



# PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## **Minutes of the 296th meeting held on 27th February 2012 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall**

**Present:** Tom Ballantine, Sandra Blake, Archie Burns, Diana Cairns, Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, Robert Gatliff (Joppa Tennis Courts Club), Caroline Hosking, Nelson Johnstone, Peter McColl, Joe Madden (Portobello Open Door), Brenda Molony (*Portobello Reporter*), Andrew Patterson (Portobello Council of Churches), John Stewart (PAS), Nick Stroud, Ros Sutherland (PPAG), Leon Thompson, Anne Ward (PCATS), Frances Wraith (Brightons & Rosefield Residents).

**Apologies:** Cllr Mike Bridgman, Celia Butterworth, Sheila Gilmore M.P., Kenny MacAskill M.S.P., Lawrence Marshall (Portobello Older People's Project), Eva Schonveld (PEDAL), Margaret Williamson (Portobello High School).

**In attendance:** Cllr Maureen Child, Cllr Stephen Hawkins, Ben McLeish (Gilberstoun Residents), Barry Mercer (Safer Neighbourhood Team), Andy Matheson (CEC), Allyson Thomson (CEC), Steve Wheatley, John Young (Portobello Police), and some 20 members of the public.

### **296.1 Chair's welcome**

John Stewart welcomed everyone to the meeting, and asked people to make clear, concise points as there were a lot of people present and a full agenda.

### **296.2 Police report**

Sgt. Young introduced his colleague Acting Sergeant Barry Mercer who recently joined the Safer Neighbourhood Team, then summarised the main points from his report. Although the police have made arrests in connection with a spate of bogus callers and domestic break-ins they were still urging the public to be vigilant, and to check the security of their property (there is advice about this on the police website). The police were particularly anxious to hear from witnesses to a stabbing at a garage in Portobello High Street on 17th February, while emphasising that Portobello is a very safe place in which to live and work. Sgt. Young summarised recent road accident statistics: there had been 57 accidents involving vehicles in the area in the previous 11 months, resulting in two serious and seven minor injuries; there had been 13 accidents involving bikes since April 2009, most resulting in minor damage only. The police now had four bikes for local use and would be training officers to use them.

Sgt. Young made several further points in answer to questions. The police were aware of motorcyclists using the car park at the Big W site and would act to minimise any antisocial behaviour from this. Proposed action in support of cycling would involve educating both cyclists and motorists. Problems with traders' use of CCTV should be raised directly with the Safer Neighbourhood Team. Although the police were aware of the vulnerability of a certain type of window in Coillesdene housing, it was the responsibility of home owners to rectify the problem.

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

### **296.3 Environmental update**

Allyson Thomson reported that the Environment Team hadn't been able to find a bench to replace the one lost from the Town Hall bus stops, and couldn't afford the £2-3,000 that a new one would cost; however Diana Cairns observed that Jim Hunter had said that the old bench was in storage ready to be reinstated, and Andy Matheson agreed that the Team would follow this up. Allyson reported that the Environment Team is still looking for an alternative site for the recycling bins at Bridge Street. She reminded the meeting that the Neighbourhood Partnership would be discussing proposals to deal with local traffic congestion and parking problems at its meeting on Wednesday evening, and she announced that the Environment Team would be using Twitter to highlight its activities on three days in the near future, 28th February, and 1st and 5th March, from 6:15am to 9:15pm (to see this, follow 'east\_team' and/or look for the hashtag '#edinclean').

Nelson Johnstone asked if anything could be done about antisocial parking at Coillesdene; John Young said that the police were aware of the problem but that no offence was being committed; Andy Matheson had initiated a process to create disabled parking spaces in the area, but this was a legal process that would take six months to complete. Andrew Patterson observed that there are very few benches along the High Street, and that the elderly in particular might be more attracted to our shops if it were easier to rest along the way. Several people mentioned antisocial behaviour involving rubbish bins and rubbish disposal. Allyson said that the Environment Team was aware of a problem with a bin at Windsor Place and would be fixing it more securely in place; she agreed that the Team would investigate reports of illegal disposal of business rubbish.

- \* **Action: Environment Team to locate the bench removed from the Town Hall bus stops.**
- \* **Action: Environment Team to investigate reports of antisocial/illegal disposal of rubbish.**

## **296.4 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Diana Cairns asked that a redundant sentence be removed from item 295.8, and that it be noted in the same item that there was concern at the over-supply of certain types of premises. With these changes the minutes of the January meeting were accepted: proposed by Diana Cairns seconded by Anne Ward.

## **296.5 Matters arising**

**296.5a** Bench at Town Hall bus stops (295.5b). *See item 296.3 above; ongoing.*

**296.5b** Recycling bins at Bridge Street (295.5c). *See item 296.3 above; ongoing*

**296.5c** VAT on privatised Council services (294.5e). Ben McLeish had given Stephen Hawkins the requested information.

**296.5d** Town Centre sub-group to consider ideas for new signs in Portobello (294.5i). The sub-group had met, and initiated a programme of ongoing activity.

**296.5e** Community Council survey (295.5h). This would be a major agenda item at the March meeting.

- \* **Action: Diana Cairns to circulate the Community Council with the results of the survey.**

**296.5f** Buses to reduce speed in Brighton Place (295.5j). Diana Cairns had received a reply from Lothian Buses, in which they committed only to ensuring that their drivers observed the legal speed limit.

**296.5g** ‘Shop Local’ campaign (295.8): Local traders expressed disappointment that nothing had yet been done to follow up the concerns expressed at the January meeting, and were assured that they would shortly be invited to a meeting of a sub-group to follow up the points they raised. Problems of local traders selling food unsafely from unlicensed premises were again mentioned, and it was agreed that the Community Council should do more to support those who were complying with the relevant regulations. John Stewart asked traders to let him have details of possible offences and he would take these up with the City Council’s enforcement agencies. (People can contact the Community Council through its website at <http://www.portobellocc.org/>) Brenda Molony mentioned that she had carried out a brief survey of the High Street area and found 15 cafes and 12 takeaway premises, and only one or two more empty shops than usual.

- \* **Action: John Stewart to collate information about unlicensed trading activity and take it up with the City Council.**
- \* **Action: Ben McLeish to arrange a meeting of the sub-group and invite local traders.**

**296.5h** Train noise at Stanley Street (295.10). John Stewart and Diana Cairns had written to the East Coast Train Company about overnight noise and pollution but had not yet received a reply.

**296.5i** Bellfield Street telephone kiosk (295.11). Steve Wheatley, Leon Thompson and John Stewart had circulated further information as requested (and see item 296.6 below).

**296.5j** Library consultation (295.13a). Diana Cairns had submitted the Community Council’s response to the consultation as requested, and reported that the volume of responses had prompted the City Council to find extra money to fund Sunday opening.

**296.5k** Alcohol sales (295.13b). Nick Stroud had submitted our response to the consultation as requested.

**296.5l** Rosefield Park (295.13c). Peter McColl said that he was unable to attend Wednesday’s

Neighbourhood Partnership meeting and couldn't therefore ask about the planting in Rosefield Park, but he would submit a written report.

- \* **Action: Peter McColl to submit a written report to the Neighbourhood Partnership about the planting in Rosefield Park.**

## **296.6 Bellfield Street telephone kiosk**

Steve Wheatley summarised the campaign he and other local residents had organised to retain the telephone kiosk at the top of Bellfield Street, which BT has declared to be redundant. Other communities have adopted redundant BT kiosks and turned them to such imaginative uses as art galleries, bookshops, and defibrillator points. The local group had an aspiration to create a 'light box' to display images from 'Lost Edinburgh', by local children, and from other relevant sources. Leon Thompson reported that insuring the kiosk would add £23 to the Community Council's annual insurance bill, but that it would cost more to insure against the cost of removing the kiosk if it could not be sustained. The group hoped to raise initial funding from the Neighbourhood Partnership, and was told that Peebles had adopted a similar kiosk with funding from the Postcode Lottery and had installed solar panels on it. The main outstanding problem was to find out who owned the land on which the kiosk is located; John Stewart agreed to pursue this aspect with Bill Miller of the City Council, and Diana Cairns offered to investigate in the Registers of Scotland if that proved unsuccessful.

- \* **Action: Leon Thompson to find out how much it would cost to insure the kiosk against having to be removed and disposed of.**
- \* **Action: John Stewart to investigate the ownership of the land where the kiosk is sited.**
- \* **Action: Steve Wheatley to consider asking the Peebles group about their experience in adopting their kiosk.**

## **296.7 Agree Agenda and AOB**

Various items were noted. In particular it was agreed to take advantage of the presence of the local Area Roads Manager, Andy Matheson, to make a full agenda item of the City Council's recommendations for traffic management between Bath Street and Bellfield Street.

## **296.8 Promenade signage**

Andy Matheson, Roads Manager with the City Council's East Edinburgh Team, summarised the outcome of several months' work and consultation to design new signs for the Promenade, now that it was part of the city's Core Path Network and therefore permitted for cycling. The proposal was to put up large rectangular signs at all the main entrances to the Prom, with suggestions for how cyclists and pedestrians should behave towards each other; and small round signs implying priority for pedestrians over cyclists with small rectangular signs saying "please consider other users" at regular intervals along the Prom itself. There would probably be painted signs on the Prom at key points, and perhaps railings or other devices at blind spots to ensure that cyclists and pedestrians could see each other safely. The aim was to prioritise pedestrian safety, and the cycling organisation SPOKES would be helping with a campaign to promote a safe-cycling message. The hope was to have the signs in place by the start of Summer.

There followed an extensive discussion in which the following points were made. The proposed advice to "keep dogs under control" was questioned, but remained unclarified, and was conceded to be a difficult issue. There was some feeling that the rights of pedestrians were not being clearly enough emphasised, in a place whose very name is "walk"; so the signs should not say "please" to cyclists, and should say "dismount" rather than "stop". There are particularly busy times when children are going to and from Towerbank, and 'through-cycling' should be discouraged at these times since children tend to run about unpredictably and shouldn't have to learn to suppress their natural energy and exuberance. The advice that both cyclists and pedestrians should give way to the other would be ambiguous, and undermines the priority that pedestrians should have; pedestrians should always and emphatically have priority. The signs, especially the large green rectangular ones, would have quite an impact on the appearance of this conservation area; Andy Matheson conceded the importance of this aspect, and was awaiting advice from the Scottish Office on aspects of the proposed signage. Andrew Patterson regretted that a few bad cyclists gave all cyclists a bad name, and

pointed out that pedestrians and cyclists mix successfully on the towpaths alongside Edinburgh's canal; he suggested that it might be useful to find out from British Waterways how they have achieved this.

Mr Matheson agreed to present revised proposals to a future meeting of the Community Council.

- \* **Action: Andy Matheson to let John Stewart know about future meetings to plan this signage, and John Stewart to circulate to community councillors so that any may attend.**
- \* **Action: Andy Matheson to see if British Waterways have relevant experience or advice.**

## **296.9 Traffic management proposals for Bath Street – Bellfield Street**

Following two consultations about traffic congestion in the streets between Bath Street and Bellfield Street on the North side of the High Street, the City Council was recommending that Marlborough Street and Regent Street should be made one-way from South to North, and that parking on one side of each should be abolished, on the West side of Regent Street and the East side of Marlborough Street, with a loss of 70 parking spaces in total. These recommendations were due to be discussed at the Neighbourhood Partnership meeting at The White House in Niddrie Mains Road, at 6:30pm on Wednesday 29th February.

A lengthy discussion ensued, in which the prevailing opinion was that these recommendations would not solve the existing problems and would create new ones. There was particular concern that nothing had been proposed to stop 'rat-running' along Straiton Place; Andy Matheson responded that the consultation had not brought out this desire, and admitted that the Council had not carried out any relevant traffic surveys. It was agreed that Portobello should be considered as a whole in developing traffic plans, with Windsor Place clearly suffering the same challenges as the streets on the other side of the High Street. There was support for choosing local convenience and safety over traffic throughput, so that for example traffic lights should not be sequenced in favour of through-traffic but should be responsive to pedestrians, and access to local shops should not be unduly restricted. Andy Matheson emphasised the difficulty of the problem, pointing out that there were simply too many cars in a very restricted space, and there was no local consensus on what to do about this. Maureen Child emphasised the necessity of emergency vehicles being able to get along all local streets without delay or hindrance. Robert Gatliff liked the streets without pavements that have been created in Bingham and Craigmillar, and thought that removing the pavements in local streets would create more and safer space for all users, but Andy Matheson pointed out that the City Council has a very limited budget for any initiatives, and certainly couldn't afford to create 'homezones'.

It was agreed to make the following points to the Neighbourhood Partnership meeting:

- the whole of Portobello should be included in any traffic management proposals.
  - more surveys of existing traffic flows should be undertaken before any recommendations are made.
  - there should be full consultation before any recommendations are implemented.
  - full consideration should be given to making Straiton Place one-way from West to East.
  - Windsor Place faces the same challenges as the Bath Street–Bellfield Street area.
  - the issue should be treated primarily as one of community safety, not of maximising traffic flow.
- \* **Action: Nick Stroud to write a letter making the above points, for Dawson Currie to deliver to the Neighbourhood Partnership meeting.**

## **296.10 Town centre sub-group update**

Ben McLeish reported that the group had met and had begun to develop a comprehensive plan for "Our Portobello", with the aim of making the best of our community. It was immediately clear that there were several initiatives already under way, and it would be important to coordinate these to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort or demands on resources. Ben apologised for not having yet been in touch with the traders who had expressed an interest in this work, explaining that the group didn't want to waste their time by involving them before it had worked out its own strategy. The next step was to have a meeting of the sub-group with Sarah Woodford.

- \* **Action: Ben McLeish to arrange a meeting of the sub-group with Sarah Woodford and a meeting of the group with interested local traders.**

## 296.11 Reports

**296.11a Treasurer:** Leon Thompson reported that there had been no incomings or outgoings in the previous month, so the balance in the current account remained at £2,020.93.

**296.11b Neighbourhood Partnership:** the next meeting would be at 6:30pm on Wednesday 29th February, at The White House, 70 Niddrie Mains Road, with two items of local interest on the agenda: recommendations to cope with traffic congestion, and the maintenance operations in Rosefield Park.

**296.11c Planning:** John Stewart circulated the McCarthy & Stone plan for building 49 flats in four storeys on the old British Legion site in Baileyfield Road, removing the existing building. This would be a very large building, but with a variety of frontages and finishes to disguise its size. Neighbours approved of this use, and several mature trees would be retained. It was believed that the architects had been steered towards a modern design in informal discussions with City planners. Joe Madden emphasised the urgency for the British Legion of making progress with the development. It was agreed that the Community Council should write in support of the proposal, commenting on the materials to be used, the general look of the building, and landscaping.

- \* **Action: Diana Cairns to write a letter of support, circulating the draft to community councillors for comment.**

**296.11d Signs and Plaques:** no report this time.

**296.11e Community Centre:** no report this time.

**296.11f Joppa Tennis Courts:** Robert Gatliff thanked Tom Ballantine and Leon Thompson for their hard work in clarifying the Club's relationship with the Community Council.

### 296.11g Councillors

Maureen Child had circulated her monthly report by email. Stephen Hawkins reported that the City Council's main activity had been to set its budget for the coming year, and he was pleased that extra money had been found to enable libraries to continue opening on Sundays and for the repair of the Joppa Tennis Pavilion.

## 296.12 Any Other Business

**296.12a Election Hustings:** Diana Cairns reminded the meeting that the City Council elections were due to be held in May and that the Community Council had a tradition of organising hustings meetings for elections. Dawson Currie pointed out that there were new regulations which might affect such a meeting. It was agreed that John Stewart would ask Tom Ballantine, Andrew Patterson and Leon Thompson – the team who organised the last hustings – if they would take on this task.

- \* **Action: John Stewart to invite a sub-group to organise a hustings meeting for the City Council elections in May.**

**296.12b Edinburgh Association of Community Councils:** Dawson Currie reported that the next EACC meeting would be a 'Big Debate' on the subject of criminal justice, and he hoped to see fellow community councillors there. The meeting would be in the City Chambers from 10am to noon on Saturday 3rd March, and would finish with a light lunch.

**296.12c Sponsorship of local Rugby club:** John Stewart had received a request for help in funding the youth activities of Portobello Rugby Club; after some debate it was agreed to offer a one-off donation of £50 towards the cost of the new strips.

- \* **Action: Leon Thompson to send £50 to Portobello Rugby Club.**

**296.12d National Spring Cleaning Week:** John Stewart reported that this year's Spring Cleaning 'Week' would run from 1st April to 31st May, and wondered if the Community Council should participate. Diana Cairns observed that Brighton Residents' Association and PEDAL were both intending to organise events in conjunction with this, and she agreed to circulate details so that community councillors could join in if they wished.

- \* **Action: Diana Cairns to circulate information about local spring-cleaning activities.**
- \* **Action: all, to join in with local spring cleaning activities if they wish.**

## **296.13 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 26th March 2012 (297)

Subsequent dates are: 30th April 2012 (298)  
28th May 2012 (299, preceded by the 30th AGM)  
25th June 2012 (300)  
27th August 2012 (301; no meeting in July)

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

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

## Portobello/Joppa Beat Update

### Crime Update

Overall crimes recorded have significantly reduced compared to January but a number of crimes of concern have occurred.

Unfortunately the East Neighbourhood area has recently experienced an increase in domestic housebreakings and bogus caller type activity that has taken place across the city as mentioned in last month's report. In response to this the Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) have increased high-visibility patrols as well as speaking to and providing advice to local householders and community meetings.

A number of arrests have been made, however residents are encouraged to continue to be vigilant and take time to check their home security.

Crime prevention advice can be found by visiting the Lothian and Borders Police website [www.lbp.police.uk](http://www.lbp.police.uk) and clicking on the crime prevention link, or alternatively you can arrange for a Crime Prevention visit by contacting the Craigmillar SNT team, tel 0131-652-4147.

We continue to work closely with the City of Edinburgh Community Safety Teams to tackle anti-social behaviour and will be increasing our joint patrols in the area to tackle identified problems and provide reassurance.

Youth calls continue to reduce, however following a slight increase in calls during the evenings at Portobello High Street we focused patrols, engaged with businesses and young persons frequenting the area, resulting in a reduction of complaints.

### Appeal - Serious Assault

There has been a significant reduction in assaults in Portobello and across the East Neighbourhood over the January/February period and serious assaults are a rare occurrence in Portobello/Joppa. When they do occur the police as expected investigate them thoroughly to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Police are investigating the stabbing of a man on a garage forecourt in Portobello High Street and are making a renewed appeal for information, a week on from the incident. The 51-year-old victim was left with serious injuries following the attack, which happened around 12.45pm on Friday, 17th February.

He was attacked by two men on the forecourt of AGS Motors, in Portobello High Street.

The first suspect is described as white, 40 to 50 years old, with a gaunt appearance, and wearing a dark cap, dark clothing, and sunglasses. He spoke with a Scottish accent. The other suspect is described as having a dark/swarthy complexion, is aged around 30 years, and was wearing dark clothing and white trainers.

Following the incident, the pair were chased to the Baileyfield Industrial Estate, where they got into a silver coloured BMW saloon, which was lost to sight on Sir Harry Lauder Road.

Detective Superintendent David Gordon has appealed to anyone who was in the area last Friday, who either witnessed the incident or who noticed any suspicious activity, to come forward.

He said: "The garage where the attack took place is close to the Kwik-Fit garage in Portobello High Street, an area that would have been quite busy at that time of day.

"Likewise, there is a nearby bus stop where drivers routinely change buses, meaning that there may have been passengers who were sitting on the bus for longer than usual, and who may have noticed two men acting suspiciously in the area.

"We want anyone who was in Portobello High Street or the surrounding area last Friday lunchtime, who noticed the two suspects either walking on the street or in a silver-coloured saloon car, to contact police immediately.

"Anyone else who recognises their descriptions, or who has any other information that can assist our inquiries, should also get in touch."

The victim received hospital treatment for his injuries and is making good progress.

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**.

### **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. If you wish to raise a concern regarding matters in your street please get in touch.

You can contact your community policing team on:

Tel: 0131 652 4147 (office)

Tel: 0131 311 3131 (24hours)

email: [ADivSNTCraigmillarPortobello@lbp.pnn.police.uk](mailto:ADivSNTCraigmillarPortobello@lbp.pnn.police.uk)