



PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the 244th meeting held on 27th November 2006 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall

Present: Celia Butterworth, Diana Cairns, Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, Robert Gatliff, Kathleen Hart, Stephen Hawkins, Bob Jefferson, Peter McColl, Stephen McIntyre, Brenda Molony, Margaret Munro, Tom Nimmo, Sheila Scott, John Stewart, Nick Stroud, William Wilson, Betty Young.

Apologies: Alix Gaffney, Karen MacLean, John Smart, Margaret Smith, Tom Smith, Aileen Ward.

In attendance: Cllr Maureen Child, David Connelly, Dave Davidson, Caroline Hosking, Cllr Lawrence Marshall, Kenny Owen, I. Richardson, Carla Van Bunderen, Anne Ward.

244.1 Chairman's welcome

Robert Gatliff welcomed members and visitors to the final meeting of the year, which would as usual be a short one followed by Christmas refreshments.

244.2 Minutes of the previous meeting

Maureen Child and Stephen McIntyre referred to inaccuracies in the minutes of the previous meeting. It was agreed that the Secretary should circulate a corrected version of the minutes, and should add the word DRAFT to future minutes until these had been corrected and approved at the following meeting.

- * **Action: Secretary to correct and redistribute the minutes of the October meeting.**

244.3 Matters arising from October meeting

244.3a Jewel & Esk Valley College (minute 243.2)

Robert Gatliff pointed out that it was unnecessary for him to write to the City Councillors about the plans for redeveloping the College, since they had both been at the meeting.

244.3b redevelopment plans for Western Portobello (minute 243.3)

Robert Gatliff regretted the lack of progress on this, but Lawrence Marshall said that such procedures inevitably took time and couldn't be hurried. All agreed, however, that progress was too slow, so Lawrence Marshall agreed to talk to Francis Newton to try and get things moving early in the New Year; Robert Gatliff offered to back this up with a letter.

- * **Action: Lawrence Marshall to ask Francis Newton to expedite the Western Portobello development plans.**
- * **Action: Robert Gatliff to write to Francis Newton outlining a desirable timetable for progress.**

244.3c High Street redevelopment (minute 243.7)

Stuart Smith of the City Council suggested that it would be more useful to have an onsite meeting in the New Year, once all works had been completed.

244.3d Portobello Online (minute 243.8h)

Robert Gatliff had discussed various problems with Maria Devoy, who had agreed with Bob Jefferson, Paula Williams and technical colleagues that it would be best to form a separate group to run the website, with no formal or legal links to the Community Council. Members were requested to comment on this proposal before the January meeting. Margaret Munro was concerned that it took a lot of work to set up a new company; Robert Gatliff observed that *Big Things on the Beach* was also considering setting up a company.

- * **Action: all, to consider possible consequences of *Porty Online* becoming a separate entity.**

244.4 Community Planning

Margaret Munro circulated three papers on this subject, and reported on three meetings she had attended on the Community Council's behalf, but was concerned that progress was very slow.

Following May's elections Edinburgh will have 17 three- or four-member wards, each with the same number of community representatives. Our ward would be "Portobello/Craigmillar", extending out as far as the new Royal Infirmary and Kinnaird Park, though with only three councillors. Devolved services would include environmental health, trading standards, anti-social behaviour, roads, parks, waste, building services, housing and libraries. If our Community Council doesn't participate actively in these, decisions affecting us will be made without us. Craigmillar Community Council has suggested a meeting with us to discuss the issues.

It was agreed to form a working group to decide what we should do, with Margaret Munro, Robert Gatliff, Tom Smith and one or two others: volunteers were requested. There would be a meeting at the Royal High primary school on 5th December at which more information might become available. Maureen Child observed that everyone involved in the partnerships would have to learn new roles, including City Council officials. There would be 13 "neighbourhood partnerships" based on the 17 multi-member wards, which would be combined into five community planning areas reporting to one overall community partnership called The Edinburgh Partnership; new managers would be appointed to each of these groups. It had not yet been decided how to appoint these managers, nor whether the groups would communicate with paper or online, and difficulties might arise in arranging meetings between paid officials working normal business hours and volunteers who would only be available outwith those hours.

There had been a presentation on the experience of a pilot group in West Edinburgh, from which it was clear that each area was unique, and there might not be a fixed pattern for everyone. Flexibility and good will were certainly going to be required. Financial arrangements would also change: community councils receive grants of £600-£700, while neighbourhood partnerships would have budgets of over £100,000.

A great deal of work would have to be done over the coming six months, including the production of a local plan and communication with all local community groups. The benefit of this effort would be a noticeable improvement in local services. Maureen Child felt that Portobello was well placed to take advantage of the new arrangements, but Margaret Munro remained concerned about the effort required to forge the new partnerships.

- * **Action: Margaret Munro, Robert Gatliff and Tom Smith to set up a working group to decide how to prepare for the new neighbourhood partnerships.**
- * **Action: all, to consider joining this working party (two volunteers are sought).**

244.5 Reports

Most reports were held over for the next meeting.

244.5a Police: the police had dealt with 1,471 calls in the month, which was a typical figure following the unusual increase the previous month. Inspector Ward communicated his thanks for the Community Council's contribution to the cost of children's wristbands.

244.5b Treasurer: The current balances were:

Treasurer's Account: £3,884.65 (of which £89.10 belonged to the website group);
Joppa Tennis Courts: £7,011.28.

244.5c Joppa Tennis Courts: no report this time.

244.5d Task Force: no report this time.

244.5e Planning: no report this time.

244.5f Signs, Plaques and coadestone: Celia Butterworth reported that prickly plants were to be used around the coadestone pillars to discourage people from climbing up them.

244.5g Portobello Traders: no report this time.

244.5h Portobello Online: no report this time.

244.5i Community development planning: no report this time.

244.5j Community Centre: no report this time.

244.5k Councillors:

Maureen Child circulated her usual monthly report.

244.6 Any Other Business

244.6a High School and St Johns: Andrew Fraser, chair of the School Board at Portobello High School, had written to ask for Community Council support for an orderly planning process; his letter is appended to these minutes.

244.6b Lothian Buses: Bus service 69 has had its route extended to cover the High Street, Mountcastle, Northfield, Willowbrae, and along Milton Road to Brunstane, then back along Harry Lauder Road to the High Street, starting on 21st January. Sheila Scott referred to a 140-signature petition regretting earlier bus changes, and pointed out that two elderly people had been injured while using alternative bus services.

244.6c Viridor waste management: John Stewart wondered why Seafield had not been chosen as the new waste management site, as recommended in the draft local plan. Maureen Child and Lawrence Marshall recommended anyone interested in this to visit the Viridor exhibition.

244.6d Portobello sailing school: Robert Gatliff reported that he was planning to help an application for an LDC grant to support the sailing school; he asked if this could be done in the name of the Community Council, and this was agreed.

244.7 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 29th January 2007.

Subsequent dates are: 26th February 2007
26th March 2007
30th April 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