



PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the 295th meeting held on 30th January 2012 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall

Present: Tom Ballantine, Sandra Blake, Archie Burns, Celia Butterworth, Diana Cairns, Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, Caroline Hosking, Peter McColl, Joe Madden (Portobello Open Door), Brenda Molony (*Portobello Reporter*), Andrew Patterson (Portobello Council of Churches), Eva Schonveld (PEDAL), David Scott (Portobello Community Centre), John Stewart (PAS), Nick Stroud, Ros Sutherland (PPAG), Anne Ward (PCATS), Sean Watters (Towerbank Parents Council), Frances Wraith (Brightons & Rosefield Residents).

Apologies: Robert Gatliff (Joppa Tennis Courts Club), Lawrence Marshall (Portobello Older People's Project), Leon Thompson, Sarah Woodford (City of Edinburgh Council), John Young (Portobello Police).

In attendance: Catherine Abbot, Cllr Mike Bridgman, Cllr Maureen Child, Catherine Francis, Kieran Gaffney, Cllr Stephen Hawkins, Ben McLeish (Gilberstoun Residents), Katie Quinn (CEC), Karen Wilson and several members of the public.

295.1 Chair's welcome

John Stewart welcomed everyone to the meeting. He congratulated Peter McColl on becoming the 54th Rector of the University of Edinburgh, and announced that Lilian Graham had retired from the Community Council; he had written thanking Lilian for her contributions and support.

295.2 Police report

Sgt. Young was unable to attend this meeting, but had circulated a report by email. The main points were that there had been a drop in reported crime and in vandalism, and a 50% drop in antisocial behaviour, compared with the same period last year; and that bogus callers were operating in Coillesdene, all local residents thus advised to ask for identification of anyone claiming to do work for them. He also circulated a list of active Neighbourhood Watch schemes in Portobello/Joppa, in response to a previous request.

(Sgt. Young's full report is appended to these minutes.)

295.3 Environmental update

Katie Quinn reported on a number of items. She is trying to get information about a bench at the Town Hall bus stops from the Parks Department or the Police. There are ongoing discussions between the Council's Roads and Waste departments about the recycling bins at Bridge Street and Windsor Place. Following the successful pilot of the Neighbourhood Pride project in the Craigtinny/Duddingston area, there are now plans to launch it in the Portobello/Craigmillar ward, probably starting in April this year. The Portobello Traffic Consultation generated over a hundred responses, which are currently being analysed; there will be an update on the results at the Neighbourhood Partnership meeting on 29th February at the White House. The traffic lights at the junction between the High Street and Fishwives' Causeway have been found to be working fine, but not synchronised with other lights along the High Street. The Council's Traffic Signals Section cannot afford to fix this at present but hope to do so in the next financial year.

295.4 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the November meeting were accepted without change: proposed by Diana Cairns seconded by Anne Ward.

295.5 Matters arising

295.5a Local Neighbourhood Watch schemes (294.2). Sgt. Young had circulated the list as requested.

295.5b Bench at Town Hall bus stops (294.3). *See item 295.3 above; ongoing.*

295.5c Recycling bins at Bridge Street (294.3). *See item 295.3 above; ongoing*

295.5d Joppa Tennis Courts (294.5d): the new JTC Club constitution had been circulated as requested, and was agreed to include all the requested changes. The Club is therefore now fully and formally part of the Community Council.

295.5e VAT on privatised Council services (294.5e). Stephen Hawkins asked Ben McLeish for information discussed at a previous meeting, in relation to the City Council's option of privatising services.

* **Action: Ben McLeish to give VAT information to Stephen Hawkins.**

295.5f 'Big W' public inquiry (294.5f). John Stewart said that the Reporter had requested further information from the City Council, so there was no decision yet.

295.5g Town Centre sub-group to consider ideas for new signs in Portobello (294.5i). The sub-group had not been able to meet, but Ben McLeish had met Sarah Woodford to work on a vision for Portobello which he would circulate shortly. John Stewart had passed on Paul Lambie's email address as requested. *Ongoing.*

295.5h Community Council survey (294.5k). The sub-group had met, and Sean Watters had carried out further analysis of the results of the survey. Sandra Blake pointed out that there was a lot of overlap with the work of the Town Centre sub-group and that the results needed to be published as soon as possible.

295.5i Repair of road surface in Brighton Place (294.5l): A letter from Andy Matheson said that this important road had been added to the 2014/2015 Road Capital Works Programme for improvement.

295.5j Buses to reduce speed in Brighton Place (294.5m). Diana Cairns had written to Lothian Buses to request this speed reduction but not yet received a response.

295.5k Strategic and Local Development Plans (294.7): John thanked everyone who had contributed to the collective responses, which he had circulated for comment and submitted by the relevant deadlines.

295.6 Agree Agenda and AOB

Various items were noted.

295.7 The Toddlers Hut

The subject of the Toddlers Hut was introduced by the two members of its staff and an independent community consultant, then the project architect Kieran Gaffney summarised the key elements of the proposal for a replacement building. The Toddlers Hut opened in its current premises in 1929 to allow mothers to go back to work, and is thought to be the oldest child-care facility in the UK. The present building is difficult to heat, is not wind- and water-tight, and is an easy target for vandalism. The design for an eco-friendly replacement building has been developed over a two-year period of consultation and research. The new building would be at the north end of the site, overlooking the Promenade, to make the best use of sunlight. It would contain two storeys, probably brick below and timber above, with a double pitched roof to deter vandals, and would use solar energy for heating. The plans were now being presented for public consultation, and if accepted a campaign would be launched to raise the £250,000 needed for construction.

Several points were made in subsequent discussion. Ben McLeish recommended the early involvement of the Care Commission and relevant officials in the City Council. The shelter whose roof gives easy access to the site could be moved to the back wall of the neighbouring playpark. John Stewart welcomed the overall plan but suggested that a different roof design be considered in order to minimise its impact on the view of the historic Tower from the Promenade; the architect used his interactive computer model to demonstrate that there would still be clear views of what he appreciated was a key local feature. The new building could be available for compatible community use outwith school hours.

There was general support for the project, and agreement that the Community Council would help in any way it could in the processes of planning and fund-raising. The next step was to hold a public consultation in the Library on Saturday 4th February, 1-4:30pm, with a presentation by the architect at 2pm.

* **Action: all, to consider visiting the presentation in the Library on 4th February.**

295.8 Proposal for a ‘shop local’ campaign

Eva Schonveld outlined the challenges facing Portobello’s shops, businesses and general community, and was keen that the Community Council should be more proactive in supporting and promoting them. Her researches into other communities facing the same challenges showed that a comparatively small effort could make a significant difference for little expense. She was keen to make the most of the opportunity provided by the work of the City Council’s local town centre manager, Sarah Woodford, to develop projects such as local currency that would produce lasting benefit. A number of Portobello’s traders were in attendance and made useful points, emphasising that they needed to be involved in any initiatives designed to support them; several volunteered to join a working group. The near-impossibility of access by car and over-zealous traffic wardens were mentioned, as was the over-supply of certain types of premises. Tom Ballantine observed that several complex issues were involved and that there wasn’t a single easy solution, but that the Beach House and the Espy demonstrated that it was possible to operate a successful business in Portobello without providing car parking. There was some comment that shops and the High Street itself had become tired-looking and unattractive, and that some spark of ‘quirkiness’ was needed to attract people. Sean Watters reported that the recent local survey indicated both concern and support for the High Street as major issues, and was keen for the Community Council to help in any way it could. Franny Wraith identified the three challenges for local shops as accessibility, variety and cost, with places like Asda and Tesco being the easiest options for working families; offering a low price was not enough on its own to counteract this. Inadequately-monitored licences for food retailing were mentioned as a problem. Maureen Child emphasised the role of the City Council in maintaining standards, and noted that one local business was operating without planning permission. Brenda Molony said that the *Portobello Reporter* was available to support any initiative to help local businesses.

It was agreed that the Community Council should do anything it could to help local businesses. Ben McLeish was asked to convene a meeting of the town-centre sub-group as soon as possible, involving local traders and Sarah Woodford, and to bring recommendations to the Community Council.

- * **Action: Ben McLeish to organise a meeting of the town-centre sub-group to identify initiatives for the Community Council to support.**

295.9 Keep Scotland Beautiful beach award

Celia Butterworth summarised the initiative to obtain a beach award so that Portobello would appear on the map of Scotland’s beaches. One of the requirements was that a map of local facilities should be on public display, and since Sarah Woodford’s budget would extend to creating a map but not to displaying it, she had asked to use a section of the community noticeboards at each end of the Promenade for this. Some alternatives were discussed but it was agreed that the noticeboards could be used until such alternatives were available. It was pointed out that this is not a City Council initiative being imposed on Portobello, but a local initiative that could help attract people to our shops and cafes.

295.10 All-night train noise

A Stanley Street resident outlined the problems of overnight noise and air pollution caused by a recent increase in the number and type of trains using the Craigenfinny rail depot. Responses received from rail companies and SEPA had proved unsatisfactory, though the Community Council’s involvement was helping to get better information. Mike Bridgman pointed out that the same problems had been experienced at Mountcastle. Maureen Child recommended the involvement of the City Council’s environmental health department and noise team. There was general agreement that such disruption was unacceptable, and puzzlement that train engines should be left running overnight when this was apparently not necessary to heat and light trains while they were being cleaned.

- * **Action: Diana Cairns and John Stewart to write to the East Coast train company supporting the residents’ concerns.**

295.11 Bellfield Street telephone box

John Stewart reported that BT was planning to remove the old red telephone kiosk at the junction between Bellfield Street and the High Street, and introduced local resident Steve Wheatley who was campaigning to

save the box as a local landmark. Redundant kiosks elsewhere in the UK have been used as book exchanges, art galleries and defibrillation stations. BT supports and encourages local charities and community councils to take on repair and maintenance of redundant kiosks through an 'adoption' scheme. It was agreed that the phone box should be saved, that the Community Council should help if possible, and that the cost of insuring it should be investigated. John Stewart asked for an estimate of costs to be circulated, and warned that a rapid decision might be required as BT was already planning to remove the box.

(There is information about BT's 'adopt a kiosk' scheme on the Web at http://www.payphones.bt.com/adopt_a_kiosk/HTML/payphone/)

- * **Action: Steve Wheatley to provide estimates of maintenance and removal costs, and to find out who owns the land where the telephone box is located.**
- * **Action: John Stewart to circulate the information provided by Steve Wheatley and request a decision on whether the Community Council should adopt this kiosk.**
- * **Action: Leon Thompson to investigate the cost of insuring the kiosk.**

295.12 Reports

295.12a Treasurer: John Stewart reported, on behalf of the Treasurer, payments of £67.15 to re-register the Community Council's website domain name, £34.75 for Christmas refreshments, £4 for photocopying and £50 for rental of Joppa Tennis Courts, the last item due to be reimbursed by the Tennis Club. This left £2,020.93 in the current account. Leon has been investigating the implications for our insurance policies of the disbanding of the Association of Scottish Community Councils at the end of April.

295.12b Neighbourhood Partnership: the meeting on 16th January had examined the outcomes of the traffic consultation, and there was general disappointment that the only recommendation was for the painting of more double-yellow lines. The issue was to be revisited at the next meeting, on 29th February.

295.12c Planning: John Stewart reported that the City Council had granted permission for the construction of new houses in the green belt at Newcraighall, but 20% fewer than had been requested. Mike Bridgman observed that all three local city councillors had opposed the development, and Ben McLeish expressed his disappointment that the well-run local campaign opposing the plans had been defeated (there are further details on the Gilberstoun Residents Association Facebook page).

John Stewart had submitted the Community Council's letter of objection to the planning application to demolish and rebuild 11 Rosefield Street after circulating the draft for comment.

295.12d Signs and Plaques: no report this time.

295.12e Community Centre: David Scott reported that the next management meeting would be on Tuesday 14th February.

295.12f Joppa Tennis Courts: no further report.

295.12g Councillors

Maureen Child circulated her usual written report. Mike Bridgman and Stephen Hawkins were as usual working on several local issues, and were currently heavily involved with the City Council's budget process.

295.13 Any Other Business

295.13a Library consultation: Diana Cairns had received little feedback on her request for input to the City Council's consultation on libraries, and would submit what she had got.

295.13b Alcohol sales: Nick Stroud had received some feedback on the City Council's consultation about alcohol sales outlets and would submit this.

295.13c Rosefield Park: Dawson Currie was concerned that the City Council seemed to have ignored the response to its own survey of public opinion on the redevelopment of Rosefield Park, and had removed far too much of its vegetation. Peter McColl offered to raise the issue at a Neighbourhood Partnership meeting if Diana Cairns provided the necessary information.

- * **Action: Diana Cairns to provide relevant information to Peter McColl.**

295.14 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, Edinburgh EH15 1EU.

The next meeting is on 27th February 2012

Subsequent dates are: 26th March 2012
30th April 2012
28th May 2012 (preceded by AGM)

Portobello Community Council on the Web: <http://www.portobellocc.org/>

The Safer Neighbourhood Team: tel: (0131) 652 4147
email: ADivSNTCraigmillarPortobello@lbp.pnn.police.uk

Portobello/Joppa Beat Update

Neighbourhood Watch

Information on Neighbourhood Watch and crime prevention advice can be found on the Association Of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches website. <http://www.aosnw.co.uk/>
Information/tweets from Lothian and Borders police can also be found on this site along with an article concerning metal theft, an issue raised at the previous meeting.

Crime Update

A 5% fall in A Division reported crime.
Locally there has been 50% reduction in anti-social behaviour calls in the Portobello/Joppa area compared to the same period last year. Vandalisms have also reduced, with a 10% increase in solvency compared to this time last year.

Appeal:

Bogus Caller – Request for Information

In the past week, there has been a number of Bogus Caller incidents in the Coillesdene area, involving elderly residents being approached by persons claiming to have carried out roofing work on their properties and requesting payment.

One of the suspects is described as white, early 20s, 5ft 10ins tall, with short brown hair, and a slim build. He was wearing a black and red sweater, and a dark jacket.

The other man is described as white, around 27-years-old, 5ft 9ins tall, slim build, and wearing beige clothing.

A suspicious black four-door saloon vehicle was also seen in the area at the time, with three men inside.

It is clear by their actions that the suspects have absolutely no qualms about targeting elderly victims, and we are keen for any information that can help us track them down.

Anyone with any information should contact Lothian and Borders Police on 0131 311 3131, or Crimestoppers in confidence and complete anonymity on 0800 555 111.

Preventative Action

At this time we are warning people to be on their guard against anyone calling at their door claiming to be there to collect payment for roofing work, or offering to carry out any other type of unsolicited work.

We urge anyone who receives an unsolicited call at their property by any individual claiming to be employed by a company or organisation to **ask for identification**.

If you are still not satisfied, then you should deny them access, and contact the organisation they claim to represent to verify their identity.

Similarly, if you have any suspicions over the intentions of any cold caller, you should contact police immediately.

Further information on how people can guard against falling victim to bogus callers is available on the Lothian and Borders Police website, in the Crime Prevention section.

Safer Neighbourhood Team officers are patrolling the area and have spoken with a number of residents. Letters seeking information that may assist in tracing those responsible have also been delivered with additional crime prevention advice.

Unfortunately several homes across the East Neighbourhood have recently been targeted. Individuals have been arrested, but it is important not to be complacent.

Local Policing/Community Priorities

At the Neighbourhood Community Safety Sub Group meeting held on 18th January it was decided to continue with the following priorities:

1. Tackle and reduce fly-tipping at Greendykes and Wauchope areas
2. Tackle and reduce anti-social behaviour at Thistle Foundation
3. Improve road safety around local primary schools

Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) – On the Beat

The SNT continue to listen to your concerns and endeavour to tackle and/or find solutions to areas of complaint. We are currently aware of a recent upsurge of anti-social behaviour at Quarry Park, Rosefield Park, Portobello High Street and Eastfield. As a result of increased patrols a number of youths have been identified and positive action taken.

You can contact your community policing team on:

Tel: 0131 652 4147 (office)

Tel: 0131 311 3131 (24hours)

email: ADivSNTCraigmillarPortobello@lbp.pnn.police.uk