

LEITH LINKS

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES

MONDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2021

6.30pm

online, via Microsoft Teams

Councillors and Members Present: Gail Clapton (Treasurer & Vice Chair), Abigail Cunningham, Angus Hardie, David Igoe, Barbara Kerr (Leith Festival), Andrew Mackenzie, Sally Millar (Secretary), Chrissie Reid, Jim Scanlon (Chair), Eileen Simpson, Michael Traill (Engagement Officer).

Elected Representatives: Councillor Chas Booth, Councillor Adam McVey.

In attendance: Viktoria (Vik) Sucakova of Living Rent Leith, members of the public.

Minute Taker: Kay Goodall.

1. Welcome, Apologies

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Deidre Brock MP, Tommy Sheppard MP, Councillor Gordon Munro, Robert Cormack, Teresa Perchard

2. Adoption of Minutes of last meeting on Monday 25 October 2021

Proposed by Gail Clapton; seconded by Abigail Cunningham. Available at <https://leithlinksc.org.uk/>

3. Guest Speaker, Vik from Living Rent Edinburgh / Leith

Vik explained that Living Rent is a member-led union for low and middle-income renters, (in both private and public sector), with 3 branches in Edinburgh. https://www.livingrent.org/about_us Their activities range from research and campaigning to helping stop evictions, highlighting unfair planning decisions, and reaching out to communities. Their focus is the lack of good affordable housing and their concerns cover many associated issues, such as pollution, and health. The next [Leith branch](#) meeting is 9 December 2021.

- *What would improve the situation in Edinburgh?* Vicky argued that rent pressure zones are not the best answer, and no council in Scotland has yet introduced one. Rent controls would be more effective and easier to regulate.
- *What could LLCC be doing?* Promoting awareness of Living Rent's work would be appreciated.
- *Despite the growth in house-building in Edinburgh, little is affordable.* Living Rent's view is that what is needed is more social housing first; "affordable" housing tends to be a cop-out. It's seldom truly affordable. Landlords can – and do – just keep on putting rents up.

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- *Isn't there a rent increase limit at present?* No. It's possible for tenants to appeal to an independent body, but this is not well-known and cases rarely succeed as they require evidence of detriment.
- *Is it possible for a council to intervene in the market and stop investors buying up new affordable property and putting them into the market as STLs or private lets?* Cllr Booth noted that CEC can compulsorily purchase land or properties but it's onerous and very seldom done. The City Plan proposes to increase the proportion of affordable housing in new builds to 35%, but the meeting felt that a lot of new housing is not genuinely affordable for most people. There is a research report on 'affordability' in housing coming to CEC Planning Committee this week. Katrina Faccenda commented that the current definition of 'affordable' is based on the market price of properties, whereas it needs to be based on people's incomes.

4. Report from Police Scotland

A written report was circulated before the meeting. No officers are available during this Christmas period but a community officer plans to attend the January LLCC meeting if possible.

5. Travel and Mobility Issues

The Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) [consultation](#) ends 5 December. LLCC and Leith Harbour & Newhaven CC had requested an online public meeting, to consult the community, but this was refused, as general consultations cannot take place during a TRO stage. The maps are based on old data and important aspects appear to be missing, e.g. the tiles covering Constitution St. do not show double yellow lines for the tram route, and plans simply to replace free parking areas with paid parking but do not reflect recent detailed discussions on traffic flow and congestion, low traffic neighbourhood etc. eg shows double sided parking on Salamander St & , Duncan Place. Cllr McVey is pressing Council officers for a session that could answer more specific questions and technical points.

ACTION: Cllr McVey will ask for an expanded timetable and a Q&A session.

ACTION: Jim is preparing an LLCC response and would like to received input from members in the next few days.

6. City Plan 2030

This lays down policy for the next ten years, and thus forms the basis of all decisions on eg. planning and transport, going forward, so is really important. However it is a massive and complex document. It is not necessary to comment on every section but there is a chance to put forward any views that are strongly felt, as relevant to some sections. This is the last chance for communities to respond and

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give their views. This final 'period of representation' ends 20th December. Details on how to respond are [online](#) and individuals are invited to respond if they can.

LLCC had responded quite fully to the 'Choices' stage of the City Plan last year and will send in a further response now, although there has not been time to consult the whole local community fully. As an example of points to raise, LLCC will argue that Leith always has been a successful '20 minute neighbourhood' but is now at risk of going backwards and becoming more of a 'dormitory' and tram corridor, due to extremely dense new housing-only/mainly development in many cases replacing areas which used to be genuinely 'mixed' and offering local employment opportunities (eg garages, workshops, smallish businesses, light industry etc.)

LLCC will also comment on design standards, which seem to be poor in local new builds, and to ignore heritage. Building height is an issue; CEC does have a new policy on building heights, restricting buildings so that they do not rise above the prevailing neighbouring. However, this is problematic when there are few nearby neighbours, for example on the large 'empty' brownfield sites in Leith, where the developers seem to set their own height standards and then self-reference – eg. the RopeWorks locally, and the tower blocks planned for Ocean Terminal.

ACTION: Sally, Andrew and Angus are working on a draft response. If possible this will be circulated for comments before submission. Any comments from individuals should be [sent in to the Consultation directly](#) and copied to LLCC.

7. Seafield Sewage Works and the Water of Leith

LLCC wrote to Ben Macpherson MP recently with concerns about the lack of response from Scottish Water regarding complaints procedures regarding Seafield. Elsewhere, there have been many breaches of regulations recently. The water quality at Portobello is far below standard, especially at the eastern end; although Seafield deny all responsibility, it is known that there is a pipe that discharges into the sea in storm / overflow situations. The Water of Leith and the Figgate Burn (and other waterways) are regularly affected by sewage outflow. Councillor Munro had been informed that Scottish Water 'models' but does not actually monitor sewage outflows (where how often, how much). SEPA should have been more proactive. There are many questions to be asked and answered by Scottish Water and SEPA. LLCC is supporting SOSLeith in a campaign to get to the bottom of all of this, and feedback from a meeting they held with Scottish Water should be available soon. It is clear that problems are not just at Seafield, but all the way back up the waterways. Very substantial investment is needed, which will not be covered by the £150m promised for the Seafield plant.

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There is a huge increase in housing density in the Leith area – is the sewage infrastructure adequate? CEC states that *“Planning permission will not be granted where there is an inadequate water supply or foul water waste sewerage available to meet the demands of the development ...”* (p133 of City Plan 2030). Seafield say they ‘have capacity’ but that apparently includes / accepts regular outflows of raw sewage into waterways and sea! Climate change will worsen the situation, particularly given the increase in flood pressure on storm tanks.

ACTION: Eileen will write to Ben again to press for a response and action on the complaints procedure.

ACTION: Sally will maintain and develop links with SOSLEith and their campaign.

8. Parks and Greenspaces – update

Master Plan for Leith Links

A site walkabout took place last week with Steven Sixsmith (landscape architect), Scott Thomson (CEC, Parks), Ross Woodside (ELGT), Lindsay Grant (CEC, Parks). Four members of LLCC attended, alongside Evie Murray (Crops & Pots), Nicola Lamberton (Duncan Place) and some local residents. Steven’s draft design is to be completed before March 2022.

This was a positive and useful ‘brainstorming’ and fact finding event. However, one criticism is that the MasterPlan budget, although potentially large, will not cover important everyday maintenance such as leaf-clearing, nor will it provide extra to cover the trees in the arboretum. We should still be pushing for commitment to a ‘Maintenance Plan’. Apparently, repairs to pavements around the Links (damaged by tree roots), should be dealt with by the CEC Roads department, not Parks and Greenspaces (but does anybody ever draw their attention to these?). There is some pressure to ‘take the weight off’ CEC and to form a Friends group to attract outside funding. This process had been initiated by LLCC but suspended during the pandemic, however this MasterPlan process has helped to identify stakeholders and raise awareness, which is potentially helpful.

ACTION: Sally will circulate Lindsay’s written notes from that meeting to gather more feedback. These must not be publicised outside the Community Council as they are informal discussions and ‘work in progress’.

Use of city parks for public and commercial events

Michael Traill reported that the [consultation](#) on public events in parks closes on 15 December. The process has raised useful points, but has ended up as a document that tries to compromise between two very different viewpoints and does not cover all of local communities’ concerns. CEC is emphatic that parks are mixed-use and can be used to earn income for the city. However, many feel that there

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should be more transparency and that money raised locally should be spent locally. The Council says that earned may end up spent mostly on administration and site repair, and does not represent large 'profits'.

ACTION: Michael will summarise the discussions and draft a response for LLCC. If possible this will be circulated for comments before submission.

9. Update from Elected Representatives (Holyrood, Westminster, CEC) as available, & Open Floor

Most things had been covered. Cllr Booth encouraged council tenants to take part in the [CEC consultation](#) on rent levels.

10. AOCB

National planning framework for Scotland: Barbara highlighted the draft [consultation](#) on the national planning framework, which will cover the strategic policy direction for e.g. housing and transport links.
Collection of glass recycling in Duke St. / Academy Lofts: this has not happened for a month and a half.

ACTION: Cllr McVey will investigate this.

Proposals for introducing more hard standing in Leith Links: Some kind of modern bandstand could potentially be considered for Leith Links (as there was one before, in the past) but new hard standing might aid the Council in trying to attract bigger events - which would be strongly opposed by the local community. There are no plans for other installations, other than (hopefully) upgrading of some paths. Only the Green Flag parks have maintenance plans: Leith Links does not have one.

Vacancy on LLCC: there is still one vacancy. There was one person interested (but with whom no meeting was arranged due to pandemic complications etc.) who should be contacted again before this is 'advertised' again.

Meeting ended at 8.30pm. Chair reminded people that there is no official meeting in December and wished everyone well for the festive period.

Date of next public meeting: Monday 31st January 2022, 6:30pm, online