



# PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## **DRAFT Minutes of the 278th meeting held on 26th April 2010 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall**

**Present:** Tom Ballantine, Sandra Blake, Archie Burns, Diana Cairns, Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, David Hamilton, Caroline Hosking, Nelson Johnstone, Peter McColl, Brenda Molony (*Portobello Reporter*), Andrew Patterson (Portobello Council of Churches), John Stewart (PAS), Nick Stroud, Ros Sutherland (PPAG), William Wilson, Frances Wraith (Brightons & Rosefield Residents), Anne Ward (PCATS).

**Apologies:** Celia Butterworth, Lilian Graham, Margaret Munro (Portobello History Society), Sarah Potter (Portobello Police), Gavin Strang M.P..

**In attendance:** Cllr Mike Bridgman, Cathy Cherizard (CEC), Cllr Maureen Child, Cllr Stephen Hawkins, D. Killeen, Lawrence Marshall, Margaret Smith, Tom Smith, C. Thomson, Catherine Thomson.

### **278.1 Chair's welcome**

John Stewart welcomed everyone to the April meeting. He reported that Lilian Graham had suffered a heart attack but was now recovering following an operation. Diana Cairns had sent Lilian a card on behalf of the Community Council, and everyone sent best wishes to Lilian for a speedy recovery. John announced that Margaret Rae had moved away from Portobello and was to be replaced by Ros Sutherland to represent the Portobello Park Action Group. He thanked Margaret for her contribution and welcomed Ros to the meeting.

### **278.2 Minutes of March meeting**

The minutes were accepted without alteration: proposed by Diana Cairns, seconded by Brenda Molony.

### **278.3 Matters arising from March meeting**

**278.3a** Diana Cairns to object to any application to permit food retailing at the Big W site (277.3). Done.

**278.3b** All, to submit comments on feedback forms (about Big W proposals) if wished (277.3). Done.

**278.3c** Helen Platts to reinstate the bench lost from the vicinity of the bus shelters on the south side of the High Street, if appropriate (though not necessarily in the same place) (277.5e). In hand and ongoing.

**278.3d** Helen Platts to try and locate and reinstate the 'Welcome to Portobello' sign removed during the King's Road roadworks (277.5f). The original is lost; Helen Platts is investigating the possibility of getting a replacement, and will consult the Community Council about this.

**278.3e** Helen Platts to investigate the possibility of installing a sign pointing to the Bridge Street car park (277.5g). There is apparently already a sign here but it is not easily visible from both directions; Cathy Cherizard agreed to look into this.

\* **Action: Cathy Cherizard to arrange an inspector to check the Bridge Street sign.**

**278.3f** Gillian Smith to consider a tourist information point at the bus stops on the north side of the High Street (277.5h). In hand.

**278.3g** Celia Butterworth, Archie Foley, Margaret Munro, John Stewart and Nick Stroud to meet the planners to help develop ideas (277.5i). Done; text and photographs (four historic and six modern) have been submitted. The City Council is operating on a tight timescale with this project.

**278.3h** Robert Gatliff to seek funding to repair Baptist Church so clock can be put back in place (277.5k). Robert has identified several possible sources of funding and will apply to them. Ongoing.

**278.3i** Stephen Hawkins to arrange a meeting of Council official and William Wilson at swingpark (277.5l); ongoing.

**278.3j** Diana Cairns to liaise with Cathy Cherizard on a consultation event for Brighton and Rosefield Residents' Association (277.5p). Diana will now organise a meeting.

**278.3k** Peter McColl to circulate notes on discussions about the use of the Town Hall (277.5q). Peter has been away but agreed to do this shortly.

**278.3l** Cathy Cherizard to see if the Community Council may comment on the description of the Town Hall in the City Council's website (277.5r). Cathy reported that the entire website is being redesigned in a tight 24-week schedule, and there had already been some public consultation about it. She agreed to try and feed in our comments about it.

- \* **Action: all, to identify what we don't like about the current website, and what doesn't work.**
- \* **Action: Cathy Cherizard to circulate as much information as possible and feed our comments back to the website design team.**

**278.3m** Anyone who has not already done so to complete the Community Council 'skills audit' questionnaire (277.5s).

**278.3n** Sub-group to organise hustings for the General Election (277.5u). Hustings is arranged for 7–9pm on Wednesday 28th April in the Town Hall; all six candidates have accepted the invitation to attend. The event will be run along the lines of the BBC's *Question Time*, chaired by Alastair Cameron who will select the questions from all those submitted.

**278.3o** Community Council to consider how to fill its vacancies for group representatives (277.5v). Andrew Patterson is now a member of the Community Council, representing the Portobello Council of Churches. Registrations for Portobello Older People's Project and Joppa Tennis Courts are in the pipeline. Diana Cairns agreed to ask Portobello Open Door (POD) and Portobello Energy Descent and Land Reform (PEDAL) if they would like to register a representative, and to contact Holyrood and St John's schools; Tom Ballantine agreed to talk to the Head Teacher and Parent Teacher Council at the High School about sending a representative.

- \* **Action: Diana Cairns to ask POD, PEDAL, Holyrood and St Johns if they would like to join the Community Council.**
- \* **Action: Tom Ballantine to ask the Head Teacher and Parent Teacher Council at the High School about sending a representative.**

**278.3p** Diana Cairns to ask Eileen Hewitt to distinguish between news for community councils and news for the general public, and to let us know what other channels are used for the latter (277.5w). Ongoing.

**278.3q** All, to consider how the Community Council can improve its communication networks (277.5x).

**278.3r** Cathy Cherizard to follow up as many as possible of the anti-littering suggestions (277.7). Cathy reported that she had referred all the points to the Task Force manager but had not yet received any response. Ongoing.

**278.3s** Diana Cairns to circulate the details of several consultations by email (277.9). Done.

**278.3t** Diana Cairns to arrange for some Community Council details to be displayed in the Library (277.10). This is in abeyance until the Library has organised the space for us; Diana agreed to see if they could arrange temporary space meantime. Although a grant had been obtained to fund our information space, this work was being held up by refurbishment elsewhere in the Library.

- \* **Action: Diana Cairns to ask the Library for temporary information space until our permanent arrangement can be made.**

**278.3u** Cathy Cherizard to report on the meeting about flooding in Rosefield Park (277.11e). Cathy handed round the report of a meeting that had taken place on 19th March, at which it was determined that screens in the burn in Rosefield Park had become obstructed and had been reported for modification.

**278.3v** Cathy Cherizard to organise an inspection of pavements that are liable to flooding (277.11e). Cathy reported that she had done this and been told that problems would be dealt with in the appropriate manner, hopefully to be fixed by June. All gullies would be inspected shortly and cleaned within three months. Some flooding, notably around Bellfield Lane, seemed to be due to the repaving work and the contractor had agreed to clean the affected gullies. Some drains had collapsed, however, and would take longer to fix.

## **278.4 Matters for Any Other Business**

Some items were identified for discussion in Any Other Business.

## 278.5 Traffic issues in Portobello

John Stewart introduced this discussion by explaining that he wanted to tackle the topics that had been identified for future meetings. In this case, he wanted the Community Council to discuss the issues of traffic in Portobello before consulting further with City Council officials. One option would be to set up a short life working group to identify some key issues and proposals. A great many points were contributed to the discussion, as follows:

- Big Things On The Beach have spoken to hundreds of people during their research, and traffic issues were frequently mentioned. Photographs of Portobello in its heyday show thousands of people visiting, so transport obviously worked all right then.
- ‘Traffic’ should be about the movement of people, not of machines; people move around on foot, on bikes, on skateboards, in buggies – a large variety of methods which must all be catered for.
- The Science Festival considered running a major event on Portobello beach, and this would have highlighted transport difficulties. There is likely to be increasing interest in running large events in Portobello, and these would require good transport connections.
- Portobello’s transport issues should not be seen as the problem of making space for more cars, but as an opportunity to provide better access by bike and public transport.
- There is a good opportunity here to make a big impact on Portobello's carbon footprint.
- The recent closure of Sir Harry Lauder Road had come close to gridlocking local streets, and with several large residential developments planned in the near future, regular gridlocks would be ever more likely if we fail to reduce car use significantly.
- The Scottish government has published guidelines to encourage planners to put people before cars in new developments, and the principles can be transferred to existing environments.
- We need imaginative solutions, such as putting footpaths down the centre of narrow streets and allowing car parking at the edges, although traditional traffic engineers have difficulty with such ideas.
- It was suggested that photographs of home-zone areas on the continent always seem to be traffic-free, so are not a relevant model for Portobello.
- Many local residents buy cars and expect to be able to park them near to where they live, and it’s hard to see how they can be told not to do this, even though it’s impossible to make room for these cars.
- People buy cars because they can afford them, and it isn’t clear how to deal with that.
- There is a danger that some local streets are so congested that emergency vehicles would not be able to get through them.
- Congestion would be significantly reduced if parents didn’t take their children to school by car.
- Portobello needs a train station to handle the large number of people likely to move into the new residential developments.
- Buildings in the High Street vibrate as buses and lorries go by.
- There is a new pedestrian crossing on Milton Road near the Coillesdenes, but motorists approach this too fast to be able to stop.
- Safety should be of paramount importance. People are not allowed to manufacture electrical equipment which can electrocute users, nor smoke in enclosed public spaces, and they should not be allowed use transport which puts other people’s health and safety at risk.
- Rising fuel prices will discourage the use of cars, though this will take a long time to have much effect.
- The City Council publishes design guidelines for streets aimed at improving their appearance so that people will want to spend more time in them.
- Remedial work in Bath Street made a big difference to its appearance and use.
- People should be encouraged to use the City Car Club as this could take a lot of cars off our streets.
- If there were fewer car parking spaces, more people might be encouraged to transfer to better ways of getting about.
- Research is needed to understand traffic flows and usage, before detailed plans can be made. For example, the City Council does not know how many people use the Promenade and how they get there.
- We should change what we can in Portobello, and not try and solve all the world’s problems here.

- British people love their cars, and depend on them too much to give them up.
- Whenever anyone tries to imagine an idyllic place to live, they don't pack it full of cars.

In trying to draw these points together, John Stewart suggested setting up a sub-committee to look at the area bounded by the High Street, Bath Street, Bellfield Street and the sea. The following further points were made in discussing this suggestion:

- Rat-running through these streets is part of a much wider problem throughout Portobello.
- The City Council has taken eight years to organise a one-way system in Bellfield Lane, and is not likely to solve wider problems very quickly.
- Portobello has been discussing traffic problems for over 20 years – since David Begg's time – and depends very much on what's happening at national level.
- Current circumstances make the modern era a good time to revisit local and global issues, and to raise public awareness of the causes and consequences of climate change – even at a local level.
- Local residents should be consulted about any local plans.
- The sub-committee should endeavour to identify all aspects of the problem and make recommendations. It should pick up any small problems that put people off walking.

Tom Ballantine, Archie Burns, Peter McColl and Andrew Paterson volunteered to set up the sub-committee, and Peter agreed to arrange its first meeting. Local resident Suzanne McIntosh had previously offered to join in with any such initiative. It was agreed that the group itself would consider how it will proceed, and to invite representatives of local streets to join it.

- \* **Action: Peter McColl to arrange the first meeting of a sub-committee to identify local traffic problems and recommend ways of dealing with them, focusing first on Bath Street to Bellfield Street.**

## 278.6 Open Spaces strategy

The City Council has published its draft strategy for Edinburgh's open spaces, at <http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/openspacestrategy>

This includes the draft action plan for Portobello. Revised strategies for sports and allotments would follow. Responses to the strategy and action plan are invited before 21st May.

John Stewart highlighted several concerns, including artificial neighbourhood boundaries which give an inaccurate impression of the amount of accessible open space, a contradiction over Portobello Park, and proposals to concentrate investment on six multi-pitch sports venues which might lead to the loss of local facilities. It was agreed that we would like to see further clarification and justification of the proposed changes, and reassurances about timescales and funding. It was pointed out that reducing the number of high-quality sports facilities might be a barrier to spontaneous participation in sport, and would disadvantage people who don't have their own transport.

It was proposed to turn part of Joppa Quarry Park into allotments. John Stewart pointed out that we had already lost recreation ground in this area when the Richard Corsie bowling centre was sold for housing, and Sovereign (the developers of that site) had still not made their agreed improvements to Joppa Quarry Park and Joppa Tennis Courts. Although it was thought that the Park's soil was unsuitable for allotments, there was a 4–7 year waiting list for allotments in Edinburgh, and it was agreed that the possibility should be investigated of having a corner of Joppa Quarry Park converted for allotments, provided some recreational space was retained. Diana Cairns reported that PEDAL had received a grant part of which would be used to identify land suitable for growing food. David Hamilton agreed to check the local plan to see if the triangle of land bounded by railway lines just south of Brunstane train station would be suitable for allotments. Another possibility was the old Freightliner site.

There was some resentment that Portobello Promenade had been subsumed into Edinburgh's waterfront promenade, with cycling permitted along its entire length. It was pointed out that no one has been able to show how cycling and walking can be combined safely on Portobello Promenade. Dawson Currie wondered what had happened to the idea of a linear park along the Figgate Burn from the Promenade to the High Street; Stephen Hawkins said this had always depended on the generosity of the developers, and had probably been forgotten about now.

Stephen Hawkins felt that different maps should be produced with and without the new High School and with and without allotments in Joppa Quarry Park, since these developments would make a significant difference to local open space.

Diana Cairns agreed to draft a letter covering these points, and circulate it to the Community Council for comments in time for it to be submitted by the 21st May deadline.

- \* **Action: Diana Cairns to draft a letter responding to the draft action plan for Portobello.**
- **Action: David Hamilton to check on the possibility of using the triangle of railway land next to Gilberstoun for allotments.**

## **278.7 The Royal British Legion in Portobello**

Maureen Child reported that the trustees of the building in Baileyfield Road were now looking for agents to sell it. The main problem was that the local British Legion club had not been able to use the building often enough to keep it profitable. The club was now meeting twice a week at the Beach Lane social club. The old building and all its fixtures and fittings were having to be sold to meet the obligations in making staff redundant. It was pointed out that part of the problem was the building's inaccessibility for older people, and the fact that it was hard to get to by public transport; these problems also prevented its use as a community centre. The loss of this important local facility was regretted, but it was clear that there was no alternative.

## **278.8 Communications and public image**

The length and complexity of the previous discussions meant that there was no time to discuss this subject. John Stewart reported that our information is displayed on notices and a plasma screen inside the Library.

## **278.9 Reports**

**278.9a Police:** No report available.

**278.9b Treasurer:** Sandra Blake gave her first report as Treasurer. Kathleen Hart had retained the Community Council's cash book for the annual audit. There was £2,848.16 in the current account (of which £1,662 was ring-fenced for the Gilberstoun noticeboard), and £4,797.34 in the Joppa Tennis Courts account.

**278.9c Neighbourhood Partnership:** No report this time.

**278.9d Joppa Tennis Courts:** Elsie Thom attended the meeting on behalf of the Joppa Tennis Courts club; she said that the club was keen to work with the Community Council to ensure that the successful existing arrangement continued smoothly.

- \* **Action: Sandra Blake to agree with Elsie Thom how the Tennis Club accounts are to operate.**

**278.9e Environmental Update:** Cathy Cherizard reported that there had been 18 nominations for pavement improvements and these had been narrowed down to ten, which would be voted on at a forthcoming Environmental Forum meeting. Cathy circulated the information sheets which had been used on a recent bus tour as part of the investigation of where to spend a further £60,000. Particular problems of 'rat-running' through Joppa Terrace and Argyle Crescent had been identified, and these were likely to receive the most urgent attention. Maureen Child will be presenting more precise details of problem streets to the Environmental Forum. Dawson Currie pointed out that no changes should be made in Bath Street until local building work had been completed.

**278.9f Planning:** John Stewart distributed copies of the 'Proposal of Application Notice' which was the next step in the planning process for building a new High School on Portobello Park. Responses to this document were required by the following Friday, 30th April. John requested that all community councillors read the report and send him comments by Wednesday the 28th, so that he could construct the Community Council's response by the Friday deadline.

Several events in various places and at various times seemed to be planned, but were all to be confirmed, and no full public meeting seemed to be proposed. It was agreed that we would like to see two public meetings held in the Town Hall to discuss the process and proposals. Stephen Hawkins was worried that the City Council was apparently trying to consult on planning and on school design simultaneously, and it was not helpful to confuse these two aspects. Ros Sutherland was concerned that some meetings were to be held in the Summer holidays when several interested parties would be away. Diana Cairns said that meetings should not just be arranged for stakeholders, but for anyone who is interested, and that adequate notice should be

given. Maureen Child said that the two local Neighbourhood Partnerships would be meeting on 18th May from 6:30 to 7:45pm, probably in the High School, and that this would be a public meeting open to all. Diana Cairns said it was not acceptable to be told we could not comment on the loss of open space, and that we must be allowed to discuss this aspect along with all the others. Dawson Currie thought there was to be a workshop in the Library on 12th May; John Stewart agreed to find out about this and circulate details.

- \* **Action: All, to read the Proposal of Application Notice and send comments to John Stewart by Wednesday 28th April.**
- \* **Action: John Stewart to respond to the Proposal of Application Notice by 30th April.**
- \* **Action: John Stewart to circulate details of workshop in Library on 12th May.**

**278.9g Signs, Plaques and coade-stone:** Celia Butterworth reported that a plaque describing the Tower's history had been placed on the Beach Lane wall of the Tower. £483 from the Council's Community Grants Fund paid for the plaque and Mark Noble, the owner of the Tower, paid for placement of the plaque.

**278.9h Portobello Community Centre:** No report this time.

**278.9i 'Community Development':** Nick Stroud circulated a list of 'Portobello Projects' with the agenda, for information and for consideration at a future meeting.

#### **278.9j Councillors:**

Maureen Child circulated a written report.

Mike Bridgman was working on several of the same issues as Maureen. He was pleased to see Portobello becoming a mecca for beach volleyball, and was checking accessibility of emergency vehicles at Towerbank.

Stephen Hawkins noted that two houses refused planning permission in Bellfield Lane would have had aluminium windows; this point had been missed (they were refused for other reasons), and it showed the need to scrutinise every aspect of every application very carefully or bad precedents might slip through.

## **278.10 Any Other Business**

### **278.10a Clean-up at Gilberstoun**

David Hamilton reported a successful community event at Gilberstoun, in which 45 bags of litter had been collected.

## **278.11 Topics for future meetings**

Suggestions for topics for future meetings include:

- Usage of the Town Hall: not as good as it should be, and not a sufficiently local resource.
- Water efficiency (speaker offered).
- Refurbishment of the swingpark on the Promenade in front of Towerbank.
- Making the Community Council more proactive in improving Portobello.
- Public Art Plan for Portobello.
- Further consideration of the Neighbourhood Partnership.
- A discussion of general planning issues with a City Council official.

## **278.12 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 31st May 2010

Subsequent dates are: 28th June 2010  
30th August (no meeting in July)  
27th September 2010  
25th October 2010