



PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the 245th meeting held on 29th January 2007 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall

Present: Robert Gatliff (Chair), Nick Stroud (Secretary), Kathleen Hart (Treasurer), Jackie Brock, Celia Butterworth, Diana Cairns, Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, Stephen Hawkins, Bob Jefferson, Stephen McIntyre, Brenda Molony, Margaret Munro, Tom Nimmo, Sheila Scott, John Smart, Margaret Smith, Tom Smith, John Stewart, David Turner, William Wilson, Betty Young.

Apologies: Alix Gaffney, Zoe Dunn, Peter McColl, Aileen Ward.

In attendance: Cllr Maureen Child, Hatsuki Hayashi, Caroline Hosking, Joe Madden, Cllr Lawrence Marshall, Rosemary Moffat (Magdalene Neighbourhood Association), Kenny Owen, Alison Robinson, Anne Ward, Ian Wilson, Glen Wylie (Lothian Buses).

245.1 Chairman's welcome

Robert Gatliff welcomed a large number of members and visitors to the first meeting of the new year, and introduced Glen Wylie of Lothian Buses who had agreed to respond to numerous concerns about local bus services.

245.2 Lothian Bus services in Portobello

Sheila Scott, chair of the local traders' association, summarised concerns about recent changes to our bus services. She had received complaints from a number of Milton residents about the difficulty of getting to Portobello, now involving two buses and going via Jock's Lodge; this was especially difficult for the elderly. Glen Wylie responded that he had monitored usage of the no. 12 service over ten weeks and found that passenger numbers did not justify its continuation. Rosemary Moffat rejected this, pointing out that she had often been among eight to ten people waiting for a 12 at just one stop. Sheila Scott asked if the Council could influence route decisions; Maureen Child replied that subsidies had to be paid for unprofitable routes, and that it would cost around £150,000 a year to run the 12 between King's Road and Milton Road, a sum that could not be justified for an average of two passengers per bus. The Council had therefore agreed with Lothian Buses to concentrate on the 49 and new 69 routes, which were justified by demand. This would be reassessed when the College expansion was complete.

John Smart observed that it was difficult and dangerous to cross certain roads to change buses; Glen Wylie agreed to monitor this aspect of the new routes. Margaret Munro pointed out that the 69 comes straight to Portobello from Milton, but because it is a one-way circular route it takes much longer to go back, and asked why the recent increase in Scottish Executive funding for public transport could not be used to improve local bus routes such as this one; Glen Wylie's response was that the only vehicles which could operate in our local streets had to have steps, and were therefore unsuitable for the elderly or those with buggies.

Robert Gatliff reported that he sometimes missed his bus because it was running up to five minutes early, while others noted that 26s sometimes ran in convoys of up to four buses. Others asked that at least some 26s go along Regent Road rather than London Road for speed and to serve the Scottish Office and Waverley Steps; however Mr Wylie remained adamant that the demand was for London Road. Dawson Currie wondered why the X.48 that comes to Portobello during the day could not stop at King's Road; Mr Wylie explained that every aspect of every route had to be registered with the Traffic Commissioners, and could not be changed without their consent and the payment of a fee.

Margaret Smith asked for a bus service to The Fort; Lothian Buses would be considering this in the context of services to the new Queen Margaret University College. Robert Gatliff asked that the 26 route be extended to the airport, or that airport buses run through to Portobello or beyond. Stephen Hawkins suggested that bike racks be fitted to the front of buses. Dawson Currie wanted to see a service between Portobello and Ocean Terminal; Glen Wylie said that this was under consideration.

Tom Nimmo praised the general service offered by Lothian Buses, and appreciated the value of the 'daysaver' ticket. Jackie Brock added that the Night Services were admirable, and there was general agreement that Edinburgh is very well served by its bus company, apart from the local concerns. Nick Stroud observed that Portobello is a local 'hub' in east Edinburgh and that it would be helpful if local bus services reinforced that identity. Dawson Currie suggested that when Lothian Buses were planning future route changes, it should send a representative to discuss them in advance with the Community Council.

245.3 Minutes of the last meeting

Dawson Currie pointed out that the invitation to Lothian Buses to send a speaker should have been noted, and Margaret Munro observed that budgets for neighbourhood partnerships (item 244.4) would be considerably larger than £100,000.

With these corrections the minutes were accepted: proposed by Sheila Scott, seconded by Margaret Munro.

245.4 Matters arising from October meeting

245.4a Redevelopment plans for Western Portobello (minute 244.3b)

Lawrence Marshall reported that a revised specification had been published, and that the consultant would be appointed shortly, with a public meeting to be held thereafter.

Robert Gatliff had not yet received a reply from Francis Newton about a timetable for progress.

245.4b Portobello Online (minute 244.3d)

Bob Jefferson reported that the group had thought about setting up a company to look after the website, but had decided instead to separate the discussion forum from the website, financially and legally; he would continue to look after the website while Maria Devoy looked after the discussion forum. Dawson Currie asked that a suitable form of words be found to point from the website to the discussion forum. Volunteers for the website oversight committee were requested.

- * **Action: all, to consider joining a committee to monitor the website.**

245.4c Community planning (minute 244.4)

Robert Gatliff and Tom Smith had met with representatives of Craigmillar Community Council on 11th January, and agreed to swap minutes and hold joint meetings from time to time. The new partnership arrangements envisage having three community representatives, which would mean two from Craigmillar and one from Portobello or *vice versa*, so an increase to four has been requested. Margaret Munro had made a joint submission to the City Council with a Craigmillar representative, so we were already working together.

It was agreed to hold coordinated hustings for the May elections, in Portobello on 18th April and in Craigmillar on 25th April. Robert Gatliff asked for volunteers to help with this, and would pursue funding possibilities. David Turner said that the Portobello Council of Churches would be willing to help with the organisation. It had still to be decided whether to hold joint or separate sessions for Council and Parliamentary candidates.

- * **Action: all, to let the Secretary know if they can help with the hustings.**
- * **Action: Secretary to book Portobello Town Hall for the evening of 18th April.**
- * **Action: all, to suggest a suitable chair for the hustings.**

245.4d jet skis (minute 242.4c)

Stephen Hawkins reported on the difficulty of getting reliable information from the police or the City Council about the designated area for jet-skiing, although the Council's response to the Parliament seemed to indicate that there was one. This appeared to conflict with our SSSI, and there was no indication of how the areas were to be managed. Maureen Child responded that the Council had put out marker buoys and discussed the problem with the Coastguard, but it has no legal responsibility and had not been able to find any relevant legislation. Robert Gatliff hoped that a new Marine Bill would rectify this. Diana Cairns was pleased that the petition to the Parliament had generated several responses but regretted the lack of commitment shown by relevant organisations; for example the exclusion zone should extend 300 metres out to sea from low water mark from King's Road to the pumping station, which it clearly didn't, and no one

was enforcing it anyway. Lawrence Marshall mentioned a useful meeting in November which had brought together several relevant agencies; he hoped better signage would be in place by the Summer.

- * **Action: Stephen Hawkins and Diana Cairns to write to the City Council asking for clarification of relevant issues.**

245.4e Viridor waste management (minute 244.6c)

Lawrence Marshall reported that Viridor had withdrawn its application meantime. The City Council would still prefer the waste management site to be at Millerhill and would go to tender on that basis; it would then be up to tenderers to sort out any objections to the site being in Midlothian, but since the site would cater for all the Lothians as well as Edinburgh it was hoped that there would be no insuperable objections. Stephen Hawkins pointed out that this facility would be part of a national strategy, and that it would be helpful to have an expert tell the Community Council about the national and local strategies.

- * **Action: Secretary to invite SEPA to a future meeting to talk about waste management strategies.**

245.4f High Street redevelopment (minute 244.3c)

Celia Butterworth was concerned at a proliferation of bollards on pavements resulting from the High Street improvements. Lawrence Marshall conceded that some had been put in the wrong place, and agreed to check with Stuart Smith that they had been put back where they were supposed to be, delineating the vehicle entrance to the Town Hall. Margaret Munro had asked for the sequence of the traffic lights to be changed, and this had been done, but signs were now needed to warn people of the change. Maureen Child said that Stuart Smith was coordinating several different projects related to this, and suggested that the Secretary remind him of this problem. All agreed that the new sequence was much better for pedestrians. There was still a problem of ponding in wet weather.

- * **Action: Lawrence Marshall to check with Stuart Smith that all bollards are now in the correct locations.**
- * **Action: Secretary to write to Stuart Smith to ask for signs warning of the change in traffic light sequence, and to let him know about ponding problems.**

245.4g The Baptist Church / Old Town Hall Clock (minute 241.4d)

Lawrence Marshall reported continuing confusion about who is responsible for the clock, with the Church and the City Council both thinking the other should pay. The Council is responsible for the maintenance of the clock itself, and has just spent £7,000 refurbishing it; the dispute is over who pays for its mounting.

- * **Action: Robert Gatliff to give Lawrence Marshall a copy of the letter held by the Baptist Church which indicates that the City Council owns both clock and mounting.**
- * **Action: Secretary to write to the City Council to say that we want our civic clock back.**

245.4h Replacement of Milton Road roundabout (minute 243.8k)

Maureen Child reported that the work was scheduled to take up to 30 weeks, but could be less, and the first two weeks would be the worst. City Council officials had explored several options to minimise the disruption; any specific difficulties could be notified to her. Dawson Currie asked if planners had made allowances for extra traffic in Brighton Place; Maureen Child thought they would have, but agreed to check.

- * **Action: Maureen Child to ensure that arrangements have been made to deal with extra traffic in Brighton Place.**

245.5 Reports

245.5a Police: the police had dealt with 1,466 calls in December and 1,232 in January, with around 200 involving the High Street in both months – somewhat less than usual.

245.5b Treasurer: The current balances were:

Treasurer's Account: £3,332.38; Joppa Tennis Courts: £7,011.28.

Recent improvements to the tennis courts were likely to reduce the JTC fund shortly.

The Treasurer had sent the usual £25 as a 'Christmas box' to the keeper of the Town Hall, who had recently retired. Another £400 from the Helen Hopekirk fund had been spent.

245.5c Joppa Tennis Courts: no report this time.

245.5d Task Force: no report this time.

245.5e Planning: around 70 people had attended a meeting in the Town Hall to express concern about the latest HMO application for 6 John Street; a decision about this application was expected on 9th February. An application to build flats in Bellfield Lane had been passed despite objections, and had been resubmitted for a larger building; another neighbour was likely to submit similar plans, leading to an undesirable “development creep”.

The City Council had published a draft development brief for the Meadowbank site, with high-, medium- and low-density housing in the west, north and east parts of the site respectively, and a small multi-storey sports facility in the south. The deadline for comments was 9th March, though Maureen Child said this would be flexible. John Stewart and Robert Gatliff agreed to collect comments and draft a letter for consideration at our February meeting. Robert Gatliff suggested inviting someone from Craigentenny Community Council to our next meeting; Maureen offered to recommend a contact. John Stewart offered to let the City Council know that we would be submitting a response; Lawrence Marshall said that Richard Vinnicombe was the relevant official.

Caroline Hosking asked about the proposals to redevelop the Funpark site. John Stewart reported that there was no further news about revised proposals, and agreed to follow this up with Francis Newton.

Stephen Hawkins asked about the sailing club. No application has been submitted yet, but it was suggested that we should write to the City Council in support of the idea.

- * **Action: all, to comment on draft Meadowbank proposals to John Stewart and Robert Gatliff.**
- * **Action: John Stewart to let the City Council know to expect our response to the Meadowbank redevelopment proposals.**
- * **Action: Maureen Child to provide Robert Gatliff with a contact for Craigentenny Community Council.**
- * **Action: Robert Gatliff to invite a member of Craigentenny Community Council to our next meeting.**
- * **Action: John Stewart to ask Francis Newton about the latest proposals for the Funpark site.**
- * **Action: Secretary to write to the City Council in support of the Portobello Sailing Club.**

245.5f Signs, Plaques and coadestone: Celia Butterworth reported that the information board at the kilns had been removed and kept safely until the damaged kiln was repaired. The ‘seaside’ board at Marlborough Street needed to be replaced. The largest of the coade-stone pillars in the Community Garden was to be given a ‘cap’, without which it looked unfinished; the protective prickly plants would be added in March.

245.5g Portobello Traders: Sheila Scott reported that she would be going round local charity shops to check on the amount of new goods they were selling. Brenda Molony had received a letter from Malcolm Chisholm which showed that there was still confusion about the rules governing what charity shops could do. There was to be an initiative at the end of February to promote local shops.

245.5h Portobello Online: see item 245.5b.

245.5i Community development planning: no report this time.

245.5j Community Centre: no report this time.

245.5k Councillors:

Maureen Child circulated her usual monthly report. She drew attention to a summary of the position on local schools and suggested that it was worth waiting for further proposals from the City Council before discussing the issue further locally.

Lawrence Marshall welcomed the near-unanimous City Council decision about Portobello’s schools, and was glad that the issue would not become a political football. An objection to the proposed flood-prevention scheme for the Figgate Burn threatened to delay the entire project with a public enquiry. The High Street improvement work included the publication of a local shopping directory, copies of which were available in the Library. The Evening News had just published a very positive article on the urgent need to reopen Edinburgh’s South Suburban Railway.

245.6 Any Other Business

245.6a HMO in Duddingston Crescent: Several members of the public reported concerns over an application for a 'House in Multiple Occupation' licence for 1 Duddingston Crescent, which the City Council apparently wanted to use as a refuge for 16 homeless people, possibly including serious offenders. Maureen Child was aware of the application and suggested that the Community Council write to the City Council to highlight any concerns; John Stewart agreed to do this, and to ask local schools and the police for their comments. Margaret Munro pointed out that the City Council's Health & Social Care department was desperate to find suitable accommodation for people, and that their risk assessments do take account of locality.

245.6b Water: David Turner reported that the Portobello Council of Churches was organising a one-day 'family-friendly' festival on the theme of 'water', at St Philips Church from 10:30am to 4pm on Saturday 24th March. Artists, musicians, crafts-people and others would be helping to draw attention to this vital and precious resource.

245.6c Replacement of Portobello schools: Stephen McIntyre referred to the letter from the chair of the School Board at Portobello High School that had been circulated with the minutes (it is included at the end of these minutes also). He asked that this be discussed at the February meeting, with a view to the Community Council endorsing or rejecting the letter's request that we accept the City Council's decision and move on to the next stage of planning for the new schools.

- * **Action: Secretary to include the issue of Portobello's new schools on the agenda for the February meeting.**

245.7 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 February 2007.

Subsequent dates are: 26th March 2007
 30th April 2007
 28th May 2007
 25th June 2007

Letter from Portobello High School Board on the REPLACEMENT OF PORTOBELLO HIGH SCHOOL

The consultation period to consider plans for replacement of Portobello High School, also St John's Primary School next door, has now passed. Early indications are that a clear preference exists in the community to replace one or both schools on part of the Portobello Park or adjacent golf course. The full results of the consultation go before the City of Edinburgh Council on 21 December. There is general, and welcome, acceptance that re-building both schools is a necessary and urgent matter, and that the sites shortlisted in the report for consultation were broadly accepted as the only viable options.

During the consultation, the City of Edinburgh Council made clear its intentions to seek funding primarily from the Scottish Executive to re-build both schools, on the basis that such an approach was consistent with the Executive's policy on the previous 2 Parliaments. The Council also said that there was no intention to build housing on Portobello Park, or sell portions of the Park for this purpose by private developers. Without this assurance, the consultation would have been in serious trouble. Although affordability of the whole venture is at risk, we commend this approach.

Looking forward, regardless of which option succeeds, there are 2 key tasks for public representatives:

1. to **expedite planning** and avoid hampering progress through objection and legal challenge if at all possible; and
2. to secure a clear **funding** commitment at an early stage.

On the matter of planning, there needs to be wide involvement of local community interests, a range of stakeholders and, in particular, neighbours to the chosen sites. Portobello Community Council should remain a key forum for disconsolate community members, although the community has nothing to gain and much to lose from further delay after the decision of 21 December. Adherence to the planning process is important, as is the attraction of designing a structure and surrounding environment that is an asset to the community, a centrepiece to East Edinburgh, and potentially a magnet for the community due to excellent and sustainable design.

Whatever the outcome of forthcoming elections, the Scottish Executive will want to invest in education and complete programmes of renewal in school building. Withholding commitment to fund the re-build of 2 schools makes no sense. This commitment would remove uncertainty and enable planning with confidence.

We therefore call on local representatives at Community, City and Parliamentary level to lead the East Edinburgh community through the most efficient planning process with wide ownership of the venture, to broaden the scope of re-building to become much more than two schools – a community asset; and to ensure that the City secures funding commitment at the earliest possible stage.

Yours sincerely

DR ANDREW FRASER

Chair, Portobello High School Board