



PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the 235th meeting held on 30th January 2006 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall

Present: Celia Butterworth, Maureen Child, Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, Alix Gaffney, Robert Gatliff, Bob Jefferson, Brenda Molony, George Murray, Tom Nimmo, Avril Scott, Margaret Smith, John Stewart, Nick Stroud, David Turner, Betty Young.

Apologies: Susan Deacon, Kathleen Hart, Brian McCrow, Lawrence Marshall, Margaret Munro, John Smart, Tom Smith.

In attendance: Lys Anzer, Diana Cairns, Archie Foley, Stephen Hawkins, Eileen Hewitt (City Council's community council liaison officer), Graham Kitchener, Peter Lake, Gordon McCulloch, Giacomo Modica (Craigentiny Community Council), Cllr Ian Perry (City of Edinburgh Council), Ian Wilson.

235.1 Chairman's welcome:

Robert Gatliff welcomed a good turnout to the first meeting of 2006, on a particularly cold night. He hoped that 2006 would be as successful as 2005 had been, culminating in two joint third prizes and a second prize for the website at the Calor Gas Awards in December – for which three framed certificates would be displayed in the Library. The website team was congratulated for its success and its £250 prize.

235.2 Minutes of the 234th Meeting:

There were several mistakes in the attendance list: Brenda Molony and George Murray were present, Lawrence Marshall absent. With these corrections, the minutes were accepted: Proposed: Maria Devoy, Seconded: Margaret Smith.

235.3 Matters Arising:

- * **235.3a High Street phase 2:** John Stewart still hadn't heard from Stuart Smith of the City Council. Ongoing.
- * **235.3b Joppa Tennis Courts:** There was no further news of the plans to renovate the clubhouse. Ongoing.
- 235.3c October's public meeting:** the Secretary had at last sent the questionnaire results to the Council Directors.
- 235.3d CCTV results in Rosefield Avenue:** the Police reported that a tree had obscured the CCTV camera's view along Rosefield Avenue.
- * **235.3e outstanding bills:** the Harry Lauder Garden bill had been paid, but the bill for membership of the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils had still not been received; Dawson Currie will remind the EACC treasurer.
- * **235.3f vehicles on the beach:** the Police were still investigating the legality of taking vehicles on to the beach. There is a possibility that new gates will be put up at King's Road to prevent such access.
- * **235.3g petition to the Parliament:** the Secretary has communicated with the Scottish Parliament about submitting an ePetition on jet-skis; this can be done, but evidence must be provided of efforts to get councillors and MSPs to solve the problem. Robert Gatliff agreed to discuss the problem with Big Things on the Beach. The police representative was concerned that there wasn't sufficient legislation to deal with the problem. All were encouraged to write to MSPs and MPs about this. Ongoing.

- * **235.3h signage on Prom:** Maureen Child thought that Lawrence Marshall should be the one City Councillor to request better signage for the Prom to discourage antisocial use. Ongoing.
- 235.3i news of national events:** Stephen Hawkins has arranged for notification of various Scottish Parliament events to be sent to the Secretary.
- 235.3j primary school closures:** the deadline had passed without anyone making any representations to the Chairman.
- * **235.3k anti-graffiti measures:** Ron Dymond has still to let us know what items of street furniture we can “adopt”.
- 235.3l broken lights in Rosefield Park:** these have now been fixed.
- * **235.3m graffiti in Joppa Quarry Park:** Ron Dymond was going to arrange for this to be removed.
- * **235.3n plastic cows or haggises:** Dawson Currie has still to find out about this approach to street art.
- 235.3o Helen Hopekirk concert:** Archie Foley reported significant progress in the preparations for this event. The concert would take place on 19th May in St Marks church, with two professional pianists from the USA (who are experts on Helen Hopekirk and would be running workshops), a classical violinist, school choirs and possibly a professional soprano. The total budget would be around £4,000, much of which would be met from ticket sales, but other sponsorship was also being sought. It was agreed to donate £200 to this very worthy cause.
- 235.3p plans for community councils:** Tom Smith attended the City Council meeting about this and didn’t hear anything that suggested drastic changes.
- 235.3q 25th anniversary reception for community councils:** Celia Butterworth, Dawson Currie and George Murray attended this City Council reception on our behalf. They received a commemorative certificate which will be given to the Library for display.

235.4 Reports

235.4a Police: in the previous two months there had been a noticeable rise in break-ins, mainly at business premises, and also a number of assaults. The Youth Action Team had been kept busy, issuing ASBOs and reminding shops and pubs not to serve alcohol to under-age customers. Policing priorities for the coming year were being planned, and feedback forms were issued for those who wished to put a point of view.

235.4b Treasurer: The only change this month had been the payment of the bill for maintenance of the Harry Lauder Garden. This left the current balances at:
Treasurer’s Account: £5,742.77; Joppa Tennis Courts: £5,378.34.

235.4c Joppa Tennis Courts: no report this time.

235.4d Task Force: no report this time.

The Task Force is happy to receive reports from the public about any problem within its remit, on 078 101 81039, from 6:30am to 5:30pm, seven days a week.

235.4e Planning: John Stewart expressed concern at the positioning of a new sign and telephone at the Police Station. There had been no developments concerning ongoing planning applications. The application to build six new three-storey houses on the Prom at the foot of Bath Street was to be considered by the Council shortly. Robert Gatliff had been in touch with the new owners of the Scottish Power site, who wanted to meet local people to start planning the new development, and present plans to a public meeting. PEDL – Portobello Energy Descent and Land Reform Group – were applying to the Lottery for funding for a major tourist development.

235.4f Councillors: Maureen Child circulated her monthly report after the meeting. Lawrence Marshall was unable to attend this meeting.

235.4g Signs, Plaques and coade stone: there were no developments to report.

235.4h Portobello Traders: no report this time.

235.4i Portobello Neighbourhood Watch: no report this time; the group had not met for a while.

235.4j Portobello website: Maria Devoy reported that two or three video items were about to be finished ready to launch a local TV station on the Internet – accessible through a logo on the website’s home page. A website subcommittee meeting was arranged for 7pm on 27th February, immediately preceding the full Community Council meeting.

235.4k Community development planning: the Chairman asked for a couple of new members for this group. Diana Cairns volunteered. The Chairman would arrange a meeting of this group before the next full meeting.

235.5 Any Other Business

235.5a Redevelopment plan for western Portobello: This is apparently being driven by the City Council, but there is no firm news as yet. A timeframe has been published, a consultant is to be appointed, and there is likely to be community involvement in July.

235.5b Cycling on the Promenade: Concern was expressed at the danger caused by cyclists on the Prom, and the City Council was urged to restore the signs which prohibit cycling. The Council has a new proposal to construct a ‘boardwalk’ right along its seafront from Cramond to Joppa and it was pointed out that this might accommodate cyclists, though it would take years to construct and pedestrians would still have to cross it to get to the beach. Maureen Child said that comments on the boardwalk proposal were required now. George Murray pointed out that there had always been a strong feeling that the Prom was for pedestrians. Several people pointed out the dangers for cyclists on roads, but also for pedestrians when people cycle on pavements. A balanced approach is clearly needed, but it was not clear where that balance lies.

* **Action:** Secretary to send a copy of the City Council’s boardwalk proposal to Bob Jefferson for inclusion on the Party website.

* **Action:** all, to comment to City Council on boardwalk proposal.

235.5c Community council boundaries: Eileen Hewitt, Giacomo Modica and Ian Perry attended the meeting to lead a discussion about aligning community council boundaries with the boundaries of the city’s new multi-member wards and Westminster constituencies. At the same time, the City Council proposed to replace the present Local Development Committees (LDCs) with smaller Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) based on community council areas. The LCPs would consist of the local City councillors and representatives from health boards, police and community councils, and would decide priorities for allocation of resources in their areas. The precise resources to be managed in this way had yet to be decided but would cover such matters as street cleaning. A pilot scheme in the west of the city had worked well and the Council now wanted to extend that to the whole city. One problem with this plan was that several community councils in the city did not match their local Council wards, and in Portobello’s case our Community Council boundaries extend into two neighbouring areas, as determined by the independent Boundaries Commission. The City Council did not plan to force a realignment of the community council boundaries, but if we chose to keep our present boundaries we would be expected to send representatives to the Craigentenny and Craigmillar LCPs as well as our own.

There was a lengthy discussion about the consequences of the requested change. Robert Gatliff pointed out that some places which were clearly part of Portobello, such as the Telferton allotments, were outwith the proposed boundaries. Cllr Perry responded that areas had been defined by the Boundaries Commission, who were politically independent but ignorant of local communities. Eileen Hewitt presented population figures, showing that Portobello Community Council currently represented some 16,000 people, Northfield 11,000 and Craigmillar 12,000, and with the realigned boundaries this would be about 13,000 each. Although our Community Council’s funding was presently proportional to the size of the population we represent, a probable new funding model would ensure that there was no financial penalty in our agreeing the new boundaries. It was widely regretted that Portobello High School was outwith the new Portobello area, but Maureen Child and Ian Perry were adamant that the High School could still send representatives to our Community Council. There was some concern that people on opposite sides of the same street might be in different wards; Ian Perry felt this was unavoidable, but that the number of occurrences had been minimised. John Stewart pointed out that Portobello Amenity Society would continue to cover what it regarded as the local community area regardless of arbitrary boundaries, but he was worried about possible conflicts with neighbouring

community councils over the allocation of resources. Maureen Child said the intention was not to have communities haggling over small sums but for people to be able to influence the direction of Council strategy and investment.

Eileen Hewitt requested that we make a decision on whether or not to have our boundaries realigned in time for the City Council meeting on 23rd February, to help with preparations for the community council elections in May.

- * **Action:** all, to comment to Robert Gatliff on whether or not to align our boundaries with the new ward boundaries.

235.5d Portobello High School: Maureen Child presented the City Council's latest plans, saying that the Council was very keen to rebuild the High School, and wanted a site with playing fields and funding for it. A large Council delegation had been to the School Board meeting to present its conclusion that the only suitable local site was Portobello Golf Course.

The overall plan currently being proposed by the City Council was therefore to create a new golf course in the green belt just outside Portobello, to build a new High School and primary school for St John's on the golf course, and sell off the current High School and St John's sites and some of the golf course for housing. This plan was being discussed with all interested parties, and various funding avenues were being explored.

Many points were made in the animated discussion which followed. The City Council had ruled out redevelopment of the present High School site for lack of space. A joint development with Holyrood High School had been ruled out because that was too far away, as was Seafield, where space could be available; the Freightliner site was inaccessible and the PowerLeague site too small. In response to a question about why the existing High School had been allowed to deteriorate so badly, Maureen Child said that it had been badly built in the first place and therefore too expensive to maintain, but she thought a new school would be built to higher standards. There were as yet no definite plans about how extensive or high a new school building would be. The Council had no plans to abandon religiously-segregated schools since these were protected by law. Bob Jefferson asked that the new proposal be considered rationally and objectively, without knee-jerk reactions, and he dismissed as idealistic the overwhelming support given at last October's public meeting for the retention of all Portobello's open spaces. John Stewart reminded the meeting that there was already a possibility of relocating the PowerLeague football pitches to the golf course land, which could potentially use up the whole site, and he was concerned that the green belt was already very vulnerable in the area proposed for the replacement golf course, meaning that this redevelopment might eventually destroy it altogether. Maureen Child viewed a new golf course as a way of protecting the green belt. In response to the suggestion that schools could share facilities like playing fields, Maureen Child said that this would eat too much into the time available for sports, though it was pointed out that such arrangements work successfully elsewhere. Dawson Currie regretted the loss of yet another leisure facility in eastern Edinburgh, along with Meadowbank and Leith Waterworld.

Anyone with a view on the proposals was invited to contact the Chairman or Secretary so that support or objections could be collated and forwarded to the City Council.

- * **Action:** all, to comment to Robert Gatliff or Nick Stroud on the City Council's proposal to build a new High School on Portobello Golf Course.

235.5e Community Council elections: the Secretary drew attention to a letter from Eileen Hewitt on the timetable for May's elections for a new Community Council. It was agreed to participate fully in these, as usual.

235.6 Future meetings

Meetings are held on the final Monday of each month, except July and December, at 7.30pm, in Portobello Baptist Church Hall, 185 Portobello High Street.

The next meeting is on 27th February 2006.

Subsequent dates are: 27th March 2006, 24th April 2006, 29th May 2006.