

January 1989

PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the second part of the 6th AGM of the PCC held in Portobello Library on Monday 9th January 1989.

Present: Marjoria Amos, Fanny Wraith, Gordon McRae, Vivienne Middleton, Helen Kirsopp, Gill Anderson, Margaret Vaugh, Karen Angelosanto, Harold Alexander-Bowen, Bill Jameson (Community Education), Rena Begg, Wilma Henderson, Sue Hurford, Henry Vanless, Andrew Sandeman (Portobello Library), Drew Strachan, Margaret Shepherd, Tom Fairlie, CI Andrew Watt, PC Graham Jeffrey, Cllr Ken Ward, Catherine Kilgour, Bernadette Heron, Elizabeth Brownlee, Isabella Thomson, Susan Westwood, Bill Westwood, Ray Lang, Cllr David Begg, Hamish Shepherd (Chairman), Andy McDonald (Vice-Chairman), Harry Dawson, Florence Jones (Treasurer), Netta Sinclair (Edinburgh District Council) Maureen Child (Acting Secretary).

Apologies: Bill Davidson

The Chairman, Hamish Shephard announced the death of Gordon Cooper, who represented St Mark's Church on PCC and once served as Secretary. The meeting observed a minute's silence as a mark of respect to a devoted member.

1. **Minutes of the December 5th Meeting.** Tom Fairlie, Wilma Henderson, CI Andrew Watt, Gill Anderson, Gordon McRae and Florence Jones were added to the list of those present at the last meeting. With this amendment, the minutes were approved (proposed; Margaret Shepherd, seconded; Helen Kirsopp).

2. **Treasurer's Report.** The Treasurer could report little further progress on satisfying the auditor's points about the accounts (Ref; minutes of the 5th December meeting). As empowered at the last meeting, the office bearers had written to former Secretary, Harry Dawson on these points, saying that unless the missing funds were returned by 9th January 1989, or a suitable explanation given, the matter would be handed over to the police.

Harry Dawson's written reply was read out. (1) He had found no record of a contract with St Mark's for the Hall hire. The Treasurer confirmed £86 was paid out from the Community Council account to St Mark's. There was some discussion as to whether we could get any refund as the £96 was classed as a donation not rent. (2) Harry accepted responsibility for the £241.81p missing from PCC accounts and suggesting he pay it back at the rate of £10 a week. (3) Harry still maintained that the light bulbs had been paid for in 1987, although neither Edinburgh District Council nor PCC had any record of it and Harry himself produced no receipt. There was some confusion, since the bill from EDC amounted to £156 for 1987, not the £125 quoted in the accounts. The Treasurer said the figure of £125 had originated from Harry.

Netta Sinclair was asked to get EDC to track down a copy of the original grant cheque from EDC technical services department. Harry said it was paid out to him personally, and marked A/C Payee. Netta Sinclair agreed it was highly irregular for a cheque to be paid to a person rather than an official body and agreed to look into that too. Harry said he had not cashed the cheque and transferred the funds to the PCC account because, he said, the people who put up the lights wanted paid in cash.

All these matters remain to be clarified as a matter of urgency within the next month. In addition Drew Strachan brought up the further matter of £100 transferred from the Joppa Tennis Courts account to the General Account which hadn't come back to the JTC Account. He also had a copy of a receipt signed by Harry for £55, which Gemma McLuskie of EDC's women's unit had paid out for their hire of the courts in the summer. As far as Drew was aware, this £55 was not paid into the JTC account.

On the suggestion of both Netta Sinclair and Ken Ward, the Council agreed to set up a working party to look into the PCC finances and find out exactly what the situation is, their first priority being to clear the accounts for the year ended 31st March 1988. It was agreed the sub-committee consist of the Auditor (Dennis Hosie), (if he was willing), the Treasurer (Florence Jones), a member of PCC (Helen Kirsopp) and someone outside the CC whose expertise and integrity was respected by all; it was agreed former Treasurer Colin O'Brien be approached (proposed - Sue Hurford, seconded Gill Anderson). It was generally acknowledged that the present office bearers had done a great deal of hard work and it was no reflection on them that this sub-committee was being set up. The Chairman added that PCC had no responsibility for the lights in 1988-89, EDC had done it all.

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The Council postponed any decision about how to deal with Harry; (a) the method or rate of repayment of any monies he owed the PCC account and (b) what action council members take against him as their former Secretary, acting in their name. In discussion, members felt they had to accept responsibility for Harry's actions, but did not accept they were culpable, as individuals or as a body. Some felt it would reflect badly on the community and PCC to put the matter in the hands of the police. On the contrary, others felt it would be irresponsible and reflect badly on PCC if we did not. No proposal was made. In effect, PCC has decided to wait until they know the full extent of the monies missing. It was remarked that this was hardly a situation which encouraged anyone to stand for office in the present PCC.

3. Election of Office Bearers. The Treasurer, Florence Jones remains in office. Hamish Shepherd stood down as Chairman on health grounds. On being asked to stand as Chairman, Andy MacDonald said he'd be willing to act as Chairman till the financial situation was sorted out, then the Council would know what kind of Chairman he would be. He gave an outline of how he wanted to see the PCC function; taking an active, 'political' role with every member pulling his or her weight in bringing together all sections of the community.

It was proposed that Andy MacDonald and Maureen Child remain as acting Chairman and acting Secretary, respectively, and the election be postponed till the financial situation is resolved (proposed - Margaret Waugh, seconded - Marjorie Amos and carried unanimously). The post of Vice-Chairman was left vacant. Andy MacDonald then took over the Chair.

4. Sub-Committee Reports Joppa Tennis Courts, Drew Strachan reported that the east corner wire netting was in a dangerous condition. He asked for a letter to be written to EDC to see if it can be repaired. He also wondered if a grant might be available from the Sports Council to re-surface the courts which are beginning to crack up. (Action - Drew Strachan and Secretary).

Sub-Committee for the Elderly, Vivienne Middleton asked if any response had been received from EDC to the sub-committees report on wheelchair access to public buildings in Portobello. Wheelchair access to the Baths was thought feasible with a route through the side door, past the boilers, with a fence constructed for safety. Nothing more had been heard on the subject.

5. AOCB. Bill Westwood asked if more copies of the constitution could be made available to members of the Council.

Ken Ward commented that notification of meetings had been lax in 1988. The Acting Secretary would make every effort to give sufficient notification of meetings to everyone concerned.

Drew Strachan outlined the threat of a housing development on the the allotments at Joppa Terrace. The meeting agreed to send a letter to Portobello Planning Forum, asking that this piece of land be kept as open space, and opposing any housing on that site on the grounds of restricted access and overdevelopment (proposed Drew Strachan, seconded Sue H. Lord and carried unanimously). (Action : Drew Strachan and Secretary).

Harold Alexander-Bowen had been approached by the manager of the Hamilton Lodge Hotel, asking for PCC support for leisure and recreational developments he wants to make on the seafront. Mr Ferguson is to be invited to submit his proposals in writing. He may be asked to talk to a future meeting, if it seemed appropriate (proposed - Harry Dawson; seconded - Margaret Waugh). (Action; Secretary)

The Chairman proposed a formal vote of thanks to the outgoing Chairman, Hamish Shepherd for his commitment, 'emotionally and financially'. He said Hamish was an 'unsung hero' and had 'acted in the front line with the best interests of Portobello at heart'. He had the 'utmost respect for his integrity'. The applause was unanimous.

6. Date and Place of Next Meeting. As requested by the Council some time ago, Gill Anderson had already booked the next two meetings at St Philip's Church Hall on Mondays February 13th and March 13th, but she said it could be cancelled. Nobody voiced any objections to the change of venue, so the meetings were set for 7.30pm at St Philip's both nights.