



PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the 203rd meeting held on 28th October 2002
in Portobello Baptist Church Hall

Present:

Maureen Child, Dawson Currie, Kathleen Hart, Bob Jefferson, Peter McCabe, Lawrence Marshall, Brenda Molony, Margaret Munro, George Murray, Tom Nimmo, Margaret Smith, Tom Smith, Nick Stroud, Aileen Valentine, Lewis Waugh.

In attendance:

F. Alluwan, K. Anderson, David Beer, D. Black G. Brewer, Douglas Brown, Archie Burns, J. Clarke, R. Davidson, John Dillon, A. Duff, Insp. Bob Hope, Joyce Halsan, Liz Kirkpatrick, P. Kitson, J.M. McIntosh, Sue Mackay, John Noble, Gavin Strang MP, Wm Waugh.

Apologies:

Alix Gaffney, Robert Gatfliffe, Sheila Kennedy, David Simpson (Joppa Tennis Courts), John Smart, Sandy Smith.

Opening remarks by Chairperson

Tom Smith chaired the meeting, as John Smart was ill. He welcomed Council members, Gavin Strang, and several members of the public. The main theme for the meeting was 'youth problems'.

Discussion on youth problems

Police Report:

Inspector Hope read out a comprehensive written report, in which the main points were as follows:

At the end of the school holidays there was a major upsurge in youth disorder in the High Street, caused by groups of up to 60 12- to 16-year-olds; numbers were higher than last year, and individuals bolder, many with criminal intent. Local youngsters, adults and shopkeepers have been abused and assaulted. If a group is dispersed, they often use mobile phones to regroup. Additional police patrols had been deployed regularly to deal positively with offenders wherever possible, and had found that the majority of the youths concerned were from outwith our area—mostly from Craigmillar, Bingham and Niddrie which are now covered by CCTV.

Police resources in Portobello are limited, as at all other stations. Even three times as many officers would not be able to deal with the problem to the satisfaction of many members of the public. Patrols have been increased wherever possible, and youths spoken to when necessary. Where their behaviour gave cause for concern the ringleaders were taken to the police station and their parents summoned; the vast majority of parents have been supportive of police action, and have taken a positive stance. Where offences were detected, offenders were reported to the Children's Hearing Reporter. Particular attention has been paid to the sellers of alcohol and fireworks. In the month before this meeting, 51 incidents of youth disorder in the High Street were reported to the police, 25 of which were found not to merit police attention; 17 young people were warned or reported.

Portobello is the only high street in east Edinburgh, and is therefore bound to attract gatherings of young people. Police patrols will continue to be deployed where possible, and in the face of positive and determined action, youth from outwith our area may decide, for a while at least, that Portobello is not a great place to hang out. No doubt they will return periodically.

Inspector Hope made two further observations: there is very little youth provision in our area, where young people can entertain themselves productively; and, research shows that CCTV can help to curb antisocial behaviour, though there needs to be a long-term strategy to keep it in the public eye—as at Craigmillar—if its effect is to last longer than a few months. The police would support any local initiative to have CCTV installed in the High Street and on the Promenade, where it could be expected to provide several benefits.

Inspector Hope replied to several questions about ringleaders and gangs of youths. The public were asked to try and identify or describe ringleaders when they called the Police. The law placed considerable restrictions on what the Police could do, for example in monitoring shops that might be selling alcohol to underage drinkers, and a major problem is that some youngsters now know their rights all too well. There is no legislation to back up the Police in trying to deal with this problem. On a more positive note, Police Officers are out on the beat, and are getting to know local young people.

Gavin Strang joined in with the discussion, and while agreeing that there are issues pointed out that he had not seen any trouble yet himself. He agreed that the High Street is a magnet for trouble, and that the trouble was not a new thing but has been going on for many years, though the advent of mobile 'phones was a new addition to the problem. Dr Strang suggested that this was really a Scottish Executive problem, but we also need something like a youth working team or an unattached youth worker.

A lengthy discussion took place about what should be and is being done about the situation. Lawrence Marshall felt that installing CCTV would mean that we had failed; he suggested that the public should still walk the streets and not be frightened of the youths, but should talk to them. We must be careful not to give the miscreants what they want.

Margaret Munro pointed out that this is not a problem peculiar to Portobello, but is happening all over the city, and also in the smaller towns surrounding it, in East and West Lothian. Parents should be more responsible for their children, but some older children are out of the control of their parents, and some parents—especially single ones—are really struggling to cope.

The Chairperson thanked the public and Dr Strang for coming along. It was agreed that a letter should be sent to Susan Deacon, raising the youth problem and CCTV plan, and requesting that the matter be brought up with the Scottish Executive.

Action: Secretary

203.1 Minutes of previous meeting

Item 202.5d should have said 'it is the pruning and feathering that will be dealt with' rather than 'would looking into grass cutting'.

With this amendment the minutes were accepted (proposed by Kathleen Hart, seconded by Dawson Currie).

203.2 Matters arising

Held over until the next meeting, for lack of time.

203.3 REPORTS

203.3a Treasurer

Treasurer's Account	£5,320.95
Joppa Tennis Court	£1,717.54

The Fundfinders CD has been paid for and is up and running in the Library. The Rotary and PAS are sharing costs and may pay £50 each; we pay £60. Joyce said it is all set up and the Library staff are prepared to run courses for anyone who wants to use it.

203.3b Joppa Tennis Courts

Tom Smith read out a note from David Simpson. Sunday playing had been very quiet, and there were no complaints from locals. However Maureen said she had received two complaints, which should be taken up with the Committee.

203.3c Cleanliness and environment

Robert Davidson circulated a letter re the Figgate Burn, and also read a memo from the Scottish Executive regarding distemper in seals: anyone finding a beached seal should contact Robert. Bernard Hunter will be moving abandoned vehicles up by Craigmillar, and will be asked to move the Coadstone pillars at the same time; a letter of thanks needs to be sent to Bernard Hunter when this is done.

Action: Secretary

The 525 green machine had been in an accident and was off the road getting fixed; a replacement will be obtained, and will be shared with other task force managers who will each have use of it for one day a week. Robert is also trying to get the beach cleaned every two/three weeks. Plans to clean up the Figgate Burn had been suspended when it was found that the recent flooding had washed 90% of the debris—including a vandalised lamp-post—down to the beach. Margaret Smith said the team were doing a grand job, with which everyone agreed.

203.3d Planning matters

Brenda Molony read out a letter from John Stewart objecting to the application to build a new retail warehouse on Milton Link, on the grounds of its negative impact on Portobello town centre, in contravention of the Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan.

203.4 Any other business

203.4a Aileen Valentine read out some information from the City of Edinburgh Council.

203.4b The Hugh Miller theatre group presented two books to the Library and some to the Community Council to sell; all four were sold to members. Brenda said the play was a huge success, and congratulated Sandy Smith, his family and helpers on doing such a great job in transforming the hall and arranging such a good production.

203.4c Christmas shows: Sandy Smith usually arranges this, with help from Margaret Smith. Margaret will arrange dates and see if we can get crisps and juice from the Scotmid Store for them.

Action: Margaret Smith

203.4d Christmas lights: the City Council has undertaken to do lights and trees for the town hall but we are not sure if they will supply anything extra. Dawson agreed to deal with this.

Action: Dawson Currie

Tom Smith pointed out that the Community Council buys the trees for the Town Hall: he will see about getting a tree and will coordinate it for about 10th December.

Action: Tom Smith

203.4e Porty website: Bob Jefferson announced that the website would be hosted without cost for a year, but the Community Council should purchase and own the domain name. Bob asked if Council members would be willing to have their names and photos on the website: it would have to be everyone or not at all—and everyone agreed.

203.4f Porty Ceilidh: Lewis Waugh announced that the High School would be holding another of their Ceilidhs for the Planet on 1st November.

203.5 Dates of next meetings

Meetings are held on the final Monday of each month, except December and July, at 7:30pm in Portobello Baptist Church Hall, 185 Portobello High Street.

The final meeting of 2002 will be on 25th November, which will round off with a Christmas soiree.

The following meeting will be the first of 2003, on 27th January.