



PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the 275th meeting held on 25th January 2010 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall

Present: Tom Ballantine, Sandra Blake, Archie Burns, Diana Cairns, Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, Lilian Graham, Caroline Hosking, Peter McColl, Brenda Molony (*Portobello Reporter*), John Stewart (PAS), Nick Stroud, Leon Thompson, Anne Ward (PCATS), Sean Watters (Towerbank Parent Council), William Wilson, Frances Wraith (Brightons & Rosefield Residents).

Apologies: Cllr Mike Bridgman, Celia Butterworth, David Hamilton, Nelson Johnstone, Margaret Munro (Portobello History Society), Margaret Rae (PPAG), Gavin Strang M.P.

In attendance: Cathy Cherizard (CEC), Cllr Maureen Child, Dave Davidson (The Mortgage People), Sheila Gilmore, Cllr Stephen Hawkins, Arthur Jeffery, Kenny MacAskill MSP, Stephen McIntyre (The Mortgage People), Lawrence Marshall, Sarah Potter (Portobello Police), Gerry Richardson (Portobello Police), David Scott (Portobello Centre), Margaret Smith, Tom Smith, Ian Wilson.

275.1 Chair's welcome

John Stewart welcomed everyone to the meeting.

275.2 Minutes of November meeting

Brenda Molony asked that item 274.3f be clarified to show that it was the request for a hearing about the Fun City planning application that had been rejected.

Dawson Currie pointed out that the grant referred to in item 274.8 was from the Edinburgh Partnership, not the Neighbourhood Partnership.

With these corrections the minutes were accepted: proposed by Diana Cairns, seconded by Dawson Currie.

275.3 Matters arising from November meeting

275.3a John Stewart to write to Planning Department in support of International Language School proposal (274.3a). The planning application has now been lodged, and John has written in its support.

275.3b Robert Gatliff to seek funding to repair Baptist Church so clock can be put back in place (274.3d). Robert has identified several possible sources of funding and will apply to them. Ongoing.

275.3c Office Bearers to consider how to put letters and other Community Council documents in the public domain (274.3h). John Stewart has spoken to Joyce Campbell about this but agreed to defer the final decision until staff have settled into the redeveloped Library. Ongoing.

275.3d John Stewart has written to Stephen Hawkins as chair of the Neighbourhood Partnership to ask how we can best improve our interaction with and participation in the Partnership (274.31). The next Partnership meeting was due to focus on Craigmillar, but Stephen promised to let the Community Council know as soon as there was a meeting of more relevance to Portobello.

* **Action: Stephen Hawkins to let the Community Council know of Neighbourhood Partnership meetings relevant to Portobello.**

275.3e Stephen Hawkins to ask that bollards be installed at key points to keep lorries off pavements (274.3m). The City Council is now planning to install cycle-racks to perform this function.

275.3f Cllr Hawkins to arrange a meeting of Council official and William Wilson at swingpark (274.3o); this is due to take place by mid-February. Ongoing.

275.3g Stephen Hawkins reported that he had spoken to BL Developments to ask them to improve the security of their site (274.3r), and he would try again. Ongoing.

275.3h Treasurer to send £50 to the Librarian (274.3w). Done.

275.3i All interested to attend the Zero Waste public meeting in Danderhall (274.7).

275.3j Nick Stroud to collect photos and introductory paragraphs for the website from those who wish to supply them (274.8); this item was deferred pending a discussion of how the Community Council should present itself to Portobello.

275.3k John Stewart to talk to Joyce Campbell about the Community Council's presence in the Library (274.8). Ongoing.

275.3l Diana Cairns to put paper copies of key documents in the Library (274.8). Ongoing, while the Library decides how to accommodate Community Council documents.

275.3m John Stewart to object to the proposed development in Bellfield Lane (274.9h). Done.

275.3n Diana Cairns to write to maintain the Community Council's objections to the Planning Concordat (274.9h). Done.

275.3o John Stewart to invite The Mortgage People to the January meeting (274.10a). Done.

275.3p Nick Stroud to circulate the letter of complaint with the minutes (274.10a). Done.

275.3q John Stewart to circulate his responses to the individual components of the complaint (274.10a). Done.

275.3r John Stewart to arrange for cheque to be sent to High School for golf trophy (274.10c). Done, and thanks received from the High School.

275.3s Sarah Potter to get police statistics about the safety of the junction (274.10e). Preliminary research showed that there had been 15 accidents over a four-month period at the roundabout and 16 accidents over the same period at the new junction, but more detailed evidence was needed. Ongoing.

275.3t Diana Cairns to invite a City Council traffic engineer to the January meeting (274.10e). This was deferred because of the volume of work on the January agenda and until a meeting plan is clarified.

275.3u All, to consider objecting to the City Council about cuts in education funding (274.10f). Done.

275.4 Matters for Any Other Business

Several items were identified for discussion in Any Other Business.

275.5 Complaint from The Mortgage People

Following the discussion of their complaint at the November meeting Dave Davidson and Stephen McIntyre were invited to make a presentation for consideration at this meeting. In opening the presentation Mr Davidson pointed out that the aim was to ensure clarity and transparency in policies and procedures for the maximum benefit of Portobello, and not to jeopardise valued relationships.

Mr Davidson itemised several ways in which he felt that the Community Council had not acted impartially when dealing with their planning applications. He emphasised that he was entirely happy for the Community Council to object to any development proposals, so long as policies and procedures were fair, accurate, consistent and transparent.

Having clarified some points and highlighted difficulties in understanding Community Council procedures from the minutes of its meetings, Mr Davidson and Mr McIntyre withdrew.

There was general agreement that the most important response should be to develop the best possible practices for the future, and not to dwell too much on the past. It was also important for the Community Council to clarify its relationship with Portobello Amenity Society.

John Stewart was concerned that developers would want to build on every possible scrap of land, thereby destroying the open feel of Portobello's conservation area.

It was agreed that it would usually be impractical to invite intending developers to Community Council meetings because there is only a three-week window in which to lodge objections, and a minimum of four weeks between meetings. Stephen Hawkins pointed out that the City Council would shortly be issuing new guidance to community councils on dealing with planning issues. Maureen Child didn't think the

Community Council had done anything wrong but thought it would be valuable to learn from this experience and move on, aiming for dialogue with developers whenever possible.

It was agreed that John Stewart would write to The Mortgage People thanking them for their comments and assuring them that the Community Council fully agrees that its actions should be transparent and consistent.

- * **Action: John Stewart to write to The Mortgage People thanking them for attending the Community Council meeting and presenting their case.**

275.6 Viridor public inquiry

Diana Cairns reported that all necessary documents have been submitted for the public inquiry into Viridor's application for permission to build a waste transfer site at Sir Harry Lauder Road, including the precognitions (statements of evidence). The inquiry was due to start at 10am on 8th February at the British Legion in Baileyfield Road. Among those opposing the application would be PONGS, PAS, the Community Council, St John's School, and possibly other local schools; several people speaking against the proposal would include John Stewart, Diana Cairns, Peter McColl, Franny Wraith, the three local City Councillors and Kenny MacAskill MSP.

The Reporters would take account of the level of public attendance at the meeting, so it is important for as many people as possible to attend, even if only for half-an-hour.

- * **Action: all interested to consider attending part of the public inquiry.**
- * **Action: Diana Cairns to put details in the community noticeboards and circulate to schools.**

275.7 Application for permanent hovercraft service

Stagecoach has lodged a planning application for a passenger terminal for the Portobello end of its planned hovercraft service. John Stewart circulated several plans to indicate what was proposed. The site has been moved a little to the west of the one used for the pilot service. There would be a concrete ramp on the beach for the hovercraft and passengers would cross the Promenade to and from the terminal building, which appeared to be a very basic, functional prefabricated unit with parking spaces for six disabled drivers and no parking at all for the general public. Buses would take commuters on to Edinburgh or Leith.

Issues were suggested to include the principle of having a hovercraft service at all, the quality of the terminal building, public safety, car parking and traffic, noise, and impact on local wildlife and other beach and sea users. The City Council planning official monitoring the application had requested further details from Stagecoach. Sean Watters thought from his soundings that some local people were in favour of the new service. Archie Burns could see no evidence that the service would bring economic benefit to Portobello, and it was observed that there seemed to be no plan for a bus service connecting Portobello with the terminal. Dawson Currie suggested that we should try and achieve some planning gain for our town. Lawrence Marshall did not think the noise would be a problem for King's Road residents, and said that although fuel consumption per mile was much greater for hovercraft than for trains, the directness of the crossing meant that fuel cost per passenger-trip would be better by hovercraft. Kenny MacAskill observed that Leith would be a more logical destination than Portobello.

It was agreed that John Stewart would write to the Planning Department objecting to this particular application on several specific grounds, while supporting the principle of a hovercraft service from Fife to Edinburgh, and also to Jonathan Bendit to seek the Sailing Club's view.

- * **Action: John Stewart to write objecting to this particular application in terms of the poor design and materials proposed for the terminal building, the lack of parking, and raising questions about noise levels, location, safety issues and environmental impact, while supporting the idea of the proposed hovercraft service in principle.**
- * **Action: John Stewart to ask the Sailing Club for its views of the hovercraft proposal.**

275.8 Priorities for pavement/road spending

Cathy Cherizard had circulated information about the Neighbourhood Environment Programme, and asked for suggestions of the highest priorities for the next round of investment in local roads and pavements. Individuals could submit suggestions on the nomination forms handed out at the meeting: requests should include precise details of location and problem, with a photograph if possible. Cathy agreed to organise an

evening public meeting at which a wider group of people could hear what was on offer and suggest where the most urgent work was needed.

- * **Action: Cathy Cherizard to organise an evening public meeting to discuss priorities for pavement and road improvements.**
- * **Action: Secretary to circulate the nomination form.**

275.9 Communications and public image

There are several ways in which the Community Council could publicise its work and receive feedback from the local community, which will be discussed in detail at a future meeting. Meanwhile John Stewart had written an introductory article for the *Portobello Reporter*, and asked if anyone would like to write an article for the next edition. Tom Ballantine, as a new member, agreed to write something about why he joined and what he hoped the Community Council would achieve. Articles should be up to 250 words long, and the next deadline would be 10th February.

- * **Action: Tom Ballantine to write about the Community Council for the Portobello Reporter.**

275.9 Reports

275.9a Police: Sarah Potter introduced her colleague Gerry Richardson who would be taking her place at Community Council meetings for a few months. She reported that there had been several recent break-ins to homes and businesses, with the police fairly certain who the culprits were. She warned that a company called SAS Fire and Security was operating locally and using unpleasantly aggressive sales tactics, particularly with old people

Kenny MacAskill suggested that it would be helpful to have an article from Crimestoppers in the *Portobello Reporter*.

- * **Action: Sarah Potter to request a Crimestoppers article for the Portobello Reporter.**

275.9b Treasurer: No report available. John Stewart reported that Anne Ward was unable to take up the Treasurer's post at present, and he asked for anyone interested in taking this on to contact him.

- * **Action: anyone interested in being Community Council Treasurer to contact John Stewart.**

275.9c Neighbourhood Partnership: Dawson Currie reported that the meeting had been told that the no. 69 bus service would no longer be going from Portobello to Fort Kinnaird, because only half enough passengers used it to make it economically viable. Stephen Hawkins responded that it would cost £100,000 to subsidise the service, and that there were much higher priorities for the money; all possible options had been investigated, and the only way of continuing the service would be to have many more people using it.

275.9d Joppa Tennis Courts: No report available.

275.9e Environmental Update: Cathy Cherizard summarised local issues. Lunchtime litter was again being problematic, and it was agreed that it could be useful to organise an evening public meeting to discuss waste services, the Task Force and all aspects of recycling. A new management plan for the John Street Community Garden was being developed, and all planting along the High Street was to be renewed; suggestions about this replanting would be welcome.

Diana Cairns asked about plans to replace trees in Rosefield Park. Brenda Molony pointed out that it was two years since it had first been reported that large puddles could form at the bus stop in front of the Town Hall, and she asked that the problem be fixed.

Franny Wraith asked for help in clearing up the sludge that formed along Sandford Gardens as a result of heavy rain on leaf fall, and it was reported that a fence had fallen in the vicinity of 34 Windsor Place; Cathy agreed to investigate both these problems.

- * **Action: Cathy Cherizard to consider organising an evening public meeting to discuss waste services and recycling.**
- * **Action: Cathy Cherizard to request definite plans to replace lost trees in Rosefield Park.**
- * **Action: all, to suggest priorities for planting along the High Street.**
- * **Action: Cathy Cherizard to find out if the City Council will maintain the new planting or just install it.**

- * **Action: Cathy Cherizard to investigate progress in fixing drainage outside the Town Hall.**
- * **Action: Cathy Cherizard to investigate ‘leaf sludge’ in Sandford Gardens.**
- * **Action: Cathy Cherizard to investigate a fallen fence in Windsor Place.**

275.9f Planning: John Stewart distributed copies of the elevations of two new houses for which applications had been submitted for developments in Bellfield Lane, one a resubmitted plan at no. 19, the other a new plan for no. 17. This was effectively creating a new street where originally there had been no residential development, but the City Council apparently accepts that a precedent has been set and is not opposed in principle. Some concerns were expressed, especially over the possibility that similar developments could happen in any other street with large gardens, and there was general agreement that the City Council planning department had stumbled into this situation with its eyes shut.

- * **Action: John Stewart to object to the proposed developments in Bellfield Lane on the grounds of loss of privacy, over-development, traffic problems and loss of amenity.**

275.9g Signs, Plaques and coade-stone: No report this time.

275.9h Portobello High School: No report this time.

275.9i Community Centre: David Scott reported that there had been no meeting in January; the next was due on the second Tuesday of February.

275.9j Councillors:

Maureen Child circulated her usual written report.

Cllr Hawkins recorded his displeasure and disappointment over the lack of affordable housing and family housing in the Funpark development, and the fact that this aspect of the Design Brief had been ignored.

275.10 Any Other Business

275.10a Meet the Funders

There was to be a meeting on 28th January involving a lot of grant-awarding organisations. Margaret Munro was planning to attend if well enough, to see what funding opportunities there might be for Portobello, and it was hoped that other community councillors would go too. Diana Cairns agreed to re-circulate the details.

- * **Action: Diana Cairns to re-circulate the details of the ‘Meet the Funders’ meeting.**
- * **Action: all, to consider meeting potential funders on 28th January.**

275.10b Portobello Library

Librarian Joyce Campbell had written with news of the Library’s redevelopment. This had incorporated a wide range of suggestions made by customers of all ages, with every effort made to incorporate the history and the strong community spirit of the area in the new design and furnishings. The redevelopment had cost £98,000, with an additional £20,000 spent on new stock. The library re-opened on 21st December, and was officially opened by Cllr Deirdre Brock on 15th January. There are further details, with photographs, at http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/internet/leisure/libraries/your_nearest_library/cec_portobello_library

275.10c Provost Brand’s portrait

Brenda Molony was concerned that the portrait of Portobello’s last Provost had been moved from the Library to the Town Hall, and was therefore not likely to be seen by many people. The major issue was agreed to be that not enough local people use the Town Hall because it is so expensive, even though it belongs to our town. It was agreed that this should be a topic for a future meeting; meanwhile Peter McColl would circulate some of the local community development trust’s thinking about how usage of the Town Hall could be improved, and Cathy Cherizard would find out how well it is being used at the moment, and why its usage is apparently less than it was a few years ago.

- * **Action: Peter McColl to circulate thoughts on improving use of the Town Hall.**
- * **Action: Cathy Cherizard to find out how well the Town Hall is used, and whether there has been a change in recent years.**

275.10d Community Council skills

There had been a proposal a year ago to find out what skills and talents community councillors could offer the group, and a questionnaire had been drawn up, tested and distributed to find out. Those who had not already done so were asked to fill in the form and return it at the February meeting; it was stressed that the information was entirely for the Community Council's internal use, and would not go further afield.

- * **Action: all, to complete the 'skills matrix' questionnaire.**

275.10e Plans for the 'Big W' site

It was reported that the Big W site at Brunstane train station had been acquired and was due to reopen as a retail warehouse, possibly with an attached garden centre; John Stewart agreed to find out more.

- * **Action: John Stewart to investigate plans to open a new retail centre at the old 'Big W'.**

275.10f Computer classes

Caroline Hosking circulated information about computer classes for beginners running from 9th February to 30th March in Piershill Library, at 5.30pm–7.30pm. Anyone wishing further information or to sign up should contact Linda Kelly (0131 657 2607).

275.10g Visiting people in custody

Diana Cairns reported that Lothian & Borders Police were organising a meeting on 13th February for anyone who would be interested in volunteering to visit people who had been taken into police custody, to act as impartial observers.

- * **Action: Diana Cairns to circulate information about the scheme by email.**

275.10h Conduct of meetings

Sandra Blake was concerned that the meeting had gone on too long, and that important matters had been squeezed out by less important ones. There was general agreement that Community Council meetings should finish by 9:30pm, and that as much routine information as possible should be circulated in advance.

275.11 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.
- Traffic problems in Portobello (Community Council discussion, then City Council visitor).
- 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.

275.12 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 22nd February 2010

Subsequent dates are: 29th March 2010
26th April 2010
31st May 2010
28th June 2010