



PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the 273rd meeting held on 26th October 2009 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall

Present: Sandra Blake, Archie Burns, Celia Butterworth, Diana Cairns, Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, Lilian Graham, Caroline Hosking, Nelson Johnstone, Peter McColl, Brenda Molony (*Party Reporter*), John Stewart (Portobello Amenity Society), Nick Stroud, Anne Ward (PCATS), Sean Watters (Towerbank Parent Council), William Wilson.

Apologies: Cllr Mike Bridgman, Margaret Munro (Portobello History Society), Margaret Rae (PPAG), Gavin Strang M.P.

In attendance: Tom Black, Cllr Maureen Child, Fiona Crosbie, Robert Gatliff (Joppa Tennis Courts), Sheila Gilmore, Kathleen Hart, Cllr Stephen Hawkins, Bruce Heil, Arthur Jeffery, Andrew Paterson (Portobello Council of Churches), Sarah Potter (Portobello Police), David Scott (Portobello Centre), Tom Smith.

273.1 Chair's welcome

John Stewart welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introduced Bruce Heil and Fiona Crosbie who outlined their plans to create an international language school in Phoenix House.

273.2 International Language School

International College Britain (<http://www.icb.ac.uk/>) in partnership with the Interactive Design Institute (<http://www.idesigni.co.uk/>) is hoping to create a language school in Phoenix House, Portobello High Street. If the proposal is successful, and they get planning permission to change the building's use, they would aim to let part of the ground floor commercially and create the school on the first and second floors. This would require relatively little conversion work, so a school could be ready to take in its first hundred students within a year, aiming to increase to around 500 in three years' time. These would be students of 18 and above, from all over the world, who plan to attend UK universities but who need some extra language coaching first. The school would be open from 8am to 8pm on weekdays and 9am to 5pm at weekends. Students would choose where to live: some might wish to stay in bed and breakfast accommodation in Portobello; some are already resident at Queen Margaret University. Demand for this type of teaching was said to exceed supply, with strong interest already expressed from China, the European Union, Iran and Malaysia amongst others. One principle of the college would be to get different nationalities to mix as much as possible. Student welfare in general would be a primary concern.

The Community Council was generally in favour of the proposal, and welcomed this as an appropriate use of this building. Since the college would have strong links with Queen Margaret University it was suggested that Lothian Buses be asked to extend the 15 route from Eastfield up to QMU.

- * **Action:** John Stewart to write to the Planning Department in support of the proposal.
- * **Action:** Secretary to ask Lothian Buses to extend the 15 route up to Queen Margaret University.

273.3 Minutes of September meeting

William Wilson said that the barriers to which he was referring were not at the foot of Beach Lane but in the neighbouring playground (item 272.10).

Archie Burns pointed out that he had asked that the Community Council discuss traffic issues in Portobello before inviting the relevant City Council official to attend a meeting on the subject (item 272.10).

Celia Butterworth pointed out that the Community Council paid separate insurance premiums for public liability (£65.40) and for our tourist information boards (recently raised to £444 but negotiated down to £192

with the help of the Association of Scottish Community Councils' treasurer) (item 272.11b).

With these corrections the minutes were accepted: proposed by Anne Ward, seconded by Caroline Hosking.

273.4 Matters arising from September meeting

273.4a barrier at Beach Lane (minute 272.7)

This item was covered in the agenda; see 273.10e.

273.4b traffic problems in Bath Street (minute 272.8)

John Stewart had not managed to find the Bath Street study report produced around 20 years ago, and asked Cllr Maureen Child to ask about it in the City Council; he had given the Amenity Society's plans for one-way traffic in the area to local resident Suzanne McIntosh. Cllr Child had met the City Council's Andrew Matheson on-site, and he had agreed to explore possible options for making improvements.

- * **Action:** Cllr Maureen Child to see if City Council has Bath Street study report, and to relay City Council plans to minimise traffic damage.

273.4c restoration of civic clock to Baptist Church (minute 272.9)

Cllr Stephen Hawkins reported that the City Council had organised the clock's repair but that building restoration work costing around £50,000 was required before it could be put back in place. Robert Gatliff suggested that the clock could be restored to public view and use elsewhere, but also agreed to look for sources of funding to keep it where it belongs, on one of Portobello's earliest civic buildings.

- * **Action:** Robert Gatliff to seek funding to repair Baptist Church so that clock can be put back in place.

273.4d insurance for tourist information boards (minute 272.11b)

The insurance premium for the boards had been negotiated down from £444 to £192, by not insuring the pedestals. The Amenity Society had agreed to pay half, leaving the Community Council paying just £96.

273.4e donation to Portobello Sailing Club

John Stewart pointed out that a donation to the Sailing Club promised at a previous Community Council meeting had still not been paid, and was therefore another outstanding financial issue. He noted that the sailing club had already received £1,950 from the community fund, from which community councils are also funded. Kathleen Hart pointed out that £500 amounted to two thirds of our annual grant. These facts had not been known when the initial agreement was made to donate the money. After some discussion it was agreed through a vote that the full £500 originally promised to the Club should be paid.

It was agreed that in future possible donations should not be discussed in the presence of the recipient.

- * **Action:** Treasurer to send £500 to Portobello Sailing Club.

273.4f concerns about BL and Funpark developments (minute 272.11g)

John Stewart thanked Archie Burns and Suzanne McIntosh for their contributions to the Community Council's letter to the City Council. His request that these planning applications be heard by the full planning committee had been rejected on the grounds that the developers had complied with the relevant development plan and had consulted extensively with the local community before submitting their applications. There was general concern that the developers had hardly modified their plans in response to local objections and therefore couldn't be said to have dealt fairly with the local community. Site visits were due to be made on the afternoon of 29th October. Diana Cairns pointed out that both plans deviated significantly from the North West Portobello Development Brief and the refusal to grant the Community Council a hearing should therefore be resisted.

- * **Action:** Diana Cairns to write to the City Council's John Bury and Jim Lowrie pointing out that these major development proposals ignore the design aspirations adopted by the City Council itself for NW Portobello.

273.4g loss of ramp in Funpark development (minute 272.11g)

John Stewart had confirmed with the relevant planning officer that the developers of the Funpark site had removed the plan for a ramp at the kilns, so access would now only be by steps.

273.4h grass cutting and removal at Coillesdene sheltered housing (minute 272.12)

Cllr Maureen Child reported that she had raised this issue in a full City Council meeting, seeking to find the outcome of an earlier pilot scheme to maintain such grassy areas properly; she would relay further information when she received it.

273.5 Matters for Any Other Business

The following items were identified for discussion under Any Other Business:

- the ASCC ballot
- honorarium for Joyce Campbell
- a noisy fast food outlet at the eastern end of the Promenade
- erosion of the beach

273.6 New community council constitution

Diana Cairns distributed a new pro forma constitution, standing orders and related material from the City Council that it wished all community councils to adopt. The main differences from our existing constitution were a more detailed description of the role of community councils and their responsibility to represent the views of their community, relaxed rules about vacancies, clarification of roles, and more explicit guidance on financial procedures. There was a requirement that a community council convene an emergency meeting within 14 days if asked to do so by at least 20 local people; some felt this period was too short. It was agreed that Diana Cairns should seek further clarification from Eileen Hewitt of the City Council before we adopted the new constitution.

Questions were raised about whether new office bearers should have been elected at the previous meeting, and whether that meeting should have been the first meeting of the new Community Council. Diana Cairns pointed out that section 9(a) of the new community council constitution made it quite clear that the correct procedure had been followed, and it was also correct that the previous meeting was the first meeting of the new community council as there had been no election; she had specifically checked this with the City Council's Eileen Hewitt before the September meeting.

Archie Burns asked that Community Council correspondence be put in the public domain.

- * **Action:** Diana Cairns to consult Eileen Hewitt about aspects of the new constitution.
- * **Action:** Office Bearers to consider how to put letters and other relevant Community Council documents in the public domain.

273.7 The Neighbourhood Partnership

Peter McColl described the operation of the Neighbourhood Partnership. Seven of its nine sub-groups meet during the day, which disenfranchises Portobello people in particular. He suggested that the Community Council discuss relevant issues at its regular meetings and feed back the outcomes to the Neighbourhood Partnership. It was agreed that we try this, and ask the chair of the Neighbourhood Partnership to accommodate this way of working.

- * **Action:** John Stewart to write to the chair of the Neighbourhood Partnership asking how we can best improve our interaction with and participation in the Partnership.
- * **Action:** Peter McColl to circulate the Community Council with the list of Neighbourhood Partnership sub-groups so that we can identify the issues most relevant to us.

273.8 Organisation of November meeting

For many years the Community Council's November meeting finished with Christmas celebratory refreshments provided by Kathleen Hart and Margaret and Tom Smith – who had now retired from the Community Council. These were heartily thanked for their much-appreciated work which had made these occasions so enjoyable. Sandra Blake generously volunteered to organise something for this year, and Maria Devoy offered to help; other volunteers should contact Sandra.

- * **Action:** Sandra Blake and Maria Devoy to arrange refreshments at the November meeting.
- * **Action:** All, to contact Sandra Blake if they can help with the refreshments.

273.9 Topics for future meetings

Suggestions for topics for future meetings include:

- 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.

The need for a bus shelter beside the Coillesdene sheltered housing was agreed not to be a matter for a future meeting but for immediate attention. Cllrs Maureen Child and Stephen Hawkins agreed to take this up.

- * **Action:** Cllrs Child and Hawkins to try and get a new bus shelter installed at the Coillesdenes.

273.10 Reports

273.10a Police: Sarah Potter reported that opportunistic crimes are a problem at present, for example with the theft of bicycles, and that there has been some house-breaking. With Hallowe'en and Guy Fawkes imminent the Police have been doing 'preventive work' to minimise the chances of problems. They continue to talk to old people's groups about the dangers from bogus workmen.

The issue of delivery lorries parking on pavements was raised, particularly with some pavements currently being renewed. Such infringements can be reported to the Police. Cllr Stephen Hawkins agreed to look at the possibilities for installing more bollards to prevent this, as they have been in Brighton Place.

- * **Action:** Stephen Hawkins to ask that bollards be installed at key points to keep lorries off pavements.
- * **Action:** All, to let Stephen Hawkins know where bollards are particularly needed.

273.10b Treasurer: There was £2,033.51 in the Treasurer's Account but of this £111.56 belonged to the website and £500 had just been promised to the Sailing Club, leaving £1,421.95. The Joppa Tennis Courts account stood at £3,989.16, following their investment in a 'deep clean' at the courts.

273.10c Neighbourhood Partnership: Peter McColl reported that the next meeting would be on 11th November, and he welcomed anyone interested to join him there.

273.10d Edinburgh Association of Community Councils: Dawson Currie reported that there hadn't been a meeting since our last one.

273.10e Environmental Update: William Wilson was concerned about the state of the walls around the swingpark on the Promenade in front of Towerbank School. Cllr Stephen Hawkins had established that the 'playgrounds' section of the City Council was responsible for this, and he agreed to identify an official to meet William onsite.

- * **Action:** Cllr Hawkins to arrange a meeting of a Council official with William Wilson at the swingpark.

273.10f Planning: the major planning issues of the BL and Funpark developments were dealt with earlier. Archie Burns asked about the proposals to build on the green belt at Newcraighall. There had been no further developments, but John Stewart agreed to repeat the Community Council's objections to the City Council's planning department. There were no other planning issues of concern at present.

- * **Action:** John Stewart to emphasise the Community Council's objections to destruction of the Green Belt.

273.10g Signs, Plaques and coade-stone: Celia Butterworth summarised the work of the sub-group she chaired, pointing out that the Community Council now owned nine tourist information boards and 11 plaques. The sub-group has raised the funding to create and maintain all these, and thanks to the help of the Association of Scottish Community Councils treasurer they are now adequately insured. The three large general-purpose noticeboards badged to the Community Council are owned and maintained by the City Council.

273.10h Portobello High School: no report on this occasion.

273.10i Joppa Tennis Courts: Robert Gatliff reported on another successful year, with 96 paid-up members (most of them families) and the courts being well used. The recent deep-clean had made a big improvement. The courts held an open day on the first Sunday of every month.

273.10j Community Centre: David Scott reported that the Community Centre was going well; its next management group meeting would be on Tuesday 10th November.

273.10k Councillors:

Maureen Child circulated her usual report. She drew particular attention to the item on Credit Unions, and the development of our local East Edinburgh Credit Union. Credit Unions can be a lifeline for less well off people, and although our one already has 840 members it urgently needs more to become self-sustaining. There is to be a meeting about this in the Just World shop (54 Portobello High Street) at 8pm on Wednesday 28th October.

Stephen Hawkins was particularly concerned with the local planning applications (dealt with previously in the meeting) and by the prospects for the After School Club at Towerbank, though there wasn't yet anything specific to report or take action over.

273.11 Any Other Business

273.11a New Community Council in *Porty Reporter*

Brenda Molony asked for a report about the new Community Council for the next issue of the *Reporter*; John Stewart agreed to write something.

- * **Action:** John Stewart to write a Community Council article for the *Porty Reporter*.

273.11b Dumping of inflammable waste at Scottish Power site

Arthur Jeffery reported the dumping of several drums of flammable liquid near the homes in Baileyfield Road. These had been dealt with by the Fire Brigade, Police and City Council, but he hoped the Police would quickly identify the culprits. Stephen Hawkins agreed to ask BL Developments to check their levels of security.

- * **Action:** Stephen Hawkins to ask BL Developments to improve the security of their site.

273.11c Fast food outlet at East end of Promenade

A local resident reported that a fast food van had recently been set up at the East end of the Promenade, and that it was powered by a very noisy electricity generator from 7:45am to 5pm, seven days a week. This was generally agreed to be unacceptable. Stephen Hawkins agreed to check that it had the necessary licence, Sarah Potter said that the Police would take an interest if the generator didn't comply with regulations, and the Community Council agreed to express our concern to the City Council's Environmental Health department.

- * **Action:** Stephen Hawkins to check that Jack's snacks is licensed to operate.
- * **Action:** Portobello Police to check for obvious nuisance.
- * **Action:** Diana Cairns to write to Environmental Health to request their advice.

273.11d Possible erosion of beach

Sandra Blake reported her anxiety at the seeming erosion of the beach, but Robert Gatliff reassured her that it was checked every six months, and although its shape might have changed, the overall volume of sand was staying reasonable steady. It is however true that global warming is reshaping beaches in other parts of the UK. It was suggested that Sandra take this up with Alvin Barber in the City Council.

- * **Action:** Sandra Blake to ask the City Council's Alvin Barber about the state of Portobello beach.

273.11e Honorarium for Returning Officer

Kathleen Hart reminded the meeting that it had been our regular practice after previous community council elections to make pay a small honorarium to Joyce Campbell in recognition of her efforts as our Returning Officer, which she usually accepted as a donation to the Library. It was agreed to do that again this year.

- * **Action:** Treasurer to send £50 to the Librarian.

273.11f ASCC election

Diana Cairns reported that the Association of Scottish Community Councils had circulated voting forms with which to elect national officers, endorse financial and legal matters, and support motions from member councils. It was agreed to support the motions and financial and legal matters, and to vote for the treasurer (who has been very helpful to us), but to abstain from voting for the other officers who are unknown to us.

- * **Action:** Diana Cairns to complete and return the voting papers.

273.12 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 30th November 2009

Subsequent dates are: 25th January 2010 (no meeting in December)
22nd February 2010
29th March 2010