

LEITH LINKS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES

MONDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2017
LEITH COMMUNITY CENTRE (NEW KIRKGATE)

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

Elected Representatives: Councillor Chas Booth.

In attendance: Susan Dougal, Walter Manclark, Eric Gallo, Evie Murray, Struan Noble, Roz Currie (for Tommy Sheppard MP), PC Colin Spence, PC Mairi McDonald

Minute Taker: Kay Goodall.

1. Welcome: Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Deidre Brock MP, Councillor Adam McVey and Councillor Gordon Munro.

2. Police Report & Questions

Statistics

PC Spence apologised for the lack of statistics for the previous month, not yet available.

Police Open Surgeries: These are running every third Monday at the Leith Community Centre, 1-3pm, and every third Friday at Restalrig/Lochend Community Hub, 12.30-1.30pm.

ACTION: Michael will set up automatic tweets and Facebook alerts for these, on LLCC sites.

Policing focus during January

There was some evidence of increase in prostitution in the area again, and so local officers have responded by carrying out both a plain clothes and a uniformed initiative.

'Boy racers'

'Boy racers' at Ocean Terminal continue to be a problem. Since the previous Thursday, at least one person per night has been served with an ASBO. Drivers' cars can be taken off repeat offenders.

Drink-driving

There was an incident involving violent males, drugs and alcohol in the middle of the previous week. Vehicles were stopped, and drivers charged with drink-driving.

Anti-social behaviour around Leith Links

Chair asked for a response regarding recent anti-social behaviour by homeless people on/around the Links. PC Spence replied that there had been a slight spike in reported incidents - two men are living in a tent in Hopetoun Crescent park and Community Safety Officers are dealing with this to find them a place to stay. Chair said that the problem he was reporting on Leith Links was not rough sleepers, but residents of the nearby hostel for people who are homeless. A shopkeeper at the corner of Links Place had been threatened by residents when he tried to stop them stealing alcohol. (Residents were later found surrounded by empty bottles of stolen alcohol.) This particular hostel (Abbotts House) had previously provided tourist accommodation but has recently moved to taking in homeless persons and there has been a noticeable increase in anti-social behaviour since then, such as drunk men fighting in the bowling green. The problem is presumably partly due to poor management of the hostel.

ACTION: PC Spence will look into this.

Vandalism of cars

Sally asked about the mid-term spike of teenage car vandalism around Restalrig. PC Spence reported this as the work of a youth "gang". It is currently occasional, not nightly, but has been focused upon because such behaviour can tend to become more frequent if not tackled.

3. Invited Update on Crops in Pots/Leith Community Croft – Evie Murray

Evie Murray (CEO of Crops in Pots) was invited to speak after concerns raised at the last LLCC meeting about the installation of borehole drilling on the Croft. Evie began by apologising for any errors in judgement that she and the board had made, and stating that they wished to make amends. She had provided LLCC with a written paper outlining the situation. She explained the difficulties that Croft users had been facing in obtaining sufficient water. The supply was insecure - e.g. had been temporarily disconnected at a crucial time in the growing season, last year.

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Two members of their Board had previously been planners, and had not seen any need to seek planning permission for the drilling. However, in the light of concerns, she had arranged to meet with Edinburgh City Council planners on 28 February to discuss this. If a retrospective application was required, she would ensure this was done. She added that there had been some confusion regarding the rig above ground that had been used to drill the borehole to its depth of 23m: this is not a permanent structure and will be removed as soon as the work is completed (but unfortunately a technical breakdown has necessitated the rig staying in place much longer than had been expected). Chair recognised that the Croft and Crops in Pots projects are generally viewed very positively. He stressed however that planning permission should have been sought, and that the consent of the City Archaeologist should not have been bypassed. Evie responded that Archeology consent had not been thought necessary as the borehole is only 6 inches wide and does not require a mass excavation, but she added that he was now being consulted.

Sally asked for further details about the rig, including whether the pump can be removed and whether it requires a generator, to operate. Evie responded that the pump can be lifted out, and that they are striving to avoid the use of a generator. Sally observed that the generator planned for interim use would be noisy and that neighbours would need to be informed. Evie responded that the proposed fresh produce market will also need electricity and that they have obtained a quote from an electricity company for underground cabling to the pump.

David asked whether boreholes down to the water table are common in Edinburgh. Evie thought there were several in the city, none of which had planning permission.

Chair asked for confirmation that the lease for the Crops in Pots projects only permits digging down 600mm. Evie responded that it was not specified to that level of detail in the lease and that she did not believe that by drilling they had done anything that was outwith the spirit of the lease.

Chair asked whether the proposed power supply would run from the Pavilion. Evie responded that it would: they are about to launch their produce market, which will require electricity. At present they are paying substantial sums to Leith Athletic to cover Pavilion bills, and will need financial support in the future for this. They are applying for a £500,000 grant to renovate the building.

Angus asked what the size of the aquifer is, whether the water supply is effectively limitless, and whether it is drinkable. Evie responded that SEPA permits 2 cubic metres of water to be extracted daily, which is more than the Crofters would need. It would replenish itself.

Jacqueline asked what would happen to Leith Athletics once the lease for the Pavilion has been transferred to the Croft. Evie responded that Leith Athletics are keen to let go of the Pavilion as they feel it is a drain on their resources; they will move to their Meadowbank premises.

Jacqueline asked for clarification – can Crofters currently access water in the Pavilion? Evie responded that they do, but it means carrying water right across the site.

Sally asked what the delay is in transferring the lease of the Pavilion? Councillor Chas Booth replied that the problem is the conditions surrounding the lease, because the land is common good land and no lease should be issued for more than 10 years (even though at present the Leith Athletic lease is 25 years), because of the risk of ‘alienating the land’ (i.e. losing its common good status). Evie responded that research is in progress into whether the land is inalienable, and that Andy Wightman is providing advice. Chair thanked Evie for attending.

4. Adoption of Minutes of previous meeting (30/1/17) & Matters Arising:

Adoption of the Minutes of the previous meeting was proposed by Michael Traill and seconded by Chrissie Reid. These are available at <http://www.leithlinksgc.org.uk/> ('Our library' tab)

- **Outstanding actions**

Monthly police reports: Michael confirmed that he had spoken to a colleague of Inspector Carson, who will look into whether a full written report can be produced each month.

Scottish Government Planning Review consultation: Michael had approached the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils who, after some discussion, confirmed that they were not arranging any city-wide meetings. Michael therefore rapidly organised a city-wide event for 28 February, with at least 16 of the city's Community Councils represented, to help all CCs to formulate their responses to the consultation on this complex issue.

Powderhall waste management facility: Councillor McVey had sent Michael an edited press release with key details and Michael has circulated this via the website and social media.

Hustings for Leith Ward: Councillors Chas Booth, Adam McVey and Gordon Munro have committed to attending. As yet no-one has come forward to represent the LibDems or Tories.

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Seafield smell complaints: Rob Kirkwood was contacted about this, and agreed to LLCC circulating a leaflet with the current contact numbers for complaints (on the back of the Hustings leaflet being circulated to all residents). LLRA did not want to share the costs of this, however, as they intend to circulate a leaflet or newsletter themselves later in the Spring, once a single contact number for all such complaints has been established.

Training: Several LLCC representatives had taken part in the City Council training session on alcohol licensing procedures. Councillor Booth asked whether this had been worthwhile. Councillors said that it had, and Michael said that he had also attended further training on alcohol and licensing issues, which would be useful for Leith where there are many alcohol-related problems.

- **Questions from members of the general public**

Local resident Eric Gallo raised the problem of missing litter bins. One bin on the Links had gone on fire, had been removed, and had not been replaced. The result has been that people throw dog poo bags, bottles and other litter on the ground, in areas where children play. Another bin at the bus stop outside the Links Medical Centre had also been taken away and not replaced. Evie observed that there were similar problems at the Croft. Sally had passed Eric's email on to City Councillors; Councillor McVey had taken it up. She had also done a recce herself, taken photographs, and contacted the City Council (waste) on behalf of LLCC. This is a test case for whether the Council is responsive when contacted. No reply or action has yet been forthcoming, which is unsatisfactory. Councillor Booth apologised for the lack of action taken.

ACTION: Councillor Booth will look into the lack of response to the removal of the bins.

ACTION: Sally will also follow up.

Local resident Susan Dougal raised the problem in Gordon Street / Manderson St. of abandoned cars, particularly one which is currently lying untaxed in a car park, with broken windows and flammable canisters inside. She had contacted Environmental Health and the DVLA, and had been told 7 months ago by the City Council that the matter was in hand.

ACTION: PC Spence will organise checks to be carried out on the abandoned vehicle.

Local resident Walter Manclark raised the problem of untaxed cars being left in the disabled parking space on Gordon Street. The space had been painted, but it will apparently take 8 more months to put a sign pole up. Councillor Booth apologised for the delay, adding that although the Council had experienced a great deal of reorganisation recently, this was not an excuse.

ACTION: Councillor Booth will raise this with the relevant officials.

Local resident Struan Noble enquired about what would need to be done in order to get a zebra crossing installed opposite Forbes Nursery on Claremont Park. There are 2 Primary schools nearby, a nursing home, and many dogwalkers and children using the Links, but this is a busy road which drivers often speed along. Stephen asked whether there had been any accidents and Struan responded that there had been a dog killed last June. Chair observed that he had tried to pursue a similar project in Prospect Bank but it had been rejected because the crossing would be too close to traffic lights. Councillor Booth responded that this had been raised 3 years ago and he had asked City Council officers to do a road safety assessment. At the time it was decided that there was not sufficient traffic or pedestrian volume, but he added that things might now have changed. Sally pointed out that there have been new flats built and that a further 1000+ new people will soon take up residence in the planned new Seafield Road housing estate, which will use pedestrian access to Claremont Park as access to the nearest bus route. Route. Councillor Booth added that if a decision showed a borderline situation, colleagues in the past had done a door-to-door survey which had increased pressure for change. He could argue for a leaflet drop if required.

ACTION: Councillor Booth will ask the City Council traffic officers to reassess.

ACTION: PC Spence will also ask local officers to assess the traffic safety of the area.

ACTION: Michael will mention this on the LLCC website.

5. Parks and Green Spaces Sub-Committee Update

A first meeting took place on 20 February, with Andrew, Jac and Michael attending. Jacqueline explained that the sub-committee is currently formulating a work plan and planning a survey of the main users of the Links on issues such as the state of the playpark or sources of funding. They will meet again in one month and are inviting a list of key contacts to attend. Evie suggested that contacts could include organisations such as Crops in Pots, football and cricket clubs, the Dry Dock and the Primary schools that use part of the space as a playground and for sports. Angus asked if there was an overall plan. Jacqueline responded there had been a plan to invest £400,000 to bring the playpark

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up to the standard of ones such as the Meadows, but that it had been suspended. Evie observed that the Leith Links Regeneration Group had not met for a year. Michael said that local dynamics had changed since the area had been surveyed 5 years ago. Parks Development Officer Scott Thomson is keen to work with LLCC on this.

ACTION: Date of next meeting for Parks and Green Spaces Sub-Committee?

6. Planning

Scottish Government Consultation on Review of Planning System

The Scottish Government is bringing forward a planning bill and is consulting on proposed changes, with a closing date of 4 April. LLCC will send in a response. It might be more powerful if there were also a joint response with other Edinburgh Community Councils.

Briefing meeting for all Edinburgh Community Councils on 28 February

Organised by Michael, LLCC and 17 other Community Councillors from across the city will meet on 28 February to hear from Planning Democracy and discuss the Scottish Government's planning review.

Planning Aid Scotland sessions and Scottish Government Drop-in sessions

Sally noted that several public meetings have been advertised. Planning Aid Scotland and Planning Democracy represent very different perspectives, so attending meetings of both is worthwhile.

LLCC Planning

Organised by Michael, LLCC's own training session on Planning (City of Edinburgh Council) will be held on 13 March (McDonald Rd. Library), open to all LLCC members and to other Community Councils across Leith and NE Edinburgh area.

ACTION: The LLCC Planning Sub-Committee will meet on 15 March, 6 pm, Leith Community Centre.

7. Edinburgh Association of Community Councils

At the November 2016 meeting, Michael had raised the question of whether it was beneficial for LLCC to remain a member of the EACC. Meeting had decided to defer the decision until February 2017, to give the newly-elected LLCC councillors time to familiarise themselves with the work of the EACC.

Michael explained that all Edinburgh Community Councils are automatically members, unless they opt out, but that the organisation is not very active. Chair added that only around half of Edinburgh's Community Councils are involved, and that there had recently had to be an extraordinary meeting because of conflict within the organisation and problems with the accounts. Michael added that he had found it problematic to organise city-wide meetings on specific topics because communication with and within the EACC was slow/ poor. He had meanwhile contacted other Leith / NE Edinburgh community councils about creating an informal group, not as a substitute for the EACC but purely to lead joint working on local issues.

A variety of views was then expressed on whether to remain or to leave. Angus and Eileen felt that leaving would be interpreted as making an unnecessarily negative statement. Abu felt that it would be better to stay and attempt to bring about change from within. Sally observed that LLCC is already effecting some change, through Michael being so active in organising city-wide events and developing relationships between other Community Councils. A vote was taken, with the majority deciding to remain, for the moment.

8. Community Links Fund update

33 grant applications have been received (11 small, 22 large), involving considerable work to get to this stage: e.g. leafleting, Help & Support Sessions, and many other efforts, which has evidently paid off. The next stage is for brief information about each application to go online later in the week. The social voting event will take place on 11 March at Leith St Andrew's Church Hall, 11:0-13:30. Members of the public attending can have coffee, a blether with the applicants, and then vote. Attendance by all grant applicants has not been made compulsory but it is hoped and expected that most will take part. Online voting will then be available until midday Wednesday 15th March. Eligibility to vote includes anyone living, working, volunteering or studying in the LLCC area.

Sally emphasised that a great deal of voluntary support will be needed to make the day successful, from registering voters and stamping wrists at the door to making/serving tea and coffee etc. and asked for volunteers, and most Councillors offered their services. Michael observed that it was a really good opportunity for LLCC to shine. Jim added that he hoped local politicians would attend and asked Roz, Tommy Sheppard MP's chief of staff, if he could make it; Roz said that she would check

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his diary. Sally stressed the need to attract as many voters as possible (a comparator is the 1,500 who voted in Leith Decides last year). She asked everyone to encourage participation through their own local networks and is proposing handing out information the day before and the morning of the event, in public places. Chrissie, David and Jac offered to help Sally leaflet. Michael is publicising it on the website and social media.

David asked about checking the ID of voters. Michael explained that this is based on trust; that there have not previously been problems, but the issue is kept under review. Sally added that once people have voted in person, their hand will be stamped, so they cannot vote twice. Michael explained that once voting has closed, the in-person and online spreadsheets will be merged and any duplicates or irregularities removed.

9. Open forum

LLCC stalls at local events: The Leith Festival Gala Day will take place on Saturday 10 June. LLCC will have a stall in partnership with other two Leith LLCCs. LLCC will also have a stall at the Leith Market Community Day on 29 April.

Policing 2026 Review: Police Scotland has launched a review and 10 week consultation on policing in the future. Information can be found at <http://www.leithlinksc.org.uk/policing-2026/> . Local officers would be happy to address a meeting, with break-out discussion groups, if LLCC organised one. Angus asked if EACC should be involved

ACTION: Sally will write to EACC asking them to respond by a set date, as time is short.

ACTION: If EACC is not organising one, Michael will organise a city-wide meeting.

Honours system: Michael suggested possibly organising a city-wide meeting to discuss nominees. It was pointed out that it is a rolling programme so could happen at any time of year.

Pedestrian guard rail on Gladstone Place: David noted that this is suffering from lack of maintenance. Councillor Booth explained that there is a policy of getting rid of these, rather than repairing them.

ACTION: Cllr Booth will look into this case.

Changeworks event: Angus, Sally and Michael had attended a focus group event at Changeworks, which is applying for a large Scottish Government grant for a project to make Leith a 'Zero Waste Town'. Their current definition of 'Leith' includes much but not all of the LLCC area and indeed what is officially regarded as the Leith area. Changeworks is a large and long-established environmental charity <http://www.changeworks.org.uk/> .

Pre-election period: Chair asked whether City Councillors can attend Community Council meetings during the period before the Council elections. Councillor Booth explained that they would still be in post and would be carrying out normal duties.

Chair thanked all attendees. Meeting ended at 9pm.

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