



# PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## **DRAFT Minutes of the 283rd meeting held on 25th October 2010 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall**

**Present:** Tom Ballantine, Sandra Blake, Archie Burns, Celia Butterworth, Diana Cairns, Dawson Currie, David Hamilton, Caroline Hosking, Nelson Johnstone, Peter McColl, Joe Madden (Portobello Open Door), Margaret Munro (Portobello History Society), Andrew Patterson (Portobello Council of Churches), David Scott (Portobello Community Centre), John Stewart (PAS), Nick Stroud, Leon Thompson, Anne Ward (PCATS), Sean Watters (Towerbank Parents Council), William Wilson.

**Apologies:** Cathy Cherizard (CEC), Cllr Maureen Child, Maria Devoy, Lilian Graham, Matthew Higson (Portobello Police), Brenda Molony (*Portobello Reporter*), Ros Sutherland (PPAG), Frances Wraith (Brightons & Rosefield Residents).

**In attendance:** Cllr Mike Bridgman, Robert Gatliff (Joppa Tennis Courts), Cllr Stephen Hawkins, Margaret Williamson (Portobello High School), and several members of the public.

### **283.1 Chair's welcome**

John Stewart welcomed everyone to the meeting, and explained the addition of outline timings to the agenda to help ensure that the meeting did not go on too late. He also proposed that in future the Police and City Council representatives would give their reports after Matters Arising, so that they could then leave if they wished.

### **283.2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

William Wilson asked that the following sentence be added to the minutes at item 282.8e, in order to give a fair reflection of points made at the meeting:

“One community Councillor felt the unity of the team writing the draft was not what it could have been and that some points of view were excluded. He requested further consultation on this issue as he believed the PCC was not fully representative on this matter.”

Sean Watters pointed out that the shelter referred to in item 282.8d was not in the Towerbank Playground but in the swingpark in front of it on the Promenade. With these corrections the minutes were accepted: proposed by William Wilson, seconded by Anne Ward.

### **283.3 Matters arising**

**283.3a** Letter to Dalrymple Estates (282.2). David Hamilton was thanked for collating comments and writing the letter.

**283.3b** Community Council Communication (282.6). The working group had met and produced a proposal for how to proceed: see item 6 below.

**283.3c** Dog-free zone on the beach (282.8d). On agenda: see item 8 below.

\* **283.3d** Letter to City Council Planning Department about solar panels (282.8e). Diana Cairns to write; ongoing.

**283.3e** John Stewart to write about bus links to the hovercraft terminal (282.8e). Done.

### **283.4 Agree Agenda and AOB**

Key items were agreed for AOB, but others were held over to ease the pressure on limited time.

## **283.5 Protocols, roles and responsibilities of Community Council members**

Diana Cairns had circulated all members of the Community Council with relevant guidelines from the City Council on responsibilities, constitution, and dealing with disputes, and John Stewart hoped that everyone would agree to be guided by these. In particular he requested that everyone respect the authority of the chair and listen to each other's contributions with polite and respectful attention.

The guidelines emphasise that community councils have to communicate effectively with their communities and reflect the full range of local opinion to the City Council. Everyone agreed that this requires a great deal of work and is difficult to achieve with limited time and finance, especially with the recent spate of major planning issues, but that there were plenty of good local opportunities for improving contact and feedback.

Sean Watters pointed out that we have not yet adopted the new constitution proposed by the City Council. Diana Cairns agreed to circulate the section that was causing difficulty, and check its status with the City Council's new community councils liaison officer, so that we could make a decision at the next meeting.

- \* **Action: Diana Cairns to enable a decision to be taken about a new constitution at the November meeting.**

## **283.6 Communications update**

Joe Madden reported on the sub-group meeting with David Hamilton and Margaret Munro to plan improvements within and outwith the Community Council. He proposed setting up a new, dedicated website as a communications hub, incorporating mailing lists and other contact options. He cited Morningside's website as a good example to emulate. The aim would be to keep everything simple so that it would not depend on any one individual's expertise, to ensure its long-term success and to minimise its cost. Precise details and protocols would be refined during the site's use, for example to handle email contacts.

Margaret Munro pointed out that it was up to the Community Council to decide what to do about the sub-group's recommendations. It was generally agreed that the sub-group should start implementing its proposals, looking to register the domain name "portobello.cc" and seeking funding – though the cost is not great, at £40 for a domain name for five years and £42 a year for hosting.

- \* **Action: Joe Madden to register the domain name for the new website.**
- \* **Action: Diana Cairns to explore funding options.**

## **283.7 Portobello High School planning application**

John Stewart thought that the Community Council should aim to write a letter to the City Council which reflected the views of Portobello in a balanced, impartial way. He pointed out that the City Council has already collected a lot of local opinion through a range of initiatives, and published it in a consultation document which forms part of the planning application. He suggested that a sub-group be formed to write this letter, with Brenda Molony and Celia Butterworth as neutral members and two others from each side of the argument. Responses had to be with the City Council by 15th November.

It was agreed that this was the best way to proceed, and that a list of points of objection and favourable comments should be included in the letter to represent all viewpoints. The other sub-group members would be Archie Burns, David Hamilton, Ros Sutherland and Sean Watters. Members of the Community Council could email comments and contributions to Brenda and Celia; members of the public could email Diana Cairns. All contributions would have to be received by Wednesday 10th November, to meet the final deadline.

(Points from the lengthy discussion, contributed by both community councillors and members of the public, are summarised in the appendix.)

- \* **Action: all, to comment if desired on the plans for a new High School, by 10th November, to Celia Butterworth and Brenda Molony.**

## 283.8 Designation of a dog-free area of the beach

A constituent had written to Sheila Gilmore M.P., requesting that an area of the beach be kept free of dogs. Cathy Cherizard had circulated a letter from the City Council which suggested that the Land Reform Act of 2003 made this impossible, though Dawson Currie pointed out that the Blue Flag conditions include dog-free areas, implying that this must be possible. Sean Watters agreed to look further into this.

- \* **Action: Sean Watters to investigate the possibility of having dog-free areas on the beach.**

## 283.9 Preparation for November meeting social

Maria Devoy had already agreed to organise this but requested help; Sean Watters agreed to do this.

## 283.10 Reports

**283.10a Police:** Matt Higson had circulated a report by email. Youth issues are a concern, often involving alcohol. People are advised to be particularly vigilant in the period leading up to Christmas, when bogus callers and bike thefts tend to increase.

**283.10b Treasurer:** Leon Thompson reported that we had £3,418.82 in the bank, having recently paid out £90 for hire of the meeting hall, £50 to Big Things on the Beach, and £67.50 for the hire of the Town Hall for the election hustings in May. Of this total, £1,662 is ring-fenced for the Gilberstoun noticeboard, leaving us with £1,756.82.

**283.10c Neighbourhood Partnership:** Peter McColl reported that the next meeting would be on 3rd November, at 7:30 in the Town Hall, to talk about compensation measures for open space that would be lost by building on Portobello Park. The following meeting would be on 8th December, in the High School.

**283.10d Joppa Tennis Courts:** No report this time.

**283.10e Environmental Update:** Cathy Cherizard circulated a report by email with these points:

- The Bridge Street Car Park sign should be installed by the end of November.
- Work on upgrading Christian Path was due to start in mid-January.
- The apparently redundant control box at Seafield/Kings Road appears to belong to BT Telecom, and is being investigated.
- The Roads Department has identified a number of gullies in the High Street that need to be repaired to prevent ponding; it is hoped that this will be done by the end of the year.
- The same Christmas lights as last year have been scheduled to be installed on 25th November.
- The City Council's Environmental Warden Team Leader had written a letter about problems in creating a dog-free area on Portobello Beach.
- The City Council's Woodlands Officer has been asked to deal with the overgrown bushes at Gilberstoun.
- The "Welcome to Portobello" sign from the King's Road end of the High Street has been lost; the Roads Department is considering funding a new one to match the existing ones (e.g. at the tunnel entrance on Brighton Place).

### 283.10f Planning:

John Stewart reported that Archie Burns' application to install a solar roof panel had been refused. He also reported that there was a Preplanning Application Notice to redevelop part of the Fort Kinnaird site; he and Stephen Hawkins agreed to circulate further details.

- \* **Action: John Stewart to circulate information about the Fort Kinnaird PAN.**
- \* **Action: John Stewart to request an extension to the deadline for responding to the PAN.**
- \* **Action: Stephen Hawkins to circulate details via Diana Cairns.**

**283.10g Signs, Plaques and coade-stone:** Celia Butterworth reported that Nick Stroud's map of a "stroll round Portobello" was being printed professionally with sun-proof ink, to be installed before Christmas.

**283.10h Portobello Community Centre:** No report this time; the next meeting would be on 9th November.

**283.10i Councillors:**

Stephen Hawkins circulated a written report.

**283.11 Any Other Business**

**283.11a Blindcraft**

Nelson Johnstone drew attention to the plight of this invaluable enterprise, which was currently under threat in the prevailing economic climate. It was agreed that the Community Council should write to the City Council to request support to continue this vital project.

- \* **Action: Diana Cairns to write to Cllr Paul Edie, chair of the City Council's Housing and Social Committee, requesting ongoing support for Blindcraft.**

**283.11b Joppa Tennis Courts**

John Stewart agreed to contact Robert Gatliff for news of the Club's constitutional position.

- \* **Action: John Stewart to ask Robert Gatliff about the Joppa Tennis Club's constitution.**

**283.11c Rubbish uplifts**

Pilton Residents' Association has contacted all community councils requesting their support to urge the City Council to reinstate its one free uplift per year of bulky rubbish, to counter the recent increase in fly-tipping; it was agreed to do this.

- \* **Action: Nick Stroud to add our support to this request.**

**283.11d ASCC elections**

Diana Cairns had circulated information by email about the national ballot currently under way, and requested views on how to vote. This was agreed after some discussion, and Diana would now complete our ballot paper.

- \* **Action: Diana Cairns to cast our vote in the ASCC election.**

**283.11e Baptist Church clock**

Margaret Munro reported that options for remounting our first civic clock on the Baptist Church are still being pursued.

**283.12 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 29th November 2010

Subsequent dates are: 31st January 2011 (no meeting in December)  
28th February 2011  
28th March 2011  
25th April 2011

## **Appendix: Points from the discussion of the planning application for the new High School**

The following points were made by community councillors and members of the public:

- the letter should reflect the views of the entire community.
- the letter should be constructed as a series of topics, reflecting in each area where there is a divergence of opinion.
- it's difficult to express a single 'yes/no' view in the letter; most people probably don't want the school in the Park but accept that if there's no alternative then it must be so, a view too subtle to be reflected in a vote for or against.
- the delay caused by all the discussion and dithering over the proposal is "bleeding the spirit of the community" and allowing local divisions to grow; the Community Council should try and speed up the process and the decision. (John Stewart reassured the meeting that the Community Council has no influence on the timetable.)
- the School itself has been trying to get new premises for seven years (a whole generation of pupils), and wants to move forward with as little further delay as possible. The excellent staff team that has been built up over the years might lose heart, and good teachers leave, if there is any unnecessary further delay.
- no one wanted to cause unnecessary delay, but it was a right as well as a duty to scrutinise any planning application to ensure that the best interests of all concerned were taken into account.
- the loss of the Park is regrettable, but we must get a new High School, and it must happen now.
- education is not just about a building but is a whole environment which must include the golf course and the entire surroundings. The new School could be built at Lismore.
- the letter has to be a response to the Planning Application as it stands, and not consider alternative solutions.
- many minds are already made up and cannot be changed, and the letter needs to reflect that irreconcilable views exist.
- a former pupil of the High School, many years ago, thought it disgraceful that the same building was being used, and pointed out that claims that the proposal for the Park would impinge on the golf course are incorrect.
- any alternative proposal or opposition to the current plan would cause yet further delay; a High School on the Park is the only viable option – a "fact of life".
- it is surprising that the City Council has not fully explored the use of a different site but has instead gone for the easiest, laziest option.
- it is worrying that the needs of the School and the needs of the local community are seen to be different; they are very much the same. The facilities of the new School and its grounds could be very useful to the community, and we should see the current proposal as a major addition to local resources.
- the need for the new School is urgent, so as soon as a decision has been made, everyone should accept it and move on.
- a Park Avenue resident doesn't want to see a large new School over the road and the consequent loss of amenity.
- Milton Road is a major traffic corridor into Edinburgh, and the planning officials do not seem to have addressed road safety issues adequately.
- a Milton Road resident wants Portobello to have a great new High School and sympathises with the urgency for it, but wishes there was a better alternative to the Park as traffic and parking problems would be significant.
- children are already being injured in road accidents all over Edinburgh, so it's not as if Milton Road poses a unique problem in road safety.

- a recent application to open a new nursery in Milton Road was turned down because of worries about the extra traffic it would generate.
- this debate has been going on for four years and many of the arguments are known and repetitive; the Community Council's letter should carefully report all points of view.
- we have to deal on this occasion with the plan as presented, not suggest alternatives, so we must emphasise the need to maximise road safety.
- the current plans already accommodate many comments from the local community.
- people who have strong views either way will make them directly to the City Council, so don't need to be disproportionately represented in the Community Council letter. The real need is to reflect the views of the large number of people who don't feel strongly enough to write direct to the City Council.
- the Community Council would help the City Council's planners by presenting a definite view for or against, rather than just presenting a series of headings without coming to a definite conclusion.
- a member of the public wondered if the City Council had offered any other solutions, or responded to previous comments from the public; John Stewart replied that minor changes had been made around pedestrian access, but not much else.
- Towerbank Primary School was generally in favour of the proposal, with reservations about traffic, and had asked that a Safe Routes to School Travel Plan be published before planning permission is granted.
- the Community Council probably has more influence in this current planning process than it will ever have again in this matter, and should use it.
- pupils' health and safety should be paramount, and the plan for a new School on Portobello Park conflicts with the City Council's own travel plans for the Milton Road corridor.
- pupils' health and safety are also an issue in the current School premises, which need to be replaced as quickly as possible.