



# PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## **DRAFT Minutes of the 258th meeting held on 28th April 2008 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall**

**Present:** Robert Gatliff (Chair), Nick Stroud (Secretary), Kathleen Hart (Treasurer)  
Celia Butterworth, Diana Cairns (PCATS), Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, Caroline Hosking, Bob Jefferson  
(*Party Online*), Peter McColl (PEDAL), Tom Nimmo (Brighton Residents), David Scott (Portobello  
Community Centre), Margaret Smith (Portobello Labour Party), Tom Smith, John Stewart (PAS),  
Sean Watters (PFANS).

**Apologies:** Jet Cameron (PPAG), James Hunter (CEC), Lawrence Marshall, Brenda Molony  
(*Party Reporter*), Margaret Munro (Portobello History Society), Kenneth Owen (Police), Sheila Scott  
(Merchants & Hoteliers), David Turner (Portobello Amnesty Group), William Wilson.

**In attendance:** Archie Burns, Cllr Maureen Child, Cllr Stephen Hawkins, Kenny MacAskill MSP,  
Scott Thomson (CEC), Anne Ward, Margaret Williamson (High School), Frances Wraith.

### **258.1 Chair's welcome**

Robert Gatliff opened the meeting with the sad news that Community Councillors Nora Mackenzie and Sandy Smith had both died in the preceding month. The Community Council observed a minute's silence to remember Nora, Sandy, and Alix Gaffney and Betty Young who died last year.

### **258.2 Primary school art event**

The Chair of the School Board at the High School requested that notice be given of an exhibition in the Town Hall on the afternoon and evening of Friday 23rd May, where there will be pictures by children of the High School's six feeder primary schools to illustrate what they would like to see as part of their new High School. The exhibition is being portrayed as the largest multi-school culture event ever held in Portobello, and judges will include Tom Farmer, Kenny MacAskill, Sebastian Tombs and Lynn Hanley.

### **258.3 Edinburgh City Local Plan**

Robert Gatliff referred to a letter he had received from Alan Henderson inviting the Community Council to participate in a planning meeting on 15th May which would prepare for a public enquiry in September to consider the objections to the Local Plan. The Community Council had objected to the proposal to redevelop the Meadowbank site (this had now been withdrawn from the Plan); to the proposal to build several hundred houses at Newcraighall; and to the specific proposal for the new High School. Since the community was split over the site for the new High School, it was suggested that it would be better for PFANS and PPAG to represent their own views at this pre-meeting rather than have the Community Council try to represent the whole community.

- \* **Action:** PPAG and PFANS representatives to contact Robert Gatliff if they would like to attend the planning meeting on 15th May.

### **258.4 Investing in young people**

David Turner had suggested at a previous meeting that we should explore ways of providing more for young people in our community, but it was agreed that with our limited resources it was difficult to find out what was needed. Margaret Williamson reported that High School pupils were generally too busy to participate in the Community Council and advise us on the views of young people. It was suggested that we should contact the youth leaders at the Community Centre, and Community Education, to seek their advice. Maureen Child suggested that groups who had achieved something noteworthy – like participating in a

debate at the Parliament – could give a presentation about it to the Community Council. Nick Stroud suggested that the Community Council sponsor a Summer ‘shop window’ event for the High School in the Town Hall, and a prize for contribution to the community; it was agreed that it would be too late to organise this in the current session, but the idea should be discussed in August for session 2008–2009.

- \* **Action:** Secretary to seek advice on facilities for young people from the Community Centre and Community Education Service.

## **258.5 Sovereign House development**

The Chairman reported on a meeting involving himself, the Secretary and Sovereign House about the redevelopment of the former recreation site next to the Jewel College and behind the King’s Manor Hotel. A large number of flats are being built on the site of the old Richard Corsey bowling club, and a new development is proposed on the College’s old playing field to the south of that. The company already had outline planning permission for this, and would be applying shortly for full planning permission for a mix of housing and flats. They would probably be consulting the Amenity Society about their plans, and could give a presentation to the Community Council if asked.

## **258.6 Common Good**

Stephen Hawkins reported that the City Council had accepted that Portobello Park was a Common Good asset, given to Portobello as a ‘dowry’ in the 1896 merger. He felt that the Town Hall and Swimming Pool site should be in the same category, but it was hard to find out since the City Council did not publish a register of Common Good assets. There was general agreement that it would be helpful to know the status of these public possessions, and that everything possible should be done to protect community assets.

- \* **Action:** Stephen Hawkins to look into the Common Good status of the Town Hall and Swimming Pool site.

## **258.7 North West Portobello Master Plan**

Diana Cairns pointed out that the consultants’ plan for the redevelopment of North West Portobello would be considered by the City Council planning committee on 15th May, and it was important to oppose any unsatisfactory elements in it, as experience with the ‘Caltongate’ plan showed that quite draconian measures could be taken if permitted by such plans. Maureen Child said that the three local City councillors would receive copies of the document at a briefing on 2nd May, and it was due to be made public on the 8th; she believed that substantial changes had been made to the one presented to the community a few months previously. The Secretary was asked to circulate key points of the plan as soon as possible, so that a decision could be taken on whether to send a delegation to the City Council meeting. The Chairman was asked to write to the City Council to find out if a Master Plan of this kind can be submitted to a Planning Enquiry.

- \* **Action:** Secretary to circulate key points in the latest plan once known.
- \* **Action:** Secretary to circulate details of the planning committee meeting when known.
- \* **Action:** Chairman to write to City Council to find out the legal status of a Master Plan, and whether it can be taken to a planning enquiry.

## **258.8 Waste transfer proposal**

Diana Cairns reported a rumour that the Viridor application would be considered by the City Council’s planning committee in May and was quite likely to be accepted, especially as SEPA had withdrawn its objections. A number of anxieties remained: there were big differences between Viridor’s public and private pronouncements, with for example 920 daily lorry movements rather than 200; Viridor had not provided the public information they promised; the value of neighbouring properties could be reduced; and there was already a big problem from pests in the area. Diana Cairns agreed to retrieve relevant information from the City Council website, for the Secretary to circulate. Maureen Child agreed to try and get the planning report released to the public early, to give us more time to analyse it. Dawson Currie suggested that we should add SEPA’s original objections to our own. Maureen Child reported that the City Council’s waste strategy depended on negotiations with the Government, and would not be ready for some time; it was possible that even if the City Council refused to use the proposed site at Portobello, Viridor would ship in enough waste from all over Scotland to make the transfer station financially viable.

- \* **Action:** Diana Cairns to check City Council website for information about this application.
- \* **Action:** Secretary to circulate City Council information.
- \* **Action:** Maureen Child to request early publication of the report on this application.

## **258.9 Telferton allotments**

A new housing company had taken over the Telferton site and was seeking a meeting with the allotments committee to discuss development proposals. Further details were required and awaited. New Scottish legislation to protect allotments was due in 2009, but this might not be soon enough for Telferton. The City Council had given the allotments the strongest protection it could in the Local Plan.

## **258.10 Community Council AGM**

Robert Gatliff drew attention to various matters which he hoped could be settled at the following month's AGM. We now had four vacancies due to the deaths of four of our colleagues, and a fifth due to the long-term indisposition of another member. The City Council had been asked to advise us on how we could fill these vacancies. The election of a new Community Council in May 2009 had been deferred to October, to avoid a clash with the European elections. Robert Gatliff felt that he had not been able to do justice to the Chair's job because of increased work commitments, and therefore proposed to stand down at the AGM; Nick Stroud was in the same position as Secretary. All members were invited to consider standing for these posts.

- \* **Action: All,** to consider standing for election to Chair or Secretary of the Community Council.

## **258.11 Kenny MacAskill**

The local Member of the Scottish Parliament was welcomed on his first substantive visit to the Community Council.

Mr MacAskill gave a brief presentation before responding to specific questions. He agreed with the need for a new High School and said that the Government had provided the Council with the funds to build it, though it was right that specific priorities for new schools should be set by councils, not by central government. He had met with Viridor about the waste transfer station proposal, and was due to meet Sovereign House about their housing development proposals. He was in discussions about problems at the Seafield waste treatment works, and felt that the problems were partly due to Scottish Water not owning the site. He was working to achieve a more visible police presence and to tackle alcohol-related problems across all ages and classes; there were calls to increase the legal age for drinking alcohol to 21, but he felt it would be more productive to encourage young people to drink sensibly. He was also worried by reports of a world-record drugs harvest in Afghanistan this year.

Maureen Child quoted statements from the City Council's Director of Finance which implied that the Government had only provided 20% of the funds needed for the city's new secondary schools; this difference of opinion was not resolved.

Mr MacAskill was asked to oppose inappropriate proposals in the North West Portobello Master Plan; he agreed to do so, and asked to be kept informed of developments. He supported the City Council's plans for Meadowbank. He also supported the idea of a hovercraft crossing of the Forth, though felt that Leith was the more sensible destination for it as this would be where most of the commuters would be working; however the Government was content to leave the initiative with transport planners and providers.

Mr MacAskill said the Government was examining possibilities for new fiscal powers. He opposed the Council tax and was pleased that it had been frozen as this protected a lot of older people who had had difficulty paying it. The SNP would prefer to have a Local Income Tax to raise Council funding, but the Government might not be able to get the necessary support to achieve this. It was setting up the Scottish Futures Trust as a more acceptable way than PPP/PFI to bring private money into public projects.

## **258.12 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The action mentioned in 257.3 of making a donation to the new group Friends of Figgate Park was incorrect: the decision was that we could make a 'corporate donation' at some point in the future if that would be useful. In item 257.12f, there were 24 pieces of the new top for the coade-stone pillar, not 32. With these corrections the minutes were approved: proposed Celia Butterworth, seconded Maria Devoy.

## **258.13 Matters arising from February meeting**

### **258.13a new planting at Eastfield (minute 257.4)**

- \* *John Stewart and James Hunter are still to meet to discuss this; ongoing.*

### **258.13b reinstatement of marker buoys (minute 257.5)**

- \* *Diana Cairns to write to the City Council requesting this; ongoing.*

### **258.13c Chairman to write to City Council urging replacement High School (minute 257.6)**

*Robert Gatliff had modified his draft letter to take account of the comments made at the previous meeting, and sent the new letter to the City Council. He circulated copies for information. Completed.*

### **258.13d damaged door on community noticeboard (minute 257.7)**

- \* *James Hunter is investigating this; ongoing.*

### **258.13e new area map for community noticeboards (minute 257.7)**

- \* *Nick Stroud is working on this; ongoing.*

### **258.13f Community Council information in community noticeboards (minute 257.7)**

- \* *Secretary to arrange; ongoing.*

### **258.13g train station for Portobello (minute 257.8)**

- \* *Secretary to write in support of the South Suburban Railway; ongoing.*

### **258.13h updated membership list and constitution (minute 257.11c)**

- \* *This is ongoing with the Secretary, to be done after the AGM and filling of current vacancies.*

### **258.13i Secretary to supply missing minutes to website (minute 257.11d)**

- \* *Ongoing.*

### **258.13j City Council 'communication' grant (minute 257.11f)**

- \* *Robert Gatliff had completed the application form and assembled supporting documentation; ongoing.*

### **258.13k the Baptist Church clock (minute 257.11g)**

- \* *This is ongoing with Stephen Hawkins.*

### **258.13l display of Calor Gas awards in the Library (minute 257.11h)**

- \* *Robert Gatliff to discuss this with the Librarian; ongoing.*

### **258.13m rat-running traffic on the western Promenade (minute 257.11i)**

- \* *Scott Thomson reported that new bollards had been ordered, and he agreed to check on the progress of their reinstatement.*

### **258.13n Secretary to invite Cllr Mike Bridgeman to our meetings (minute 257.11j)**

- \* *Ongoing.*

### **258.13o making young people feel part of the community (minute 257.11k)**

*Done; see item 4 above.*

### **258.13p Secretary to write to Brian Greatorex in support of his application for a grant to fund youth work (minute 257.13b)**

*In hand.*

## **258.14 Reports**

**258.14a Police:** no report this time.

**258.14b Treasurer:** Treasurer's Account: £2,883.61; Joppa Tennis Courts: £9,031.30.

The Treasurer had sent a donation of £25 to St Columba's Hospice on the Community Council's behalf, in memory of Nora Mackenzie.

The Treasurer agreed to distinguish in her future financial reports between our own money and money ring-fenced for specific items, since at present we appear to have more 'disposable' money than we actually do.

**258.14c Joppa Tennis Courts:** repairs are ongoing to prepare the courts for the new season.

**258.14d Environmental Update:** Scott Thomson reported on James Hunter's behalf. Grass-cutting was now well under way, there had been some planting along the railway line, the Community Garden had been tidied up, and Community Service workers would be working in the Figgate Park for about five months. The Friends of Figgate Park were concerned that the maintenance would disturb nesting birds; Scott Thomson responded that the City Council was aware of this danger and was taking care to minimise the impact on wildlife. There were complaints that the work in Sir Harry Lauder Road had begun at 6am on a Sunday morning, disturbing neighbours; Scott Thomson reported that this was because the police had complete power in authorising road closures, and they had stipulated these antisocial hours. The Secretary was asked to write to protest against this antisocial behaviour by the police. A complaint was made about litter around the Matelan warehouse; Scott Thomson pointed out that this was not City Council land, but he agreed to investigate. The City Council was thanked for renewing the seafront railings at Eastfield.

\* **Action:** Secretary to write to the police asking that they do not force noisy work to be carried out in quiet neighbourhoods at antisocial hours.

\* **Action:** City Council to investigate reports of excessive litter at Matelan warehouse.

**258.14e Planning:** John Stewart reported that there were no new local applications.

**258.14f Signs, Plaques and coadestone:** Celia Butterworth reported that the laminated covering of the John Street board had been renewed.

**258.14g Portobello Traders:** no report this time. Sheila Scott was reported to be retiring, so a new representative would be required.

**258.14h Party Online:** Bob Jefferson drew attention to a good showing of High School artwork in the galleries section.

**258.14i Portobello High School:** Margaret Williamson gave an overview of some key news from the High School. The School had become the first high school in the Lothians to achieve the highest of the Health Promoting School Awards, allowing pupils to investigate such issues as mental health, reducing exam stress, healthy eating, education for sustainability and links with the community. Next session, the School will be joining forces with Keep Edinburgh Beautiful on a major anti-litter project. The School was currently working towards the Art Competition / exhibition on 23rd May in the Town Hall. Several pupils were involved in a Jazz Project working with respected Scottish Jazz musicians. The Senior Rugby team had won two 7s competitions, the S1 football team had reached the final of the Scottish Cup, the S1 Basketball Team had become Scottish Cup winners, and other teams had done almost as well.

Exams were about to begin, so pupils would legitimately be out and about during school hours. One consequence of the suspension of normal classes was that the Home Economics department was offering cookery lessons to older local people who might find themselves newly living alone; these would be taking place on the four ensuing Tuesday mornings with further details available from the School (669 2324).

**258.14j Community development planning:** although a few initiatives were being pursued behind the scenes, the group was effectively waiting to get going again in the Autumn.

**258.14k Community Centre:** David Scott reported that Maggie Le May's retirement event had been very enjoyable, and that the Committee had met in early April to consider her replacement. Interviews were about to be conducted and the new person appointed by the time of the AGM, which would be at 7:30pm on 13th May at the Community Centre.

**258.14l Communicating with communities:** no report this time.

**258.14m Neighbourhood Partnership:** Peter McColl reported on the recent meeting and on various other current issues. The meeting had been largely taken up with a presentation on the draft community development plan, and had approved grants for a Summer camp and a youth group. There had been a discussion of the naming strategy for new streets in the area and a new cemetery (details of these were

subsequently circulated by Maureen Child). The next meeting would be on 25th June at the High School, when the major topic would be traffic and transport in Craigmillar.

Robert Gatliff reported on his attendance with Dawson Currie and Nick Stroud at a City Council training event for community councillors, at which it had been clear that Neighbourhood Partnerships were not working well where they were based on electoral wards rather than actual communities. Stephen Hawkins said that the review to be undertaken after the first year would look at that aspect; the pilot Neighbourhood Partnership in Leith had taken 18 months to settle down.

Robert Gatliff drew attention to several forthcoming training events for community councillors: 'committee skills' on 6th May; roles and responsibilities on 14th and 27th May; and the third session in a series on 'involving the community', on 21st May. Details are available from the Secretary.

- \* **Action: All**, to contact the Secretary if interested in attending any community council training sessions.

#### **258.14n Councillors:**

Maureen Child circulated her report at the meeting. She drew particular attention to some transport aspects. The no. 69 bus was to remain as at present for the time being, with a new low-floor bus. Real-time bus-tracking was to be installed in conjunction with the replacement of the King's Road roundabout, where work was due to start at the end of May. Pedestrians and bus passengers were alike dissatisfied with the timing of the traffic lights on the pedestrian crossing at the Town Hall; the City Council traffic engineers had offered to meet the community's wishes on this, so a neighbourhood consultation was required.

Stephen Hawkins raised a number of issues. The redevelopment of North West Portobello would require the creation of several new streets, which would need to be named. Portobello Rugby Club was doing very well, and he suggested that congratulations should be sent from the Community Council. The City Council had received a request from an Eastfield resident to buy a strip of land to be turned into a garden. There were mixed feelings about this, though some anxiety that the land could be sold cheaply and lead to a much greater increase in the value of the property. The Amenity Society was opposed to the sale, and the Community Council was inclined to be also. It would not happen if all three city councillors opposed it.

- \* **Action:** Chairman to write to Barry Sinclair, with congratulations on the Rugby Club's success.

### **258.15 Any Other Business**

#### **258.15a extension of Towerbank Primary School**

Sean Watters reported that Towerbank was seeking a meeting with the City Council to discuss the £1.3m shortfall in funding for the School's urgent expansion. The minimum requirement of four new classrooms and a nursery could be funded, but there was a threat to refurbishment work and to the original scheme to realign or close the road in front of the school to create a single site. It was expected that the School would get three P1 classes for the third successive year in August, instead of the customary two, and by August 2009 the School could be at absolute capacity.

#### **258.15b flood prevention and roundabout replacement schemes**

Caroline Hosking asked if these two major works had to be carried out at the same time. Scott Thomson replied that it would make little difference to disruption, as the extra traffic generated by the flood prevention work would be minimal.

### **258.16 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 26th May 2008.

Subsequent dates are: 30th June 2008  
(no meeting in July)  
25th August 2008  
29th September 2008