Thurso Town Improvements Association

Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 8 August 2017 at 7pm in Caithness Horizons, Thurso.

Present: Graeme MacDonald (Chair), Helen Allan (Vice Chair & Min sec), Marion O ‘Brien ( Sec) Susan Rennie (Treasurer), Arran Sinclair ( Jun Vice Chair) , Alan McIvor, Sandy MacLeod, Bryan Bain, Anita MacLean, Martyn Embury (Committee Members) Alison Brownie , Joan Lawrie, (Volunteers) Fern Robertshaw (Tesco People’s Champion), Karl Rosie (HC) Fiona Rollo.

1. Apologies: Fiona Ritchie, Darrin Sutherland, Ruth Mathieson, Sam MacKay, Catherine Cowan
2. Minutes of last Meeting- 17 Jan 2017.

Proposed by Alan MacIvor, seconded by Bryan Bain

1. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

1. Chairman’s Report

G MacDonald (GM) reported that it was only 7 months since last AGM, but he felt that it made more sense to have our AGM in August in order to give us a full year of the same committee to organise a big event like Midsummer Madness.

He thanked all committee and volunteers who have helped and all the public who have been supportive of the changes we have made.

So far this year we have run a Teddy Bear’s Picnic, Car Treasure Hunt, Quiz, School Art Competition, a Raffle, Mascot & Logo design and Midsummer Madness Weekend. Currently the Red Herring and Colour Competition are running. Our events have been well supported and profitable.

The major event of the year – Mid Summer Madness weekend proved, despite the weather to have been popular (2500 on Sat & 500 on Sunday) and captured the public’s imagination.

The Wash up meeting provided a number of areas for improvement but also to look at extending to a 3 day event starting on Friday.

GM thanked the musical community, and groups who contributed to the weekend: Ian Sinclair, Caithness Gymnasts, Mina’s Highland Dancers, Caithness Wrestlers and others.

GM wanted to pay special mention to the efforts made by the committee and volunteers :

Bryon Bain and Martyn Embury– set -up and take down of the field – though it is obvious far more support needed in that area in future.

Alan MacIvor – main tent entertainment

Fern Robertshaw, Darrin Sutherland, Fiona Rollo, Alison Brownie, Fiona Ritchie, Fiona Ross – assisting all over the field.

Arran Sinclair, appointed Junior Vice Chair during the year, whose amazing design work took our marketing and advertising to a whole new level. This instilled a degree of confidence in both the committee and the public that helped us to make the event the success we hoped it would be.

GM went on to thank the office bearers:

Susan Rennie ( Treasurer) and her assistant Catherine Cowan who collected money during the event and kept the finances on track during and after the event.

Marion O’Brien (Secretary) who revolutionised our Social Media in the run up and for the event.

Helen Allan (Vice Chair) who supported me in the weeks before and during the weekend.

GM then reported on the success of Tia – our mascot. Tia was designed by Scott Hughes from Miller Academy. As well as being a big hit with all ages at our events Tia also has an additional purpose – fundraising . The local marketing opportunities with merchandising and event attendance should be fully explored.

GM asked Arran Sinclair (AS)to give an update on the new logo – AS explained he was working on a design based around the original Tia drawings and it should be ready in a few weeks.

GM then reported that one of the major changes this year was to rest the traditional Gala Queen and replace with our Young Ambassador Award. This is a year round award which can be nominated by the public to celebrate young people in the Town that have contributed to our community or personal achievement in a significant way.

This year so far we have made 4 awards- Iona MacLachlan, Kyle Oag, Lani Jones, Robyn Gunn

The awards were made by our newly elected MP Jamie Stone on the Sunday of the Midsummer Madness weekend.

GM remarked that these awards were his personal highlight of the year.

GM asked Marion O’Brien to update on the Website and Social media. She explained that with the help of volunteer Michael Matheson the website had been updated and now included a paywall where people could donate or possibly in the future buy merchandise. There is a new facebook page and Marion is also active on our twitter account.

Our new fundraising projects – chosen after suggestions from the public and independent evaluation are The Riverside Lighting Project and the Thurso Walk of Fame.

Our finances have improved over the last 7 months and we have ventured into sponsorship for between 1 and 3 years with 6 local companies.

This committee has a legacy project of the Christmas Lights Appeal. GM asked Helen Allan for an update.

GM reported that during the year members of the committee had reviewed Child Protection , Drug & Alcohol Policies, and reviewed the relevance of the our constitution.

Following a review of all out activities, projects, aims and objectives, a proposal will be put to the AGM later regarding changing the status of the group to a Charity.

We are currently looking for premises for a storage/office space, currently we are looking at the Boating Pond Shed and toilets which we hope to acquire through Highland Council’s Asset Transfer Scheme. Helen Allan is following this up.

It was agreed to return the Victoria Shelter to the Council as it is no longer of any significant use to us, some of our materials have been damaged by salt.

Our reliance on the goodwill of O’Brien’s for the use of the Sinclair Street store continues but we need to put a satisfactory long term solution in place.

We have a programme of events for the next 12 months which can be altered by the incoming committee.

These are : a family afternoon of Christmas entertainment and a parade planned for Sunday 3 Dec. an expansion of Midsummer Madness plus the traditional events of Teddy Bear’s parties, Quiz, Car Treasure Hunt, Shop Window Competition, Jumper Day, Halloween events, Santa’s Grotto, plus new events - Tipsy Tea Party, Tea with Santa, Senior Citizen’s Burns Supper, and Bring a Party to a Party.

Other topics for the incoming committee to consider:

* Develop a’ Reciprocal Volunteering Programme’ getting community groups to assist at each other’s events which will provide support but also develop contact and dialogue between organisations.
* Succession planning within the organisation should be explored so there are younger people coming through to assist and succeed the current committee. Use of Saltire and Duke of Edinburgh Awards should be used to develop interest.
* Forum for Young Ambassadors and our younger Committee Members to be developed to generate new ideas.
* More activities for 8-18 year olds
* Develop a community neighbourhood programme to try and encourage the community to tidy up at own door, whether litter, weeds or fix small things, but encourage Community Accountability to look after our town.
* The group should meet regularly with local elected members, to review our and their plans and work together wherever possible.
* Investigations should be encouraged to establish feasibility of a Community Building.
* Advantage should be taken of our location in the UK and on NC500, Thurso should be developing highlights and attractions to bring people to the area and boost the economy.

GM concluded by stating that he thought the future for this group is optimistic and it is becoming the dynamic, leading community group in the area and if bold decisions and proper engagement takes place the community will support it and goals and objectives will be achieved. So far this year the committee, volunteers and general support have been great and the group can go on to achieve much more.

GM had enjoyed his time running the group and thanked everyone present for their support.

Helen Allan thanked GM for his report and on behalf of the committee and volunteers thanked him for his leadership of the organisation which had encouraged and enabled to group to put on an a brand new event – Midsummer Madness. Due to the efforts of GM we should all be very proud of the part we all played in organising and running the event. This was agreed with by all present.

6 Financial Report – Attached

The report was presented by Susan Rennie . There were no questions on the report and it was unanimously accepted.

7 Election of Office Bearers

GM handed the Chair over to Cllr Karl Rosie. He echoed H Allan’s statements and on G Mac Donald’s

nominated by G MacDonald, seconded by B Bain and A MacIvor- no other nominations

Secretary – M O’Brien nominated by A MacIvor, seconded by B Bain – no other nominations.

Committee – Darrin Sutherland, Ruth Mathieson, Sam Mackay, Martyn Embury, Arran Sinclair, Alan MacIvor, Anita MacLean, Fiona Rollo, Bryan Bain, Joan Lawrie – All unanimously accepted.

8 AOCB

G MacDonald resumed the Chair.

8.1 He gave a resume of upcoming events for the year up to Midsummer Madness 2018. He confirmed that the next AGM would be in Aug 2018 – this would allow the committee a full year to work on Midsummer Madness as well as all the other planned events.

8.2 Volunteer List – Alison Brownie, Fern Robertshaw, Tesco, Sandy Macleod, Karl Rosie, Cathy Earnshaw, Bethany Lawrence, Fiona Ritchie, Liz Lawson, Erin Lawson, Ruth Lawson, Christine MacKenzie, Sarah Coghill, Calum Helliwell, Cath Cowan, Michael Mathieson, Fiona Ross, Clare Hughes.

8.3 Charitable Status- H Allan explained to the meeting the benefits/constraints of the organisation becoming a Charity.

Benefits

* Public Goodwill/Transparency
* Some Funders only consider Charities
* Can apply for Gift Aid and other tax relief

Constraints

* Organisation is regulated and must comply with certain conditions
* Trustees have certain responsibilities
* OSCR need to give permission to make certain changes
* Accounts will need to be externally scrutinised – though we should still be able to prepare ‘simple’ accounts. Accounts need to be submitted to OSCR.

After some discussion it was agreed that the proposal should be explored and brought back to the committee.

There being no other competent business G MacDonald thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.