



PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the 237th meeting held on 27th March 2006 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall

Present: Maureen Child, Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, Gillian Dunn (Community Centre), Alix Gaffney, Robert Gatliff, Nora Mackenzie, Lawrence Marshall, Brenda Molony, Margaret Munro, Kenny Owen (Police), Avril Scott, Margaret Smith, Tom Smith, Sandy Smith, John Stewart, Nick Stroud, David Turner, Betty Young.

Apologies: Celia Butterworth, Susan Deacon, Kathleen Hart, Stephen Hawkins, Bob Jefferson, Brian McCrow, Dr McCulloch, George Murray, John Smart.

In attendance: Tom Ballantine, Jackie Brock, Richard Butt, Diana Cairns, J. Cameron, Alison Connelly, David Connolly, Jean Douglas, Andrew Fraser, Stephen McIntyre, Karen Maclean, David Simpson, William Wilson, Emma Wood and several others.

237.1 Chairman's welcome:

Robert Gatliff welcomed everyone to another very full meeting, and was pleased to see so many members of the public.

237.2 Minutes of the 236th Meeting:

The minutes were accepted: Proposed: Margaret Munro, Seconded: Tom Smith.

237.3 Matters Arising:

237.3a Task Force: The Secretary had yet to contact Ron Dymond's successor, Andrew Hunter, about various ongoing local issues. Maureen Child believed that some of these were already in hand.

- * **Action:** Secretary to contact Ron Dymond's successor in the Task Force.
- * **Action:** Task Force to let us know what items of street furniture we can "adopt" to support anti-graffiti measures.
- * **Action:** Task Force to arrange for graffiti in Joppa Quarry Park to be removed.
- * **237.3b 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.
- * **237.3c petition to the Parliament about jet-skis:** Diana Cairns has the wording for an e-Petition. Robert Gatliff agreed to discuss the problem with Big Things on the Beach. Ongoing.
- * **237.3d signage on Prom:** Maureen Child reported that Graham Paget of the City's Planning Department had apologised for not dealing with this yet, because he had been fully occupied with other major projects, but he would organise new signage as soon as he could. Ongoing.
- * **237.3e 'boardwalk' proposal:** it had been hoped to include a Powerpoint presentation about this in *Porty Online*, but Lawrence Marshall said that copyright restrictions prevented this. It was still hoped to get the Project Officer to a future meeting.

- * **Action:** Secretary to invite Stephen Hadjucki to a future meeting.

237.3f community council elections: nomination papers would be available from 11th to 25th April. Completed nomination forms must be received by the Returning Officer (Joyce Campbell in the Library) before 4pm on the 25th.

- * **237.3g Neighbourhood Watch:** Betty Young reported that there had not been much activity since Brian McCrow's departure. It was agreed that there was no need for Community Council involvement at this stage, though if local groups wanted any help from us they would be welcome to ask for it. Maria Devoy pointed out that there is an area of *Porty Online* for the use of Neighbourhood Watch groups.

237.3h the original town clock: Lawrence Marshall reported that the civic clock that used to adorn the front of the Baptist Church is now in storage.

- * **Action:** Lawrence Marshall to find out when our clock is to be returned.

237.3i Re-a-pier: there would be no further developments in this project until the end of April, when we would hear if a site visit would be required.

237.4 Portobello High School

Following the discussion at the last meeting, the Chairman had drafted a letter to the City Council on behalf of the Community Council, its main request being for a full analysis of all the possible options. He asked for comments on this which he would take into account before sending the letter.

A member of the public referred to the questionnaire results from last October's open meeting, pointing out that the results might have been different if people had been asked to choose between a new school and the retention of open spaces. The Chairman appreciated this point, and said it was now up to the City Council to organise a wider consultation.

Maureen Child said that the letter was wrong to claim that the City Council had decided to build on the golf course, since it was still in a consultation phase. She expressed disappointment that the relevant City councillors had attended every local meeting to which they had been invited but had not been invited to a meeting organised by the Community Council. She urged that as many meetings as possible be organised to tackle a full range of questions and anxieties before the formal consultation begins. A report was due to be sent to the City Council on 25th April, after which a definite position would be taken, either by the Executive or by the full Council. She asserted that there was not yet a "done deal".

John Stewart drew attention to a newsletter article which conveyed the strong impression that the golf course was the intended site, but Maureen Child continued to insist that no decision had yet been made.

A representative from PFANS (Portobello For A New School) said that the organisation had been set up to get the best possible new school for the town, and was keen to explore all the options.

Dawson Currie wanted to know if the consultation phase would involve one option or many, and if the former, who would decide the question to be put. Maureen Child replied that it would probably involve just one, but that things can change even during a formal consultation. Lawrence Marshall said that he had tried to get several extra options taken into account, since it would be difficult to get a genuine and fully representative debate over a single-option consultation. A member of the public suggested that single-issue groups should be able to work through the Community Council to get the best possible result.

The Chair of the School Board at the High School argued that only a debate on a single definite proposal could reach a definite conclusion, and that consideration of too many options was likely to end in confusion. He welcomed the idea that the Community Council should represent all shades of local opinion, and shouldn't take a firm stand for or against any specific proposal.

A member of the public drew attention to the Evening News story about the possibility of having two new secondary schools, and suggested that people would be making up their minds on the basis of too little real evidence. He suggested that golfers and Portobello Thistle might welcome the redevelopment if they looked at the plans.

Dawson Currie observed that there were fairly specific proposals about the number of new houses to be built and the sums they would raise, and wondered how the City Council could know this if they had not drawn up very detailed plans for the golf course redevelopment. Maureen Child said this was from experience of developing other sites in the City, and that the number of houses to be built on the various sites couldn't be known until more precise plans had been developed. Furthermore, it might be possible to get extra funding from the Scottish Executive, which would reduce the number of houses that would have to be built.

The Chairman summed up by wondering what the Community Council could best do next, options including a public meeting in the Town Hall, depending on when adequate information became available. It was generally agreed that more definite information was urgently needed, and that the Community Council had an important role to play in the development of what would become a major new community resource. Alix Gaffney suggested that a professional opinion poll might be needed.

- * **Action:** Chairman to send letter to the City Council summarising the Community Council's view on the proposal to build a new high school in Portobello.

237.5 Reports

237.5a Police: March had been a fairly quiet month from the police point of view. An elderly lady had been mugged in Bellfield Street, there had been four domestic break-ins, six minor road accidents, some vehicle crime, and 22 'youth calls', with the Youth Action Team continuing to make a difference.

There was general praise for the success of the Youth Action Team. In response to a question about the cost and benefit of the Team, Maureen Child said this had been very positive in a pilot scheme, which is why it had been extended to cover the whole City. She was concerned, though, that the Council had paid for an extra 72 police officers for youth work, but that these posts might have been filled by reallocation from other duties rather than new recruitment.

- * **Action:** Maureen Child to check that the Council is getting the extra police officers it is paying for.

237.4b Treasurer: The current balances were:

Treasurer's Account: £6,761.44; Joppa Tennis Courts: £5,488.28.

The Local Development Committee had donated £2,222 in support of the Helen Hopekirk events in May.

237.4c Joppa Tennis Courts: there was no report this time, but the Chairman pointed out that the new season was getting under way, and that all tennis players would be very welcome at the courts.

237.4d Task Force: no report this time.

237.4e Planning: John Stewart reported that an amended application had been made to build a new house in Argyle Crescent, that an application for a new house in Bath Street had been turned down, and that objections had been lodged against an extension in Morton Street and an advertising sign in Sir Harry Lauder Road. A member of the public expressed concern that the Community Council had objected to his proposal for a new house in Bath Street. Lawrence Marshall pointed out that this particular application had failed on significant grounds, and that the Community Council's opposition would not have been enough on its own to stop the development. He went on to welcome the general role of the Amenity Society and the Community Council in scrutinising all local planning applications, but emphasised that these groups had no more weight with the City's planning authorities than did any member of the public.

237.4f Portobello Traders: there was no report this time. The Chairman expressed his interest in getting a quote from one of our newest local businesses, Maddocks & Dick Ltd, for a Portobello tie.

- **Action:** Chairman to investigate the possibility of getting a Portobello tie.

237.4g Signs, Plaques and coade stone: John Stewart reported plans to erect plaques for Ned Barnie at Straiton Place and for Helen Hopekirk at 148 High Street. Alix Gaffney suggested that the presence in Portobello of Long John Silver's inspiration – W.E. Henley – should be commemorated, but Maria Devoy insisted that he originated from Moray, and it was agreed that he probably stayed too short a time in Portobello to be counted as a resident.

237.4h Portobello Neighbourhood Watch: in abeyance.

237.4i Portobello website: Maria Devoy reported that Portobello Telly was up and running, and that some interesting old footage would be added soon. Everyone was welcome – and encouraged – to tune in to the website.

237.4j Community development planning: the new group has not yet met.

- * **Action:** Chairman to arrange a meeting of this group as soon as possible.

237.4f Councillors: Maureen Child circulated her monthly report at the meeting. Lawrence Marshall spoke about the redevelopment of the High Street, and had borrowed the maps from the Library to show the details.

He sympathised with the people who had been distressed by the removal of the cherry trees, but pointed out that the Council had consulted the Amenity Society and a horticultural expert from the Royal Botanic Gardens, all of whom agreed that the trees could not be saved. They would be replaced with apple trees, three ginkgo trees would be moved from in front of the Bank of Scotland to Rosefield Park, and three new trees would be planted in line with the others. He would try and find new places in which to display the plans, and they are available in *Porty Online*.

237.5 Any Other Business

We have received a very gracious message from the Japanese PhD student who visited us last month, commenting on the strong sense of community spirit and activity in Portobello.

237.6 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 24th April 2006.

Subsequent dates are: 29th May 2006
 26th June 2006
 28th August 2006