

PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the 143rd meeting, held on 28th October 1996 in
Portobello Baptist Church Hall.

PRESENT:

Sandy Smith (Chairman), Tom Smith (Secretary), Kathleen Hart (Treasurer)
Harold Alexander-Bowen, Sandy Begg, Cllr Maureen Child, WPC Siobhan Crawford, Diana Foster,
Shand Hutchison, Keith Jeffrey, Alison Miller, George Murray, Margaret Smith, Nick Stroud, Lesley
Turner, Kathleen Ward, Lilian Warwick, A/Sgt Simon Young.

APOLOGIES:

Isobel Allan, Celia Butterworth, Sheila McIvor, Cllr Lawrence Marshall, Anne Millan, Beryl Neill, Lesley
Reid, Gavin Strang, David Turner.

Note: people who wish to submit apologies at the last minute should notify Sandy Smith on 669 6534.

143.1 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all present, and introduced the three young ladies who will represent
their colleagues from Portobello High School for the next 12 months: Lesley Turner, Diana
Foster and Alison Miller.

143.2 MINUTES OF MEETING OF 30th SEPTEMBER

The Minutes of the last meeting were adopted as correct (proposed by George Murray, seconded
by Kathleen Ward).

The Chairman requested that Agenda items 6 and 7 be carried forward to the November meeting
to give members an opportunity to study arguments and proposals which had been produced.
This was agreed.

143.3 MATTERS ARISING

143.3a Towerbank swingpark: item continues.

143.3b Information Plaques: The necessary planning permission has been applied for. Item continues.

143.3c Portobello Museum: item continues.

143.3d Promoting Cycling in Portobello item continues. With reference to the N.E. Edinburgh Local
Plan (proposing a cycleway on the Promenade), George Murray attended the procedural meeting
on 17th October. A Public Local Enquiry will be held on 14th November at 10am.

143.3e Brunstane Road bus stop: item continues.

143.3f Pollution (electricity pylons): item continues, as we are waiting for replies to the Secretary's
letter(s).

It was also thought appropriate at this time to make some enquiries from Waverley Mining
and/or the Director of Property Services concerning the earth tremors arising from – it is
suggested – activities at Monktonhall Mine. The Secretary will write.

143.4 REPORTS

143.4a Police

Acting Sergeant Young gave the Police report for September, as follows:

Vehicular accidents: there were 20 accidents in September, four involving injury; there were no fatalities. This is a significant decrease in the number of accidents reported, compared to the same month last year. Interim figures for October showed a rise to 28 accidents; five of these involved injury, and there were no fatalities. This reflects an increase in the number of accidents reported in the similar period last year, but fewer involved injury.

Crime statistics: there has been a slight increase in reported crimes of dishonesty and vandalism during September, in comparison to last year. There has however been a slight decrease in crimes of violence and other miscellaneous offences including those that are drugs related.

143.4b Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that the accounts as at 28th October 1996 were:

Treasurer's Account: £2,162.83

Joppa Tennis Courts: £ 651.21

We have at last received our annual grant of £921 (dated 12th July); Cllr Child was thanked for her part in achieving this. We have also received a contribution of £1,000 from the City Council towards the centenary event.

The Treasurer reported that JTC did not have a very good season, and that they will be doing some serious thinking about the future of the Tennis Club.

143.4c Christmas Illuminations

The subcommittee met and decided that we would add to our decorations this year. Events have overtaken us in that it appears that the City Council will after all provide a Christmas tree at the usual place. It was agreed that we would prefer to dress our own tree, so Maureen will find out if we can simply be given the tree to use as we think best.

It was also agreed that the Secretary would write to the Head Teacher of Portobello High School to ask if they would arrange a choir and band at the Town Hall for a Ôswitch onÕ ceremony on Monday 9th December, probably at 7pm or 7:30pm, but at a time which suits them.

Portobello Rotary Club are currently collecting money for us from local traders (and anyone else who will contribute).

143.5 AMALGAMATION CENTENARY AND FUTURE SEARCH

The Treasurer calculates that we have so far committed £1,397 to the venture, and received only £1,000 from the City Council. In order to regularise this situation it was proposed that we should allocate £500 to the event in the first instance. This was proposed by George Murray, seconded by Shand Hutchison, and agreed unanimously.

143.6 TWINNING PORTOBELLO

Carried forward to November.

143.7 PROMENADE CHARTER

Carried forward to November.

143.8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

143.8a Litter bins: there will be no reinstatement of the bins mounted on lamp-posts, but if we can prove a need then the large pavement-mounted bins can be provided or relocated.

143.9 FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meetings will be held on the following dates in Portobello Baptist Church Hall in the High Street (enter by the door to the right of the Portobello Bar), starting at 7:30pm:

Monday 25th November

*** No meeting in December ***

Monday 27th January 1997

PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

NOTICE OF MEETING

The 144th meeting of Portobello Community Council
will be held
on Monday 25th November 1996 at 7:30pm,
in Portobello Baptist Church Hall, 185 High Street.

AGENDA

- 1. Chairman's welcome; apologies**
- 2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**
- 3. Matters arising**
- 4. Reports**
- 5. Amalgamation Centenary and Future Search**
- 6. Twinning Portobello**
- 7. Promenade Charter**
- 8. Traffic measures**
- 9. AOCB**
- 10 Dates of future meetings**

Thoughts on Twinning (Agenda item 6)

Rather than just drift into a twinning arrangement because it's a nice idea, I would like us to think very carefully about what we would want to achieve from this, and maximise its benefit to the town.

The first issue is of course whether it is even possible for Portobello to set up its own private twinning arrangements when it is part of Edinburgh – albeit a very special part, with a distinctive identity. Cllr Child observes that this needs to be handled delicately.

Assuming it is possible for Portobello to have its own twins, why would we want to? What would be 'in it' for us and for our twins? I don't know what happens in traditional twinning relationships, except that they are possibly used as a way for politicians and monarchs to develop cordial relations. They might also be a marketing opportunity, for example for a seaside resort to attract more visitors.

But surely the most valuable way to use a twinning arrangement is for education? By using this to build children's appreciation of foreign countries and cultures we would be building bridges for mutual understanding and appreciation which are so important in trying to achieve a more peaceful and stable world. So I suggest that any twinning arrangement we make should be of obvious benefit to the High School – for example building on the trips already made by its history and geography pupils. The High School Band is considering a visit to Munich in 1997, and a cultural exchange of this nature is exactly what should be underpinning a twins' relationship. Munich seems like a natural twin for Edinburgh, both being major cities somewhat away from the geographic centre of Europe, and if Munich has a tourist resort amongst its suburbs with a large modern school, then that would be a natural twin for Portobello.

I suggest that this is how we should set about finding twins for our town. Furthermore, in these days of the Internet (to which the High School is now connected), we don't have to restrict ourselves to places which are easy to visit: there could be just as much educational value in developing electronic contacts.

When the twinning issue was last raised, several years ago, our then Councillor George Kerevan was going to explore twinning with Puerto Belo in Panama, which is certainly an obvious and desirable twin for historical reasons. Another one which looks particularly appropriate is Portobello in Dunedin, New Zealand; the Heads of the Commonwealth States are meeting in Edinburgh next year, and perhaps the New Zealand representative could visit Portobello while he's here, to establish a new twinning relationship.

Pursuing the value of the educational angle however, particularly for the High School but perhaps in the long term for our primary schools as well, it strikes me that it would be valuable to have a twin in every country which is a member of the European Union. This could help to build a solid basis for the wise, prosperous and above all unified Europe we all want for the future – unified at least in spirit and outlook, if not in language and currency.

If we were to seek a twin in each European country, we could make a small but important political point by seeking twins in England, Wales and Northern Ireland: Scotland is a unique and precious country, and it is just as important to take our stand under that banner as it is to learn about other nations.

Maureen does not disagree with that in principle, but makes these points:

- we must not get carried away, and forget links that still need to be fostered within Edinburgh.
- there are reservations about Edinburgh's own twinning arrangements which might also apply to any which Portobello would create (these too need to be identified at the outset);
- what are our priorities for our community, and where in that list does twinning come?;
- are we in a position to take on the extra financial responsibilities of twinning?;

- much is already being done to foster international understanding and cooperation, and we should not try and reinvent a wheel;

I do want us to be very clear about what we are trying to achieve before we commit ourselves to anything!

Nick Stroud

Promenade Charter (Agenda item 7)

I would like the Community Council to agree on how the Prom should be used, and get Edinburgh City Council to adopt our vision as a Charter which can be displayed along the Prom itself.

Above all the Prom should be for people – not for their machines or their animals, but for people of all ages, to stroll and to recreate in complete safety, in what is arguably Edinburgh's healthiest surroundings. Since nothing can be taken for granted these days, even such a simple and basic 'right' as this needs to be enshrined in a way that clearly shows what we are trying to achieve – both to help us aspire to something even better, and to prevent the lazy and unscrupulous from exploiting what should be a common good.

A number of implications follow on from this basic aim, not all of which could be achieved immediately, but a Charter would help us to agree what is special about the Prom, and to have a yardstick by which to protect it or to judge any plans to alter its use. The following points occur to me 'off the cuff':

- safety is crucial – for everyone from toddlers to the elderly – not only must no one be knocked down by a cyclist (for example), but also, no one should even be frightened by a near miss.
- cycling should never be legal – but it should be tolerated when the Prom is essentially empty, provided cyclists understand that they will be wholly responsible for any accident they have on the Prom and will be prosecuted on that basis. This is not meant to be retributive, but is meant to concentrate the cyclist's mind on the need not to have an accident: what matters is not who was responsible for an accident, but that the accident shouldn't happen in the first place.
- we should not ban cycling altogether from the Prom, either; I would not like it on my conscience if we did this and an innocent cyclist were to be killed in the High Street when the Prom was empty.
- we should tolerate children playing on the Prom, even on bikes and roller blades, especially if we do not provide them with any safe alternative.
- the Prom started life as a 'lid' for Portobello's first sewer! – and as we see from multiple diggings-up, it is a convenient route for any number of pipes now, for water, gas, electricity, telephones and cable, as well as drains. This is fine, but it must be restored after any such work, to a completely level surface (finished in red) on which even the most infirm can walk with confidence.
- the Prom should be at all times well-lit, preferably by lampposts in keeping with Portobello's status as one of Edinburgh's largest Conservation Areas.
- motorised traffic should be completely banned from the Prom during 'School rush hours' when scores of children are walking to and from school – say 8:30-9am, 12-1:30pm and 3-4:30pm.
- at other times there should be a clearly publicised code of conduct for those who really have to bring vehicles on to the Prom: such as for example never going above 5mph, never shifting out of first gear, coming on to the Prom at the point closest to their destination, and shutting gates behind them. And only *essential* vehicles should be allowed on the Prom: this excludes taxis, delivery vehicles, routine hospital transport and private cars.
- the Prom should be kept totally clean. In the long run I would like all dogs excluded from the Prom as well as the beach, so that it is not defaced by the long dribbles of their urine and the disgusting piles of their faeces, but in the short term we could at least start by insisting that all dogs are kept on leads here so that their owners cannot fail to notice when there is a mess that needs to be cleaned up.
- pollution should be minimised – and if possible banished completely. This means air, water, noise and litter pollution – anything which detracts from the Prom's status as the jewel in Edinburgh's health crown, the very best place to come for 'a constitutional', and to revive flagging spirits.

- the swimming baths form an integral part of the ‘health’ package which the Prom offers, and its Turkish Baths and public toilets make a very important contribution.
- we should never lose sight of our hopes of one day achieving European Blue Flag status for our beach, and we should be aware of all the ways in which the Prom can contribute to this quest.

Nick Stroud