

LEITH LINKS

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES

MONDAY 24 April 2017
LEITH COMMUNITY CENTRE (NEW KIRKGATE)

Councillors Present: Angus Hardie, David Igoe, Andrew Mackenzie, Sally Millar (Secretary), Chrissie Reid, Jim Scanlon (Chair), John Tibbitt (Vice-Chair).

Elected Representatives: Councillor Adam McVey.

In attendance: PC Niall Corrigan, Jillian Edwards (CEC), David Smith (CEC), Susan Dougal, Don Giles, Adrian Graham, Walter Manclark.

Minute Taker: Kay Goodall.

1. Welcome

Welcome from Chair. Apologies from Councillor Chas Booth, Jacqueline Rogers & Michael Traill.

2. Police report

PC Niall Corrigan attended, and apologised that the monthly statistics for March are not yet published. Key areas the team have been focusing on since the last meeting:

- **street prostitution:** only one incident reported by public last month. Two cautions were handed out (3 cautions means report to Procurator Fiscal). Prostitute Liaison Officers make referrals of known women to try to address problems. One woman is being rehoused away from the area.
- **motorcycle theft:** the community PCs are working with guesthouses & B&Bs (owners and guests) on motorcycle security (lots of European motorcycle tourists with very high value vehicles visit here).
- **chaotic social housing tenants:** Police work with partner agencies on this. They removed one anti-social tenant after an assault and robbery, and are expecting him to be evicted if he is convicted.
- **problem repeat offenders:** the team has adopted a proactive approach and visit the most problematic individuals regularly at home.
- **road safety projects:** PC Margo Darling is leading a road safety education project (funded by the LLCC Community Links Fund with primary schools around the Links).

The NE area team covers North & South Leith, Leith Docks, Western Harbour area and Leith Links (LL Community Officers are PCs Lauren Mitchell, Joe Kennedy, Paul McNiven and Margo Darling.)

3. Guest speaker David Smith, City of Edinburgh Council – on homeless accommodation

David Smith is the Partnership & Planning Manager for the City of Edinburgh Council, dealing with commissioning services e.g. homeless accommodation. He was accompanied by Jillian, one of the new commissioning officers. David had been invited as a speaker because of concern about the number of premises used for homeless accommodation in the Leith Links area.

David explained that the City Council uses B&Bs because it has a legal duty under the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 etc. to offer accommodation to everyone who has been assessed as homeless and in need of temporary accommodation, and Edinburgh simply does not have enough other housing available. The city has lost around 43,000 properties since 1994, as a result of the 'Right to Buy' policy, and not enough new housing is being built. Meanwhile Edinburgh's population is rising. Every social rented property in the city attracts an average of 147 bids. Around 3,000 homeless households end up in temporary accommodation. The private renting sector is inaccessible for most people who have been made homeless, because of high costs. It takes time to get people into permanent accommodation, and the City Council uses private accommodation such as B&Bs to fill the gap. And, sadly, stays in temporary accommodation are getting longer (average of 132 days, compared with 51 days in 2003).

To become a long-term provider of accommodation with the City of Edinburgh Council under the "framework contract", premises must meet the service specification required by the City Council, and the national HMO benchmarks <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0038/00387514.pdf>

The landlord must be registered as a 'fit and proper person' and there is a criminal background check. Tenders (via Procurement Scotland) are evaluated by three independent arbitrators. There are currently 28 properties on the Framework, (9 providers) overall.

However, at the moment there are not enough of these "framework" properties to meet demand, so B&Bs need to be used as 'spot purchases' (night by night). Because Edinburgh is a popular city for

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visitors, there may only be one bed available in a particular premises on a particular night. The team negotiate to keep prices low, and this can be cheaper than providing long-term accommodation.

The City Council aims to keep framework premises to no more than 8 in any particular ward, but does use other spot purchases when needed. Leith Links has 7 registered framework premises and uses 5 others for spot purchases, totalling 12 (as compared with, e.g. 12 in Leith Walk, 8 in South Side, 8 in City Centre etc.)

It was pointed out that counting 'properties' doesn't reflect the full picture; we need to know the number of beds. One property can contain up to 45 beds (and Abbots House has 45)

ACTION: David will find out how many beds are available in each Leith Links property, so that a calculation can be done of the overall total of homeless people accommodated here.

There is a concentration in the Leith Links area simply because this is where these kinds of properties are. The City Council does seek properties in other areas, but meanwhile, it must provide accommodation for people whose only alternative would be rough sleeping on the streets (or Bethany shelter 50 people per night in church halls).

Tenants are not monitored, though particularly vulnerable or high-risk people will only be placed after police checks. The City Council has a B&B team who inspect the premises frequently, consult neighbours and investigate complaints. There is an out-of-hours service which the B&B can ring if serious cases arise. Landlords tend to be quick to evict problem tenants.

Between March 2016 and March 2017, there were 11 complaints made in the Leith Links area against 4 B&Bs.

Chair thanked David and Jillian for coming to make their presentation and answer questions.

4. Adoption of Minutes of last meeting on Monday 27 March 2017 and Matters Arising

Proposed by John Tibbitt; seconded by Chrissie Reid. Available at <https://leithlinkscc.org.uk/> (NB under the 'Our Library' tab, not under 'Our Meetings' as previously).

Outstanding actions: There were several outstanding actions to report on.

- David Smith was invited by Councillor McVey to speak to the LLCC meeting about use of B&Bs for homeless accommodation.
- Councillor Booth had raised two problems with the Waste Officer: litter bins that had been removed on the Links, and communal bins not being emptied in hard-to-access blocks. Walter reported however that the problems had not yet been resolved.
- No progress yet made on taking over responsibility for the weekly bulletin from Michael. Michael had intimated some time ago that he did not plan to continue beyond May AGM. In fact there has not been a Bulletin since 4 April. David was concerned that others would not have time to research all the information that Michael just seemed to know. Sally said that if she and Jim and others forwarded what information they did have, to the new 'Editor', and the Bulletin just functioned to pull it together into a weekly email instead of random separate emails, no great research or IT skills should be necessary.

ACTION: John Tibbitt will lead on progressing this matter and will discuss next steps with Michael Traill.

- The Parks & Greenspace Sub-Committee was to discuss the question of an outdoor gym. This is now on the agenda for its meeting on Thursday 27 April.

Issues raised by members of the public: Susan reported ongoing concerns with the bins at Gordon Street. They are often left un-emptied. Bin men actually cause litter because they upset bins but don't clear up the mess. Residents buy locks with their own money to secure the bin rooms (to keep out drug takers, people using them as lavatories etc, but the binmen break these locks rather than opening them with the key. Repeated complaints about this had achieved nothing. Sally observed that LLCC had been minuting for the past year that a walkabout sh/would be arranged, but this had never happened. Councillor McVey agreed to arrange this for the area between Leith Walk and the area between Easter Road, at Gordon Street, Manderston Street, Crown Place (usually about half and hour).

ACTION: Councillor McVey will organise a walkabout with Darren Ryan, the local transport & environment manager. He will suggest a few dates (when residents can be present) and liaise to get this pinned down.

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Trees at WoL: Adrian asked that the meeting note the continuing issue of a large number of trees being felled illegally along a section of the Water of Leith, e.g. West Bowling Street. Don said FOWL and Leith Harbour and Newhaven CC are aware, and on the case.

5. Upcoming Events

LLCC at Community Day, Leith Market, 29 April

This is an open day for the arts groups of Customs House, with entertainment from Citadel Youth Group and others, with outdoor stalls at the adjoining market. A table had been booked by Michael for LLCC for this event but planning unfortunately had fallen through, as no-one had taken on responsibility for organising it, there was no clear purpose for the activity identified, and at this late stage not enough people are available to 'man' a stall.

ACTION - Sally Millar will cancel the booking and apologise.

Sally proposed that in future, whenever a new undertaking or activity is proposed, it must be established and minuted who is leading and taking responsibility for coordinating it, before the Community Council agrees and commits to it. Members agreed the motion.

ACTION: All Councillors

LLCC at Leith Festival Gala Day, Saturday 10 June

Chair emphasised that it was very important for the CC to take part in this big day. With proper organisation, different people can do an hour or two and nobody should get stuck there all day. Adrian volunteered to assist with practical tasks on the day. Jim volunteered to do a 'shift' on the stall but will have to share his time between this and another organisation.

ACTION - John will take the lead on this. Planning for materials and activities needs to start straightaway. Angus and Andrew offered to help with this. John will contact Michael to find out about obtaining gazebo, table & chairs.

Chair noted that the other 2 Leith Community Councils usually share the cost of the stall (£45, i.e. £15 each) and all three CCs take part in the day together.

ACTION - Don will raise this at the Leith Harbour & Newhaven CC meeting and get back to Jim to confirm their participation.

6. Sub-committee Updates

Planning and Licensing

Meetings take place only when needed in relation to a particular application, consultation or other relevant issue.

Angus reported that he had (after the consultation deadline) received a response from the Scottish Government to his Fol request regarding the evidence they had on the topic of communities' equal right of appeal against planning decisions. Although he was sent pages of material, there was little hard evidence and nothing that threw much light on the matter.

Andrew had attended the pre-Application consultation led by Collective Architecture on the demolition and building of new mid-market housing in the Coatfield Lane, Kirkgate and Giles Street area. Meeting agreed that the sub-committee should follow major developments such as this that are not in our area but in neighbouring areas that might have an impact on the Leith Links area.

ACTION: Sally will add this proposed development to the agenda for future sub-committee discussion (email or meeting).

Don passed on thanks to Michael for organizing two events about alcohol sales, attended by Leith Harbour & Newhaven CC Councillors. At present only one area in Edinburgh is considered to be over-provided, and that is the Cowgate. Yet Leith appears to have over-provision compared to the rest of the city. Many premises apply for both a bar licence and off-licence permission as a matter of course, and are awarded both. After the Council elections, the Licensing Board is to be reformed and there is an opportunity to challenge that and redress the balance. Meeting agreed that LLCC would want to be involved in making a joint representation from Leith CCs.

ACTION - Don will lead on this, starting by raising it at Leith Harbour & Newhaven CC, and will liaise back.

Parks and Green Spaces

Jacqueline has notified members that the first meeting will be on Thursday 27 April at 7pm in the Community Centre.

7. Community Links Fund Review & Report

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CLF review meeting was held on Thursday 20 April facilitated by David Reilly of the Scottish Community Development Centre. Sally thanked everyone for coming, and all agreed it had been an excellent discussion. David had described the LLCC social voting day as the best event he had attended. Sally is writing up the report for the Scottish Government, to be submitted by 30th April.

David does not see a SCDC and Scottish Government role in the outcomes of local projects, but LLCC will be monitoring the use of the funds. LLCC will make light touch contact at the 3 month mark (June / July) to ask how things are going. All funded projects have signed a 'contract' undertaking to provide an end-of-project report by March 2018 at the latest. LLCC has a duty to monitor the projects on behalf of the community and to establish credibility in case of future activities of this type. We owe it to the local community to be transparent, and in fairness to those who were unsuccessful in getting funding, to check that funded projects have actually been carried out as projected. This is also an opportunity to build on the social capital generated.

8. Open Forum

Elected Representatives: Councillor McVey has attended two council election hustings with a third tomorrow, hosted by Friends of the Earth.

Community Councillors: The council election hustings organised by LLCC (19.4.17) had been a great success. Meeting discussed also planning and holding general election hustings, but agreed not to proceed with this.

Meeting reminded that all LLCC office bearers (Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary) need to be re-elected (or new nominees elected) at the AGM in May.

ACTION: If anyone currently in office is planning not to stand again, they should notify Jim ASAP - ideally 2 weeks before the AGM (to enable people to think about whether to stand themselves, or who else to nominate, etc.)

Members of the public: Adrian reported there had been a rumour that Albert Street and Iona Street are to be made one-way, but he believes that they are not: rather, entry is to be restricted from Leith Walk from certain directions, to tackle congestion – details will become clearer later.

Chair thanked all attendees. Meeting ended at 9pm.

Date of Next Public Meeting: AGM: 29 May 2017, 7pm. Shore Room, Leith Community Centre, New Kirkgate