

LEITH LINKS

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES

MONDAY 27 SEPTEMBER

2021

6.30pm

online, via Zoom

Councillors Present: Gail Clapton (Treasurer & Vice Chair), Abigail Cunningham, Angus Hardie, David Igoe, Andrew Mackenzie, Sally Millar (Secretary), Teresa Perchard, Chrissie Reid, Eileen Simpson. Robert Cormack (Leith Rotary)

Elected Representatives: Councillor Chas Booth, Councillor Adam McVey.

A member of the public

Minute Taker: Kay Goodall.

1. Welcome, Apologies

Chair (Gail) welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Ben Macpherson MSP, Cllr Gordon Munro, Jim Scanlon, Michael Traill.

2. Adoption of Minutes of last meeting on Monday 30 August 2021

Proposed by Andrew Mackenzie; seconded by Angus Hardie. Available at <https://leithlinksc.org.uk/>

Matters Arising

Leith For Ever, Leith Market: several representatives of LLCC took part in the Leith Community Councils stall at Leith Market on 18th October. It was a successful event with good community engagement and public feedback. A number of points were raised that LLCC will take forward. Leith Forever are considering if / when something similar might be repeated in future.

3. Report from Police Scotland

Road checks: stops included insurance, drug & drink driving offences, and breach of one-way system.

Violence and disorder: there have been many calls about violent behaviour and public disturbance. Several individuals have been arrested for assault in the last month. Fire-raising at the Croft has been investigated, and a woman was arrested for knife-carrying at the Kirkgate.

Proactive patrols: these also include Covid safety advice.

COP26 will place a strain on local resources in coming weeks as officers are being deployed in Glasgow.

4. Travel and Mobility Issues

Lothian Buses

LLCC wrote to Lothian Buses, who have offered to meet (also with LH&N CC) – date to be confirmed.

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Teresa Perchard will attend and represent LLCC at Ash Denham MSP's online public meeting about buses in North East Edinburgh on 30 Sept.

Pavement widths

Some sections of new pavement on Leith Walk will be narrower than the minimum width laid down by CEC's own Street Design Guidance (<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/24977/p3-footways-version-1-1>) although CEC is finding excuses to justify this. It's feared that pavements on Constitution St may also be very narrow, but no firm information is available yet. Living Streets Edinburgh has emphasised that CEC's highest priority in its 'Active Travel' policy is supposed to be pedestrians, but it often looks as though this is forgotten, in favour of cyclists and/or others.

Some local pavements are also in dangerous disrepair, e.g., Queen Charlotte Street/Tolbooth Wynd to Henderson St, (badly broken paving stones), and Hermitage Place (Links side) which are very narrow, unsafe because of tree roots making them uneven, and also used regularly by cyclists trying to avoid the busy road.

ACTION: LLCC will contact CEC about the pavement disrepair.

Concerns raised by members of the public include re-opening important access through Pirniefield steps to Restalrig Railway path and onwards to shops & bus services Cllr Booth has challenged CEC on whether it is necessary to keep the steps closed for safety reasons. Repair works have apparently been delayed due to problems obtaining materials. Another member of public was wanting to promote the idea of light rail services, using the existing railway corridors.

5. Parks and Greenspaces

Bowling Greens Consultation Report

A full, detailed report of the consultation exercise report has been written up and sent to LLCC, Councillors, Members of the Leith Links Master Plan group and others.

ACTION: Sally will post this on the website.

Master plan for Leith Links

LLCC was not consulted early, and complained, but has now been invited to join the working group, and has met the team (in a special 'catchup' meeting attended by Teresa and Sally). There is an issue about meetings being held in work hours – so David Igoe (Parks and Greenspaces) cannot attend – same for Jim and others. LLCC has complained and asked for meetings after 4 / 4:30 pm.

LLCC also felt that a much wider group of local stakeholders should be included. Teresa had suggested that there be a small 'Working Group' as at present (with David Igoe and one other representing LLCC) and also a much wider 'Community Reference Group' including many more key stakeholders which would meet less frequently, and be expected to respond to proposals but not actually do the work of devising the Master Plan. Sally has forwarded a list of suggested members for this to the team.

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The Master Plan Working Group is led by Lindsay Grant of CEC (Events in Parks) and Linda Anglin of CEC's funded Thriving Greenspaces project, running until March 2022. Three parks have been highlighted for development: Leith Links, the Inch and Inverleith. A Master Plan is a long-term design exercise, which is different from a site Management / Maintenance Plan that covers day to day issues. (LLCC feels LL ideally needs BOTH)

Although Leith Links is a Premier Park it is not a Green Flag Park, and CEC has not wanted to put it forward for Green Flag status (a national standard) unless it was likely to succeed (it probably wouldn't, just now, because it has been starved of investment - as have all parks, the Council admits – and also because of things like the bowling green area). It was suggested by a member of CEC staff that due to lack of Council funds; no park could reach the Green Flag standard without having a Friends group (that raised funds and put in work to improve the park). David Igoe feels moving forward with the idea of a Friends Group has been problematic given the impact of Covid on public meetings. Sally pointed out that a wide Community Reference Group for the Master Plan proposals could form a good basis for a possible Friends Group move, in future.

6. Seafield Sewage Works – update

Eileen emphasised at the last stakeholders' meeting that the smells had increased in recent months, causing distress and many complaints. She expressed LLCC's concern that a small voluntary community council had to monitor this as Scottish Water did not appear to do so adequately. There had been a prolonged period of adverse weather conditions, making it difficult to manage the problem, but the final designs for reconstruction will not be available before 2023. Cllrs McVey and Booth thanked LLCC and noted that CEC finds it valuable to receive the LLCC complaints, but added that the statutory bodies should provide an adequate complaints procedure themselves.

7. Planning

Ropeworks

Andrew attended an on-site meeting on 14 Sept with the Scottish Govt Reporter. The revised plan includes a 5-storey block instead of the original plan for colony style houses and a greenspace / park. CEC decision was delayed so the developer bypassed CEC and went straight to Reporter, which is very concerning. We now await Reporter's ruling.

Maritime Street

The developers propose raising the height of the building. They will provide cycle facilities but no parking. This will have an impact on nearby parking and combined with the proposed LTN and the extensive new build along the shore, this will have knock-on effects on traffic. There will be further loss of office space / local jobs etc. turning it into a residential building not a commercial / mixed use building. It is also a heritage building within a densely populated conservation area.

ACTION: LLCC will object.

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Seafield

CEC seems to be drawing back from its promise to involve the community in the plans. Angus and Andrew are maintaining pressure on CEC to keep community stakeholders and the public involved. Cllr Booth is following.

8. Open Floor and AOCB

Members of the public's communications

Construction work on Salamander St: one person raised concerns about the mess and debris.

Planning policy on solar panels: one person suggested these should be prioritised. Cllr Booth noted that CEC is considering policies to require higher efficiency standards for new builds and refits.

AOCB

Leith Festival exhibition (Ocean Terminal): this will be open until the end of October.

Ocean Terminal: there is a proposal to demolish the Debenhams end of this and build flats.

Meeting ended at 8.15pm.

Date of next public meeting: Monday 25th October 2021, 6:30pm, online