

LEITH LINKS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES

MONDAY 30 JANUARY 2017
LEITH COMMUNITY CENTRE (NEW KIRKGATE)

Community Councillors Present: Stephen Brennan, Gail Clapton (Leith Links Residents Association), Angus Hardie, David Igoe, Andrew Mackenzie, Sally Millar (Secretary), Chrissie Reid, Eileen Simpson, Jim Scanlon (Chair), John Tibbitt (Vice-Chair), Michael Traill.

Elected CEC Representatives: Councillor Chas Booth, Councillor Adam McVey, Councillor Gordon Munro,

In attendance: PC Fiona Brown, Kate Brown, Don Giles, Adrian Graham.

Minute Taker: Kay Goodall.

1. Welcome: Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Abu Meron (Treasurer), Jacqueline Rogers, and Tommy Sheppard MP.

2. Police report

Surgeries

The police open 'surgeries' continue. These are held at popular public spots such as Tiso's and the Hub on Restalrig Road (see Minutes of November 2016).

ACTION: PC Brown will send up-to-date details of all surgeries to Michael for displaying on the LLCC website and social media.

Policing focus during November/December 2016

'Boy racers' at Ocean Terminal remain a focus for local policing. Officers have spoken to some of the drivers and the problem appears to be quietening down.

There was a murder in the ward in December; someone has been charged and the investigation is ongoing.

Hate crime

Tackling hate crime continues to be a priority. A racially-aggravated assault took place on a bus: this was captured on CCTV and the perpetrator has been identified and charged. Anti-Muslim graffiti appeared at Sheriffbank: the perpetrator has been identified, and the person admitted the offence and has been charged. In addition, there were two cases of racially-aggravated conduct.

Mike advised the meeting that he had notified the local police of social media activities related to National Action, a prescribed neo-Nazi terrorist organisation, in Albert Street. PC Brown responded that officers had visited the individual concerned and would carry out follow-up visits. Housing officers will also visit. This has been recorded as a hate crime incident.

Statistics

PC Brown gave a summary of statistics for November for the Leith ward:

Housebreakings, including attempts	13 (6 dwellings; 2 non-dwellings; 5 other)
Common assaults	58
Serious assaults	1
Thefts	31
Thefts with shoplifting	39
Opening lockfast places (OLP)	3
Thefts of motor vehicles	5
Thefts from motor vehicles	6
Attempted thefts from motor vehicles	6

Vandalism and thefts from cars has been a particular problem around Madeira St. and Prince Regent St area, exacerbated by people leaving valuable property e.g. laptops visible in unattended vehicles.

Road Safety Initiative

Dangerous driving	0
Drink driving	4
Driving while disqualified	2
Driving without a licence	4
Driving without insurance	2

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Dedicated Prostitution Patrols

Kerb crawling

0

Soliciting

A small number of street workers given first caution.

PC Brown added that the policing team will continue to carry out plain clothes patrols during backshifts in known areas for soliciting. Chair commented that sex workers have mobile numbers for their regular clients, so do not need to hang around on the street for long. He had seen an Edinburgh City Council white van (registration number beginning 'SB') picking a sex worker up around Salamander Place and Links Gardens. PC Brown replied that information had been received from others regarding that van and driver. It was being followed up.

Expansion of 20mph zones

Adrian asked about the appearance of new signage, in advance of the 28 February 2017 start date. PC Brown said that while the Council needs time to get signs in place, these are not legally enforceable until the start date.

Chair commented that these expensive signs were hardly necessary in some streets where it would be unlikely that anyone would ever reach 30 mph. Councillor McVey explained that the City Council does not have the automatic power to apply new speed limits so must go through a legal process in every case. He added that the funding came directly from the Scottish Government budget for safer streets, so was not coming from the City Council budget, as had mistakenly been stated online and in the press.

3. Adoption of minutes of previous meeting (28/11/16) & Matters Arising:

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed by Michael Traill and seconded by Chrissie Reid. These are available at <http://www.leithlinksc.org.uk/>

Several outstanding actions were discussed.

Internal emails, website and social media

Sally reported that the plans to streamline emails and other communications, agreed at the last meeting, have been put into place and seem to be working well. This was agreed, and several members commented that they found Michael's new weekly bulletin very helpful.

Michael has rolled out the new LLCC website with additional features such as categories and tagging to make it easier for the public to find information on particular topics. Development is ongoing. Photos have been uploaded of all the elected representatives, and Michael offered to upload 200/250-word 'blurb' for any community councillor who would like to write one, summarising their perspective / what they hope to achieve etc. (a bit like the election materials).

ACTION: All Community Councillors

Monthly police reports

ACTION: Michael has not yet contacted Inspector Carson asking for written reports of the monthly statistics, but will explore this issue before the next meeting. (Meanwhile, oddly, it appears that written reports are no longer being provided to other Leith Community Councils.)

Training

A number of Community Councillors have signed up to take part in the training sessions on alcohol licensing, and on planning processes, that Michael has organised for 13 February and 13 March respectively, not only for LLCC but also for neighbouring Community Councils in the North East area. Places are still available, if more wish to attend.

In addition to developing joint training opportunities, Michael had suggested contacting the other Community Councils in North East about creating an ongoing 'cluster' group to lead joint working on local issues. He emphasised that this would not be a representative body substituting itself for the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils (EACC), but would be a purely informal, local group. Meeting approved this.

ACTION: Michael will contact the other Community Councils, to start to try and set this up.

Indication of issues that the general public wish to raise

Sally explained this as a new Agenda procedure, inviting members of the public to state at this early point any issues they intended to raise (so that they do not have to sit and wait through a long meeting, unsure about if/ when they could raise their issue, or waiting until the very end to be invited

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to speak). One person mentioned an issue but was happy for this to be discussed under Open Forum at the end of the meeting.

4. Powderhall / Seafield Waste Management Facilities

Sally had asked Councillor McVey to clarify this issue as rumours are still circulating in the community. The Edinburgh Local Development Plan clearly earmarks a site at Seafield north of Salamander Street, where the railway lines run, for an EfW (Electricity from Waste, i.e. incinerator) plant, which has caused concern. Councillor McVey explained that the Local Plan has been overtaken by events and that part is now irrelevant. Due to the early closure of Powderhall, a new collection depot and waste transfer station is being built at the Community Recycling Centre at Seafield – but it is just a depot - it will definitely never be an EfW. It is not even ‘another Powderhall’ in that it will only deal with only a third of the waste that Powderhall currently does. (A third will go to a similar site in South Edinburgh and a third to Dunbar and ultimately directly to the new Millerhill site (due to come on stream in 2020).

Adrian pointed out that even if less in quantity, this waste would travel by road vehicle, rather than by train, which would be detrimental to the community, in terms of air quality. He noted that it takes only one train to carry the load of 24 HGVs. Chair asked why the waste could not be moved by rail through the link at the docks. Councillor McVey observed that currently road vehicles go to Powderhall through residential areas, which is arguably worse, whereas the new Seafield site can be accessed via the bypass. Community Councillors pointed out that lorry drivers would take the easiest route for themselves (often through built-up areas) unless CEC ordered them to follow a ‘designated route’. It was noted that the new Millerhill plant has no train connection, and so a road link is unavoidable, but the plant itself will be highly clean and efficient and will produce energy. The meeting observed that it was unfortunate that Powderhall had failed to meet SEPA requirements – surely that should have been planned for? Councillor Munro explained that Powderhall’s expected life had had to be extended because work on Millerhill was delayed, but this was not longer viable.

Concerns had also been raised as to why the local community had not been consulted on the new Seafield development. Councillor McVey had pointed out (in a written response to LLCC) that it had actually been out for consultation as part of the standard planning application process, however because of the nature of the site and because Seafield was previously used as a waste collection depot, it was not felt that there was any fundamental ‘change of use’ of the site. Sally observed that LLCC may have missed the planning application, because the site is not within our area.

Michael asked if Councillor McVey could obtain a one-page briefing from Council officers on this, to be circulated, to allay the fears of local residents.

Angus commented that it is very hard in general to get a sense of what is going on in the Edinburgh area because there is no one central point where the City Council provides information for the public. Michael added that as there is no longer a Community Councils Liaison Officer, Community Councils cannot get information easily either. Councillor Booth responded that the City Council does issue Press releases and does place every press release on its Twitter and Facebook pages, although it would be very time-consuming for LLCC councillors to sift them all in search of locally relevant material.

ACTION: Councillor McVey will edit the existing press release on Powderhall/Seafield with updated information and send that on to Michael. Michael will then circulate this through the LLCC website and social media.

5. Hustings for Leith Ward (Candidates standing for election to City of Edinburgh Council, May 2017)

Jim announced that LLCC has organised a hustings to be held in the Community Centre (Kinnaird Hall) on Wednesday 19 April (the same day that postal votes are sent out). The candidates of all parties standing for election will be invited to take part. LLCC held a similar event three years ago, which was very successful, so a similar format will be used. Jim Scanlon will Chair; each candidate will speak for a few minutes; and then questions will be taken from the floor.

Michael commented that this will also be an excellent opportunity to promote LLCC. Sally added that leading up to April the LLCC website, Twitter and Facebook page will encourage everyone to register to vote.

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6. Community Links Fund - update

Michael reported that there have been four 'Help & Support' sessions with the public so far. As far as is known, there are currently at least 13 applications in progress, some applying for both the large and the small funds. Project ideas are varied, and the applicants include both constituted community groups and private individuals. LLCC representatives can meet potential applicants outwith the drop-in sessions if this is needed.

Sally urged Councillors present to try to encourage more applications, and Michael added that another batch of leaflets (reminder re applications and invitation to the voting event in March) will be distributed to all households during the week beginning 13 February. There has been chat on social media that will hopefully lead to more applications. Sally commented that when she and Michael attended a recent conference on participatory budgeting, representatives of other projects had been impressed by LLCC's efforts, notably leafleting the whole area. All had noted the surprising difficulty of stimulating new ideas (although they were all getting applications nonetheless).

Don asked if the funds had to be spent entirely in the LLCC geographical area: Michael explained that there must be a clear community benefit to the people and/or the place, although elements of the projects might take place outwith the area, or some of the people participating might be from outwith. Michael and Sally commented that even after the money is allocated in March, there will still be project evaluation and reporting to do for Scottish Government, along with monitoring of local projects etc. There may well be Community Choices funding on offer again next year, so bids will probably have to be in around the same time (summer 2017).

7. Seafield Sewage plant – update

Eileen had attended the most recent Stakeholders' meeting and gave an update on this. The main concern recently has been the burning rubber smell. At first the official response had been denial, but eventually a report was commissioned looking into the source and the health implications of the emissions. The investigation was carried out by OdourNet, modelled on a five-year dataset. However, the nearest monitoring station is at Gogarburn (the station at Salamander Street only monitors particulates).

The source was found to be a filter leaking benzene, toluene and hydrogen sulphide, but the leak was said to be at a very low level far below what would amount to a breach of regulations or a health risk. It would need to be 65 times greater to present a significant risk.

However, Rob Kirkwood, Chair of Leith Links Residents Association (fighting the Seafield sewage odours for many years) had brought in expert Professor Robert Jackson to question the validity of using data from a station several miles away with a flat farmland topography and very different local conditions.

Several Community Councillors commented that residents' subjective experiences of the offensive smell are not being taken into account adequately. One difficulty with reporting it is that the smell is intermittent and so when officers arrive, the smell is often gone again. The focus should be on prevention, not reaction. People do not report / complain enough – they have given up, as effective action never seems to be taken. Councillor Munro emphasised that continued reporting was essential, but Eileen observed that - as she had raised at the Stakeholders meeting - the lack of a single contact point makes this more difficult. Gail commented that Aberdeen has a single 24-hour contact point and Adrian added that London has a single text message system for the whole city for all air pollution. So it should be possible to make reporting more straightforward.

After discussion, it was agreed that the immediate concern was how to encourage more reporting, locally. It would be worthwhile to investigate the costs and feasibility of adding a second leaflet with reporting details to the leaflet drop already taking place for the Community Links Fund. It could go back to back with information about the hustings. Unfortunately, this would mean a very tight timescale

ACTION: Gail will contact Rob Kirkwood to discuss whether Leith Links Residents Association might want to collaborate / share the cost of a joint leaflet, or if not, to inform them of an LLCC leaflet providing the current contact details for reporting Seafield smells.

8. LLCC Policy on Funding Requests

Sally proposed 2 motions: (1) That LLCC adopts a clear and transparent policy on requests for funding made to LLCC, and (2) That LLCC policy should be to refuse all requests for funding (while, if possible, supportively directing requests to other more appropriate sources of funding). The rationale

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for refusing is because LLCC funds are public money intended only to cover the administrative costs of running a Community Council; LLCC income is low (£600 per year from City of Edinburgh Council); there is an increased number of elected Councillors and greatly expanded CC activities mean that expenditure is increasing greatly, so there is no 'surplus' (although there had been some in the past, when CC expenses were very low). Michael supported this and highlighted recent increases in expenses e.g. employing a Minute-Taker, printing and distributing leaflets. Chair confirmed that basically, there is little if any money to spare, and it is not appropriate to use it on anything other than its intended purpose.

New Councillors enquired about past practice. In the past, small amounts from an end of year surplus had occasionally been donated to worthy local causes. However, this now seems inappropriate. Many community groups are equally deserving of funds, and it is not right to make donations to just one or two on a 'first come, first served' basis.

After discussion, Councillors agreed unanimously to implement both of these proposals.

ACTION: An LLC policy document on this will be drawn up, to go on website, so that policy is transparent to the public.

9. Planning

Scottish Government Consultation on proposed changes to Planning system

Angus provided a short briefing on this complex issue. Following independent review, the Scottish Government is drafting a new Planning Bill and is consulting on proposed changes, with a closing date of 4 April 2017. LLCC should respond as this is an important matter that will affect everybody. Research has found that communities struggle to engage effectively with the planning system. On one hand, developers & the building industry sees planning regulations as obstruction. On the other hand, the perception of individuals and communities (including Community Councils) around Scotland is that the system is heavily biased to the benefit of developers and against communities. In particular, developers have a right of appeal and 'Third Parties' (i.e. communities) do not, so that even when planning permission has been rejected initially, rich developers can just persist until they eventually win. Communities get disillusioned and worn down by being repeatedly defeated by such appeals. An important question in the Consultation is whether there should be an equal third party right of appeal, or no right of appeal for any party (including developers).

Chair mentioned the example of Earthy at Canonmills, where there were 5000 objections to the development, as a result of which Edinburgh City Council Planning Committee rejected the proposal. The developer however appealed and won.

Councillor McVey was of the opinion that a community veto was not practicable, but that some third party right of appeal could be valuable.

Sally observed that responding to this would be a matter for the new LLCC Planning Sub-Committee and expressed hope that others would join her and Angus to take part in it.

Michael suggested a joint meeting of all Edinburgh Community Councils, to which an expert such as someone from Planning Democracy and/or local MSP Andy Wightman could be invited to give a briefing. Others suggested that an opposing perspective could also be put forward, and suggested the Teague representative who had been very articulate at the recent LLCC meeting about the local Salamander Street proposal.

ACTION: Michael will ask EACC whether it plans any such meeting and if it does not, he will approach them / other community councils about organising one.

10. Open Forum:

Water drilling at the Leith Community Croft

A concern was raised about the industrial equipment recently installed by Crops and Pots at the Leith Community Croft on the Links. Apparently, drilling has taken place, 23 metres down to the water table, and a tall tower to be powered by electricity to pump up water, has been installed. No trace can be found of planning permission having been sought or environmental impact assessment carried out, and it was not clear whether all members of the Croft had been made aware of the plan before it took place. Several issues should probably have been considered, such as noise, the terms of the lease of common good land, the conservation area status of the location, and the risk of disturbing archaeological remains. There was, furthermore, confusion as to the need for water since, it is understood, matters have now been satisfactorily arranged with Leith Athletic, to allow use of the water from the old Pavilion building. There was discussion of the best way forward on this. While it is acknowledged that Crops and Pots make a major positive contribution to the amenity of the area, that

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does not put them above the law. The meeting agreed to contact Crops and Pots to invite them to explain, rather than moving immediately to any formal contact with CEC (Planning).

ACTION: Sally will contact Crops and Pots informally by email to let them know of concerns raised at LLCC, and to invite them to explain their position. They will be invited to a future meeting to explain in person.

Bottled water at meetings

David expressed concern about the use of plastic water bottles (especially from Nestle) at the meeting. Chair explained that he purchases these at his own expense, and had made efforts to be environmentally friendly by ensuring that paper (not plastic) cups were provided.

ACTION: Bottled water will no longer be provided at LLCC meetings.

No further issues were raised. Chair thanked all attendees. Meeting ended at 9.25pm.

**Date of Next Public Meeting: 27 February 2017, 7pm. Shore Room, Leith Community Centre,
New Kirkgate**