dispensers

Paul Steel reported that the remaining dispensers have been fitted around the village and photographs added to the website. None has been damaged so far. A member observed that dog fouling tends to increase in autumn and winter.

Noted: Fitting complete.

5.6 Garage Plots

The Treasurer reported that, following the change of officer at Moray Council, he has written again to the new officer asking for an update on the request for a garage plot. No reply has been received.

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Action: Paul Kerrison to continue to chase.

5.7 Learning Estate Review

The Chair summarised the reply, dated 18 September 2026, from Andrew Hall, Service Manager, Education Estate, Moray Council, to the Community Council's letter and the parents' feedback sent with it. The main points were:

- No decision has been made on any changes to schools in Moray. No option for Findochty Primary School has been developed, agreed or recommended, including any merger. Discussions in the Buckie area identified possible future directions for discussion only.
- The report to the Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee on 1 September sought approval only of a method for future planning, investment priorities and options appraisal, not of any closure, merger or catchment change.
- The points raised by the Community Council, including utilisation benchmarks, suitability ratings, community sustainability, whole-life costs, housing uncertainty and decision triggers, will be considered through that framework before any specific proposal is developed.
- Approval of the framework does not decide the future of any school. Any specific proposal would need separate evidence, appraisal, reporting and, where applicable, statutory consultation, with opportunities for parents, carers, pupils, staff and community councils to take part.

The Chair recalled that the Community Council's letter had raised the absence of a clear methodology.

Agreed: The Community Council will publish the full letter so residents can read it for themselves. The reply will inform the Community Council's approach to any future consultation or survey.

Action: Paul Kerrison to publish the letter.

5.8 Stripe Steps Clean-up

Some vegetation appears to have been cut back, but the debris in the stream bed, which poses a flooding risk, does not appear to have been touched, and the handrail on the steps is rusting. Cllr Warren had been arranging help from the Community Payback team.

Action: The Chair to check the position with Cllr Warren.

5.9 Jubilee Terrace Grass Cutting

The Treasurer reported on costs for the shed and mower suggested by a resident so volunteers need not transport equipment across the village. A small wooden bike-storage-type shed with a 15-year guarantee on the timber costs £225 plus £99 delivery from one online supplier, or about £250 delivered from another. A 125cc petrol rotary mower costs £200 at B&Q. The total would be around £500 at most. No location has been identified for the shed.

Noted: Costs are now known. As no grass cutting will be needed for the next three to four months, no decision was taken; the matter will be revisited before next season, alongside other priorities.

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6. Treasurer's Report

6.1 Current position

The new financial year began on 1 October. The bank balance was £6,825, comprising:

- Admin Grant: £1,816
- Events Fund: £623
- Maintenance Fund: £1,703
- General Fund: £2,683

No income has been received since the last meeting. Expenditure since the last meeting was £77.12, being winter bulbs (£66.98) and petrol for the strimmer (£10.14).

6.2 Approval of the accounts for 2025/26

Members had copies of the accounts for the year 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2026, which have been independently examined and signed by Andrea Woodhead. The Treasurer reported that all receipts are held. The signed summary shows: balance brought forward £6,459.52; income £2,134.42; expenditure £1,168.54; surplus £965.88; closing balance £7,425.40 (cash in bank).

Income comprised the Moray Council Admin Grant (£593.83), Lucky Squares ticket sales (£500.00), donations (£250.58), the honorarium returned to the fund (£90.00) and a £0.01 reconciliation adjustment, with a further £700.00 from Seafield Estate. Admin Grant expenditure (£311.14) comprised website hosting and software subscriptions (£144.14), honoraria (£120.00) and data protection registration (£47.00). Other expenditure (£857.40) comprised plants and landscaping (£484.87), litter-picking and hi-vis equipment (£165.37), maintenance materials (£111.26), community events (£50.00), printing (£25.03) and replacement emergency bag items (£20.87).

Agreed: That the accounts for 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2026, as independently examined by Andrea Woodhead, are approved.

Proposed by: Paul Steel

Seconded by: Ron Dawson

Action: The Chair and Treasurer to sign the approved accounts, and the Treasurer to send them to Moray Council.

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7. Community Feedback (Submitted in Advance)

No matters were submitted by residents in advance.

7.1 Bins and obstruction (raised at the meeting)

A member raised concerns about wheelie bins containing material the Council will not empty (including plasterboard), and a barrel obstructing the pavement and a right of way, at a property in the village. Members said they sometimes move bins aside, but agreed it is better reported to Moray Council.

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Action: Secretary to report the matter to Moray Council.

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8. Items Submitted by Community Council Members

8.1 Village Welcome Sign Replacement

The supplier who offered to replace the weathered boat sign free of charge, as a community gift, has not replied since being sent the Findochty crest and asked for a design for approval. The new sign is to read "Welcome to Findochty".

Action: Paul Kerrison to follow up with the supplier.

8.2 E-bike Infrastructure Feasibility

The HITRANS contact asked to be approached again in October because of the Elgin rollout. The Treasurer did so and has had no reply. Extending the scheme along the coastal section of the North Coast Route would cost around £100,000, which would depend on active travel grants and HITRANS managing the scheme, and is some years away. The Treasurer will not press the matter at present.

Noted: No change; no action at present.

8.3 Winter Planting

Paul Steel reported that bulbs have been bought for £66.98, within the budget of up to £100 agreed at the last meeting. Planting will start next week, after tired summer plants (some damaged in the recent storm) are removed.

Action: Paul Steel to clear the old plants and plant the bulbs.

8.4 Asset Register

The Treasurer reported that the asset register has been completed and sent to the insurer. The Community Council was over-insured, so no change to the premium is expected, and the premium is in any case paid by Moray Council.

Noted: The register is to be kept up to date.

8.5 Memorial Plaque – Jeff Masterson

The Chair read the proposed wording for a plaque in memory of Jeff Masterson on the bench near the compass rose, and a copy was given to Jeff's widow to consider in her own time. Members were content with the wording, and there is no deadline.

Action: Await the family's feedback before ordering the plaque.

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9. Reports

9.1 Local Councillors

No Local Councillors attended and no report was received.

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9.2 Resilience Group

The Treasurer noted that the Community Resilience Plan is based on the Scottish Government's resilience guidance. The UK Government has updated its advice, including that households prepare for about three days (72 hours) without services, and the Scottish Government's March 2026 guide to emergency planning for community groups is also available. It is not proposed to rewrite the plan, but to compare it with both and identify any gaps. Moray Council has still not formally approved the current (third) version of the plan.

Action: Arrange a session to review the plan against the UK and Scottish Government guidance.

9.3 Member Responsibility Updates

Harbour Advisory Group (CC representative update)

No new Group meeting has been held since the last CC meeting. Items previously noted remain: repainting of the lighthouse, and the crumbling road at the head of Sterlochy Pier, which Paul Steel inspected recently and found to be in poor condition. The Harbour Master is aware of it, but repair is considered unlikely in the near term given the scale of the work. Fishermen have complained that sand build-up in the harbour limits their access, and a steel ladder is needed for one fisherman.

Maintenance / Gardening

Old plants are being removed and some trimming will be done for winter. See also item 8.3.

Defibrillator

Ron Dawson reported that a new battery and two sets of pads have been received, funded from Lucky Squares proceeds. The battery in use is at 8% capacity and will be used for as long as possible before the new one is fitted.

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10. Any Other Competent Business (AOCB)

10.1 Lighting on the Old Railway Line

The Treasurer reported replies on the request for solar lighting on the path towards Buckie. There is no funding for lighting, though it may be considered if funding becomes available. Moray Council is carrying out a design study, funded through the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust Network Development Fund, for the section of National Cycle Route 1 between Findochty and Portknockie. No construction works are proposed at this stage.

Action: Follow up if path funding is announced and the Community Council is not included.

10.2 Scottish Government Local Government Reform Proposal

The Chair summarised a letter dated 15 October 2026 from the Minister for Public Finance to community council chairs. The Programme for Government 2026–31 commits to a three-month period of dialogue on the future of local governance. The initial proposal, published on 21 September 2026, suggests a smaller number of Strategic Regional Authorities alongside a much larger number of Community Authorities, with strategic decisions taken regionally and decisions affecting everyday community life closer to local people. Community councils are invited to an

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online event with Government officials. The letter does not say what the proposals mean for community councils or for Moray, and is a request for views, not a decision.

The Treasurer noted that community councils are mentioned only once in the Government's proposal and expressed concern about their future role. Members discussed the funding model, noting that the Community Council receives only an Admin Grant, which may be spent only on administration, so that projects such as the bench repairs depend on external grants or community fundraising. The Treasurer preferred to exhaust grant options before asking the community to contribute.

No decisions can be taken under AOCB.

Action: Members with views on the proposals to pass them to Paul Kerrison before 3.00 pm on Thursday 5 November.

Action: Paul Kerrison to attend the online event on 5 November and report back at the next meeting.

10.3 Coastal Path near the Golf Course

A member of the public reported that gorse and moss are narrowing the coastal path from the golf clubhouse towards the village to about a person's width and covering steps beside the golf course. Previous clearance by a Community Payback team cut the growth back like a hedge, which lasts only for a time. The Treasurer, who sits on the Moray Outdoor Access Local Area Forum, said the path is part of the Moray Coastal Path but crosses golf course land, so responsibility for clearing it is unclear.

Action: Paul Kerrison to contact the Council's Outdoor Access Officer, Hector Bryden, about who is responsible for clearing the path.

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11. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 7 December 2026 at 6:00 pm (winter hours). No objections were raised.

Meeting Closed

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 8:12 pm.

These minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting of the Community Council.

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