



PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the 243rd meeting held on 30th October 2006 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall

Present: Celia Butterworth, Diana Cairns, Zoe Dunn, Robert Gatliff, Stephen Hawkins, Bob Jefferson, Peter McColl, Stephen McIntyre, Karen MacLean, Margaret Munro, Tom Nimmo, Sheila Scott, Margaret Smith, Tom Smith, John Stewart, Nick Stroud, William Wilson.

Apologies: Jackie Brock, Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, Alix Gaffney, Kathleen Hart, Nora Mackenzie, Brenda Molony, Colin Scott, John Smart, Sandy Smith, Betty Young.

In attendance: Fergus Allison, John Butterworth, Lezley Cameron, Cllr Maureen Child, David Connelly, Milly McGlone, Cllr Lawrence Marshall, Heather Millar, Patricia Millar, Phil Myerscough (BL Developments), Kenny Owen, Ian Smith, Marlene Tait, Val Thompson, Aileen Ward, Ian Wilson and several others.

243.1 Chairman's welcome

Robert Gatliff welcomed an unusually large number of people to the meeting.

243.2 Plans for developing the Jewel & Esk Valley College

Several people who live in the neighbourhood of the Jewel & Esk Valley College attended in order to express their anxieties about the College's redevelopment plans. Causes for concern included a probable increase in traffic, a restaurant and other public facilities which would generate extra activity possibly well into the evening, pressure on surrounding streets for parking, a large new building which would directly overlook surrounding houses and gardens, and the possibility of a number of new flats at the back of the campus. John Stewart responded that the Community Council and Amenity Society had scrutinised the plans when they were submitted for approval several weeks previously, and had written to the City Council to express general support for investment in the College but objecting to the size, scale and location of the proposed development, suggesting a lower and more central main building would be more suitable. The Planning Committee had still to consider the plans, and would be likely to do so on 22nd November or a month later. The Chairman summed up by saying that we do want a College in our community for the educational and employment opportunities it brings, but that it must be right for its area.

- * **Action: Robert Gatliff to write to Maureen Child and Lawrence Marshall to urge that the College's plans take account of its neighbours.**

243.3 BL Developments

Phil Myerscough summarised the latest news about the redevelopment of Western Portobello. A general brief had been accepted by the Planning Committee and the City Council intended to appoint a consultant before Christmas to turn the brief into a masterplan. There would be limited opportunities for the public to make submissions into this process, so BLD was intending to circulate a questionnaire and organise a public meeting to promote public involvement. The City Council would stand well back from the process, to maximise the consultant's independence, but had explicitly ruled out the possibility of a superstore and had specified the maximum size for retail developments.

In response to a question about the availability of minutes and written reports, Phil Myerscough said that it would be entirely up to the consultant to decide how and what to make public. Stephen Hawkins pointed out that a superstore had got around planning restrictions in Colinton by buying several small shops and knocking them into one big one; he asked if the Council were guaranteeing no superstore in the whole of Western Portobello, but Phil Myerscough thought that the assurance only covered the Scottish Power site.

- * **Action: all, to watch out for the public consultation process.**

243.4 Minutes of the previous meeting

Several points were corrected in the minutes of the previous two meetings:

241.2: the new building mentioned in the second bullet point was not to be in the centre of the campus but in the very north-west corner, and the third bullet point was wrong and should be deleted.

241.4g: Stephen Hawkins pointed out that *Porty Online*'s complaints procedure did not exclude telephone calls from the contact methods, so asked that the sentence about Maria Devoy receiving telephone calls be deleted.

241.6b: our Treasurer's name is Kathleen Hart.

241.6e: it was only Listed Building Consent which had been refused for the conversion of 20 Bath Street into three flats.

241.7b: Celia Butterworth had not been at this meeting, and should therefore not be included in this item.

With these corrections the minutes were accepted: proposed by Tom Smith, seconded by Margaret Munro.

242 attendance: Carla van Bunderen's name was misspelt.

With this correction the minutes were accepted: proposed by Celia Butterworth, seconded by Stephen McIntyre.

243.5 Matters arising from September meeting

243.5a wristbands (minute 242.5a)

- * **Action: Secretary to write to Portobello Police informing them of our decision to contribute up to £150 towards the cost of wristbands to be used for children on the Promenade next Summer.**

243.6 PCATS

Stephen Hawkins said there was nothing new to report since there had been no PCATS activity since March, though PCATS had remained vigilant in monitoring threatened developments and objecting where necessary, for example over Phoenix House and Tesco in Musselburgh. It was up to Portobello in general to determine the future of PCATS and its funds.

Stephen McIntyre reported that Trevor Davies of the City Council had assured him that there was now absolutely no chance of a superstore development in Portobello, in which case there was no further need for PCATS or its representation on the Community Council. He asked if PCATS was still considering employing a consultant to be involved with the redevelopment of Western Portobello; Stephen Hawkins replied that this was a possibility.

Sheila Scott argued that PCATS could not be disbanded until the redevelopment of the Scottish Power site was complete and without a superstore, and that the community needed to stick together over this important issue even while accommodating different views. Tom Nimmo said that PCATS was needed until there wasn't a scrap of development land left in Portobello. Stephen McIntyre said it was not PCATS' job to get involved with other matters besides the superstore, and should not misrepresent any of its supporters; Diana Cairns referred to a poll of a thousand people, of whom only one objected to what PCATS was doing.

The Chairman emphasised the value of PCATS to our community, and didn't want to have any further discussion of its affairs at the Community Council. Stephen Hawkins said that PCATS would welcome constructive suggestions for the use of its remaining funds when the time came, and that there would be no further change meantime.

243.7 High Street redevelopment

Lawrence Marshall reported that he had received no response from City Council officials about the much-delayed improvements to the High Street, though he believed the work was almost complete. Problems had been caused by sub-standard materials, sub-standard work and uncooperative utility companies. Particular points mentioned were the harmful effects on local traders, poor drainage and missing trees.

- * **Action: Secretary to arrange a site visit with Stuart Smith and to circulate members with the details so that as many as possible can attend.**

243.8 Reports

243.8a Police: the police had dealt with 1,800 calls in the month, some 50% up on the previous month, with 200–300 relating to the High Street and Joppa. Sheila Scott asked why the Police Station was closed so often, even during the day. Kenny Owen said this was on instructions from outwith Portobello, following the loss of one civilian employee.

243.8b Treasurer: The current balances were:

Treasurer's Account: £3,844.74 (of which £1,265 was not ring-fenced); Joppa Tennis Courts: £7,011.28.

243.8c Joppa Tennis Courts: no report this time.

243.8d Task Force: no report this time.

243.8e Planning: John Stewart reported that he had objected to another application to convert 6 John Street for multiple occupancy. He had attended the Reporter's site visit at the ghost train site, and the Reporter had subsequently refused the applicant's appeal to build six houses there for several cogent reasons which applied equally to the Granny's Attic site, suggesting that the community put pressure on the City Council to buy the site. Lawrence Marshall was pleased with the Reporter's summary which had been more clearcut than expected, but he was worried about what alternative use would be practicable.

John Stewart made the general point that developers were apparently consulting the community more than they used to, under pressure from legislation, but were still not providing full details to the public. Stephen Hawkins said the City Council should do more than the legal minimum in dealing with major developments, for example by holding exhibitions and public meetings rather than just circulating letters to neighbours. A member of the public said that it was difficult to hear about local developments without having to be constantly looking for them. The Chairman conceded that the Community Council along with the City Council probably had a more proactive role to play.

243.8f Signs, Plaques and coadestone: Celia Butterworth reported that the coadestone pillars had been installed; they were held in place by steel rods, and metal lids should prevent rain damage. The City Council had advised against having an enclosing railing on safety grounds, a decision which could be reviewed in the light of experience. More plants and seashells and a commemorative plaque had still to be added.

243.8g Portobello Traders: Sheila Scott reported that the alteration of the route for the no. 12 bus had affected local traders badly, and suggested that the route of the no. 49 be altered to take in Milton Road to compensate; she asked that the Community Council and City Councillors try to persuade Lothian Buses to do this. Maureen Child didn't think this would work, and suggested instead that the current local 'shoppabus' route be extended. A member of the public suggested that Lothian Buses be asked to consult in local areas before making changes, rather than having to deal with complaints afterwards. Another member of the public suggested that the City Council should put more money into better local transport rather than Greenways. Sheila Scott agreed to collect views from her customers about local bus services.

243.8h Portobello Online: no report this time. Stephen Hawkins wondered when he would receive an answer to his complaint. Diana Cairns observed that she had asked for an item to be withdrawn from *Porty Online*, but after she had been told it had been, she could still find it with Google. The Chairman agreed to discuss these points with Maria Devoy.

* **Action: Robert Gatliff to discuss *Porty Online* complaints with Maria Devoy.**

243.8i Community development planning: no report this time.

243.8j Community Centre: no report this time.

243.8k Councillors:

Lawrence Marshall reported that the developer of the Granny's Attic site had converted the ground floor to flats, making it expensive to convert them back to their intended use as a cafe. The developer had also renumbered the two flats so that Jonathan Bendit had bought the wrong one for his proposed sailing school. Robert Gatliff had been contacted by a Straiton Place resident who was worried that the dinghy storage area could lead to permanent redevelopment of the site. Lawrence Marshall was reasonably confident that a sailing school would not change allowable use of the area in planning terms, and he urged that every encouragement be given to the sailing school plans. The plan to try out a hovercraft service in October had been put back to next Summer, apparently at the request of Scottish Natural Heritage, although they denied involvement; an alternative proposal had recently been made for a seagoing ferry to run between Granton

and Kirkcaldy. The damaged kiln had still not been weatherproofed. The Adshel toilet on the Promenade was out of use because of a software problem which BT was due to fix; Bob Jefferson suggested that the Council negotiate a Service Level Agreement to cover this. A member of the public referred to the Scottish Executive money to replace the King's Road and Milton Road roundabouts with traffic lights, pointing out that roundabouts were good traffic-calming measures while traffic lights were too easy to miss, especially when drivers were dazzled by low Winter sunlight.

Maureen Child circulated her usual monthly report. She added that Scottish Executive money was given for specific purposes and couldn't be redirected to anything else, however important other causes might be. She pointed out that the City Council had withdrawn its subsidy for some local bus services, so it was reasonable for Lothian Buses to alter some of its routes; some services did not warrant a subsidy, in which case it was important to find suitable alternatives. She praised the interest of local schoolchildren in such important issues as public transport and Chernobyl.

243.9 Any Other Business

243.9a community planning: Margaret Munro reported that she had attended a useful community planning meeting and would be circulating a report about it shortly. She had been the only Portobello representative there, but there had been four from Craigmillar who seemed much readier to exploit the new funding arrangements than we were. Another meeting had been arranged for a Monday afternoon, showing that the City Council still didn't know how to involve community members who had daytime jobs, nor how to get paid officials to work with volunteers. If we do not, or cannot, get involved with the new arrangements, decisions would be made without our participation which would affect us.

It was agreed that this would be the single major topic for the November meeting, with a view to setting up a dedicated sub-group if necessary.

243.9b Alix Gaffney: long-serving Community Council member Alix Gaffney is seriously ill at the moment. All sent her very best wishes for a speedy recovery.

243.10 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 27th November 2006.

Subsequent dates are: 29th January 2007
 26th February 2007
 26th March 2007