



PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the 248th meeting held on 30th April 2007 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall

Present: Robert Gatliff (Chair), Nick Stroud (Secretary), Kathleen Hart (Treasurer), Celia Butterworth, Diana Cairns, Dawson Currie, Peter McColl, Karen McLean, Brenda Molony, Margaret Munro, Tom Nimmo, Stephen Hawkins, Bob Jefferson, Margaret Smith, Tom Smith, John Stewart, Sean Watters, William Wilson.

Apologies: Maria Devoy, Alix Gaffney, Stephen McIntyre, Sheila Scott, David Turner, Betty Young.

In attendance: Archie Burns, Lezley Cameron, Ian Campbell, Cllr Maureen Child, Eileen Cook, Caroline Hosking, Cllr Lawrence Marshall, Margaret O'Neill, Kenny Owen, Marianne Russell, Honor Thomson (Wiszniewski Thomson Architects), Aileen Ward, Anne Ward, Norman Ward, Ian Wilson.

248.1 Chairman's welcome

Robert Gatliff welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanked all involved with the successful hustings event on the 18th, and insisted that – with the elections just three days distant – no one should try to make any political points on this occasion.

He first introduced Honor Thomson, to report on behalf of the Cadell2 Partnership which had been appointed to draw up a master plan for the development of North West Portobello.

248.2 Redevelopment of North West Portobello

Honor Thomson represented the partnership of urban designers which had been appointed by the City of Edinburgh Council following an open competition to draw up an overall development plan to make the best use of the substantial areas of western Portobello now liable for change of use. She was aware of the history of the area, and of the need to move carefully and sensitively, so the plan was to start with a fact-finding evening with representatives from all the groups and institutions in the community, and she asked for suggestions of people to be invited. The consultants would collect information from the meeting and draw up several options which would be presented at a major public event, probably in June, at which anyone would be welcome to drop in and offer feedback. A strategic master plan would then be drawn up to meet as many as possible of the community's requirements. It was recognised to be a great challenge, but the consultants liked Portobello and were keen to make it even better.

Caroline Hosking hoped that local residents would be closely involved in the planning, since they were particularly concerned about possible outcomes. Robert Gatliff asked why the preliminary meeting was not to be open to everyone; Honor Thomson responded that the Cadell2 Partnership was experienced in running such meetings and found that larger meetings were difficult to manage. Stephen Hawkins wondered why the process had to be carried out so quickly when we had been waiting two years for it to begin, and was told that it was due to pressure from the City Council; while the intention was to have a strategy by the Autumn, that was not a fixed deadline and could be put back if necessary. William Wilson wondered if there was a target population for the area; this would depend on the balance of the mixed use required by the City Council, so a figure might emerge during the consultation.

John Stewart was concerned that the developers of the Funpark site seemed to be making detailed plans without waiting for the publication of the overall plan; Honor Thomson thought this was why the City Council wanted the overall plan to be published as quickly as possible.

248.3 Redevelopment of the Funpark site

Ian Campbell gave a short presentation on behalf of the Funpark Action Group, which had been set up in response to the amended design brief which had not taken sufficient account of local comments. The Group

was not opposed to a housing development on the site, just to the proposed scale and its impact on the beach, the kilns and neighbouring houses. Much of the beach lies in front of low-rise housing, but the proposed development would obscure a great length of the beach from sunshine. The proposal to raise the ground-floor flats would give privacy to the occupants as intended, but would have a negative impact on passers-by. The kilns are unique in Scotland and therefore a very important part of our national heritage; they could easily be damaged during construction of the flats, would in any case be totally overshadowed by the development, and could be cut off from the public at the whim of the flats' owners. The neighbouring housing on the site of the old potteries was a well-thought-of example of 'courtyard housing'. The proposed development would lead to a big increase in traffic in narrow streets, damaging amenity for both residents and visitors.

Robert Gatliff pointed out that more accommodation was needed in Portobello. There was general agreement with this, but also a demand that it be suitable and appropriate, and there was concern at the suggestion that the City Council had waived the requirement for affordable housing to be included. Ian Campbell expressed a wish for a much smaller development, at a scale and appearance matching the neighbouring courtyard housing. William Wilson pointed out that while the architects had indeed designed a building of the same height as others on the Promenade, it was far wider than anything else; John Stewart agreed that the developers had been selective in presenting the context of their work. He was further concerned that artist's impressions suggested that some garden fences would be removed to improve views.

Honor Thomson confirmed that the brief to the Cadell2 Partnership included the kilns and the Figgate Burn corridor, which were considered of primary importance in the area. Kathleen Hart wondered why we needed to worry about this development proposal if it was going to be subject to the requirements of the overall plan for the area; Maureen Child responded that this was the hope, but it was not guaranteed. John Stewart reported that he had obtained an extension to the consultation period for the development proposals on behalf of the Community Council and Amenity Society, and Robert Gatliff agreed to write saying that we wanted this development to take full account of the North West Portobello Masterplan, with full public consultation over definitive plans. Caroline Hosking suggested that it was also important to report our concerns to Francis Newton of the City Council.

- * **Action: Robert Gatliff to write to the Funpark developers and to Francis Newton, outlining the Community Council's concerns.**

248.4 High School update

Aileen Ward reported on what had been a busier year than usual at the High School. Following a recent visit HM inspectors had praised pastoral care, range of activities and partnerships with other agencies. The calendar had raised £300 for school funds, with a few copies still available from the School at half price. The School was hoping to become the first in Scotland to be awarded three green flags for its environmental initiatives, though the qualification to be an 'eco-school' had recently been raised to four flags. Work with a small number of pupils in the youth justice programme had paid dividends in improving behaviour and it was hoped this would continue. The School was working with the Youth Action Team to tackle alcohol problems. There was to be a Citizenship Focus event on 8th June involving the police, fire brigade and first aid training, arising out of pupils' wishes to be useful in the community. Other citizenship activities included a meeting with politicians, a session with rescued cats and dogs, and organising parties for older people.

In the School's mock election, Robin Harper, Jack McConnell and Alex Salmond had won.

Diana Cairns mentioned that High School pupils were still throwing away a lot of food packaging; Aileen Ward assured the Community Council that the School was constantly working hard to minimise the problem.

248.5 Minutes of the last meeting

Kathleen Hart (who had missed the previous meeting) pointed out that the rent paid to the Baptist Church for use of their hall for our meetings (minute 247.9b) was actually £50 for four meetings, and that the proposal was to increase this to £60. With this correction the minutes were accepted: proposed by Stephen Hawkins, seconded by Margaret Smith.

248.6 Matters arising from March meeting

248.6a Waste transfer facility (minute 247.4b)

A City Council representative had accepted an invitation to a future meeting.

248.6b High Street redevelopment onsite meeting (minute 247.4c)

A meeting was being arranged with Stuart Smith of the City Council. Margaret Smith drew attention to the urgency of this in view of the widespread 'ponding' in the recent rains.

248.6c Traffic problems at Milton Link and road safety DVD (minute 247.4c)

A reply was awaited from the City Council.

248.6d Road safety in Portobello, and police presence at our meetings (minute 247.4c)

See item 248.7a below.

248.6e Baptist Church deeds (minute 247.4d)

Robert Gatliff did not have a copy of the deeds, but gave other relevant information to Lawrence Marshall.

248.6f Baptist Church clock (minute 247.4d)

Lawrence Marshall was still investigating options about this.

248.6g Letter to chair of School Board at High School (minute 247.4e)

This was in hand.

248.6h Letter to City Council on plans for Meadowbank (minute 247.4f)

Robert Gatliff had not received any comments to help him draft a letter about the plans to redevelop Meadowbank, so would write expressing general concerns about the loss of important sports facilities. There was a rumour that the City Council was considering refurbishing Meadowbank rather than replacing it, so he would also ask City Development for further details; Celia Butterworth offered to provide the contact details.

248.6i Council expectations from Meadowbank sale (minute 247.7f)

The Council's financial calculations had yet to be ascertained.

248.6j PCC representative for the Neighbourhood Partnership (minute 247.5)

Maureen Child suggested that the Chairman, Secretary or other nominee should attend meetings to begin with, to establish our presence until a permanent representative could be identified.

248.6k Community Council constitution (minute 247.8)

The correct version had been identified, and would be circulated to all members.

248.6l Police staff levels and team duties in Portobello (minute 247.9a)

See item 248.7a below.

248.6m Funds for maintenance of Harry Lauder Garden (minute 247.9b)

Dawson Currie was still pursuing possible sources of funding, with at least one possibility in mind.

248.6n City Council to be asked to maintain Harry Lauder Garden (minute 247.9b)

A request had been made and a reply was awaited.

248.6o Thanks to Baptist Church for use of hall (minute 247.9b)

Tom Smith had passed on our thanks to the Church authorities.

248.6p Report from Joppa Tennis Courts (minute 247.9c)

See item 248.7c below.

248.6q Task Force News (minute 247.9d)

A request had been made and a reply was awaited.

248.6r Community Development Planning (minute 247.9i)

A meeting was being arranged.

248.7 Reports

248.9a Police: the police had dealt with around 1,000 calls in April, slightly less than expected, but with slightly more than usual on the High Street, and an increase in calls involving youths, some of whom came from as far away as Haddington. The Youth Action Team were keeping busy, trying to find out what attracted young people to Portobello, and working with local schools on road safety. Tom Nimmo related his experience in trying to contact the police to report a large group of youths around the Library, and playing football on the bowling green: there had been no response from the Police Station, the Crimestoppers number was not for emergency calls, and it had taken a long time to get help from the call centre. William Wilson pointed out that older people feel intimidated by large groups of young people and asked why there was so little CCTV locally. Inspector Ward thought that youth problems were getting worse in Craightinny but not in Portobello, and that some young people are attracted to Porty because they feel safer here; Edinburgh as a whole doesn't suffer too badly from youth-related problems, although problems involving alcohol are increasing. Maureen Child said that young people gather in large groups for their own safety, and were attracted to CCTV cameras for the same reason. Much of the vandalism attributed to young people in general was in fact due to adults and to a very small number of youths. Inspector Ward agreed to revive an existing plan for local CCTV and take it up with the City Council after the election.

A member of the public said that there were not enough police officers on Portobello's streets. Inspector Ward reported that 45 officers are based here, the local area having recently been adjusted so that it no longer goes all the way to Easter Road but does now include Holyrood Park. The transfer of experienced officers to Youth Action Teams was posing a significant problem as they were being replaced by much newer recruits who faced a steep learning curve to settle into the job. It was also frustrating that a major incident could subsequently require a whole shift to be lost to court duty. If Scotland were to recruit another 1,500 police officers, as some politicians were urging, this would result in less than one extra officer per shift in Portobello – so 1,500 was obviously not enough. The City Council appeared to be sympathetic, but limits are set by the Executive.

Inspector Ward agreed that there were severe traffic problems resulting from the replacement of the Milton Road roundabout, but he could not spare any officers to tackle these, even just during rush hours.

* **Action: Inspector Ward to discuss plans for CCTV in Portobello with the City Council.**

248.9b Treasurer: The current balances were:

Treasurer's Account: £2,799.13; Joppa Tennis Courts: £9,078.28.

The Treasurer had drawn up the accounts ready for the AGM in May and asked for Community Council members to audit them; Margaret Smith and Celia Butterworth volunteered.

248.9c Joppa Tennis Courts: The Chairman and Treasurer had attended the Joppa Tennis Courts AGM in March and found the club in good shape, with membership increasing. Children's coaching would begin on 1st May and was likely to be popular. There was a desire to have the courts resurfaced, but this would be expensive and was therefore a long project.

248.9d Task Force: no report this time.

248.9e Planning: John Stewart reported on a flurry of applications. Car parking space in the garden at 21 Bath Street had been rejected because this was not a 'new build' as no. 19 had been. Permission had been granted to build a new residence at the back of 11–13 Bellfield Lane, meaning that a new street was effectively growing down the back gardens here. Objections had been lodged to the plan to put two extra doors into the original frontage of the Blue Bean coffee house; to the planned signage where the Pop Inn was being converted into a William Hill betting shop, which was completely unsympathetic to the local conservation area; to an application to convert the Labour Party rooms to housing; to a plan to build mews houses in St Mary's Lane; and to the visual impact of the new British Heart Foundation charity shop in one of the town's vacant shops.

248.9f Signs, Plaques and coadestone: Celia Butterworth drew attention to Edinburgh's Public Gardens Open Day on 5th May, which included the John Street Community Garden.

248.9g Portobello Traders: no report this time.

248.9h Portobello Online: Bob Jefferson reported that a new committee had been established to oversee the website, comprising himself along with Maria Devoy, Brenda Molony, John Stewart and Nick Stroud. Kathleen Hart would continue to act as the project's treasurer.

248.9i Community development planning: no report this time.

248.9j Community Centre: no report this time.

248.9k Councillors:

No reports were permitted on this occasion since the election campaign was under way.

248.10 Any Other Business

248.10a Lifeboat appeal: Brenda Molony asked for volunteers to help with the lifeboat collection on 5th May.

248.10b pedestrian crossings: Dawson Currie was worried about the increased danger to pedestrians from changes made to local crossings. Maureen Child agreed to find out from Council officials why the timings of the crossing beside the police station had been changed.

* **Action: Maureen Child to investigate changes to pedestrian crossing beside police station.**

248.10c May and June meetings: The May meeting would be our AGM, when we would be able to fill our vacancies and update our constitution. The June meeting would be our 250th, when we would be pleased to welcome all past members and friends of Portobello Community Council.

* **Action: Secretary to circulate constitution.**

* **Action: Secretary to circulate updated membership list and constitution following the May meeting.**

* **Action: all, to invite former members of the Community Council to the June meeting.**

248.11 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 30th April 2007.

Subsequent dates are: 28th May 2007 (including the AGM)
25th June 2007 (our 250th meeting)
27th August 2007
24th September 2007