

LEITH LINKS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES

Monday 28 November 2022

6:30 pm, online via MS Teams

Councillors and Members Present: Gail Clapton (Treasurer & Vice Chair), Abigail Cunningham, Amy Fairbairn, Angus Hardie, Barbara Kerr, Andrew Mackenzie, Sally Millar (Secretary), Teresa Perchard, Chrissie Reid, Jim Scanlon (Chair), Eileen Simpson

Elected Representatives: Councillor Adam McVey, Councillor Chas Booth

Minute Taker: Sally Millar

Members of the public –4

1. Welcome, Apologies

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Councillor Katrina Faccenda, Robert Cormack (Leith Rotary), Deidre Brock MP, Tommy Sheppard MP.

2. Adoption of Minutes

Adoption proposed by Teresa Perchard and seconded by David Igoe. Available at <https://leithlinksc.org.uk/>

3. Police Report – Brief report received and circulated by email immediately preceding meeting.

4. Travel and Mobility

Leith Connections & CPZ – Officer from Council says “Given the timescales for delivery of Strategic Review of Parking (SROP) it would make sense for us to attend a Community Council meeting in February/March next year as plans will be finalised at that time and we will have a clearly defined programme for what is going to be delivered.” This shows they don’t want to hear what we have to say before decisions are made, they want to ‘tell’ us what they intend to do. They have invited us to send in our questions and issues, however. Looking at the ‘tiles’, there appear to be conflicts between the CPZ and the Leith Connections plans, e.g. the south side of Salamander Street is allocated to both parking and a cycle path. Do the two teams talk to each other? Councillors McVey, Booth and Faccenda due to get a Briefing on this soon. Cllr McVey admitted some frustration as although the teams are supposed to be working together there is less flexibility than he would have wanted e.g. re bin hub locations & parking. Jim Scanlon was horrified that after all the expensive new pavements laid, e.g. around the new Burns Statue location, the cycle path team apparently aims to dig them all up again....

Deadline on the formal consultation, for Traffic Regulation Orders for both schemes, is 23 December, LLCC will respond.

TramWorks – Andrew Mackenzie, Sally Millar & Gail Clapton did a walkaround our area with Robert Armstrong of the Tram Team on 11 November to identify items that need sorting out - there are hundreds, along the length of the route. Rather confusing as to which items are already known about, or not, and which should go on to the list the Tram Team

is committed by contract to sort out, while others go on another list that gets handed back to the Council to take responsibility for sorting. LLCC is building a 'snagging list', to be shared with Tram Team.

ACTION: put an item on LLCC web site to invite local residents to report other items

There was discussion about the cycleway on Leith Walk, which seems dangerous due to the fact that it narrows the pavement unreasonably in places, zig zags, causes conflict with pedestrians, includes little raised 'lips' which are hard to see, which can unseat cyclists and cause trip hazards for pedestrians, and whose surface quality, reports Angus Hardie, is wrong and indeed almost 'un-cycle-able'.

Chair of Leith Central CC has written to MSPs and MPs to ask for more rapid implementation of enforcement of pavement parking, as this is a chronic scourge on Leith Walk. Cllr McVey thought there was little ScotGov could do about it, and there were exemptions for goods deliveries. It may be possible to review the design for Leith Walk to introduce bollards, which had originally been rejected.

Local Bus routes – No further contact with Lothian Buses recently. The new bus routes through our area disproportionately disadvantage older people who are confused by the changes and cannot walk the distance to catch a 25 or 21, which are the preferred buses, as the 34 and 49 are much less frequent and do not serve Great Junction Street / Ferry Road. The 34 from town in particular is very overcrowded at busy times; more frequent buses are needed.

5. Parks and Green Spaces

Common Good Fund – There was discussion of the mysterious item that was uncovered in a recent Council 'external audit' report, showing transfer of £1million from Council to Common Good fund, in 2021/22. Councillors were as unclear as everyone else about the rationale and details of this, since it does not appear to refer to Council funding, but the budget item seems to relate to the construction / refurbishment of the old pavilion on the Earth in Common Croft, which now becomes an 'asset'.

Large Scale concerts on the Links, 17 & 18 June 2023 – This is now known to be the Proclaimers + supporting acts, and tickets are already more or less sold out. The community council (along with other community groups, e.g. Leith Festival) have been offered a tent and tables inside the concert compound, to share community information with concert goers.

ACTION -Community Councillors to contact Chair Jim Scanlon if they wish to volunteer to 'man' this table / tent for a period during the 2 days. A rota will be drawn up.

The concert promoters will charge ticket holders £1 each 'community payback fee' and this money (which could be up to £12,000) will be paid to the Community Council for spending on improvements to the Links (above and beyond what is provided by the Council under statutory commitments), assuming a suitable suggestion for using the money can be agreed.

ACTION – Ideas and suggestions for how to spend such money should be forwarded to Chair Jim Scanlon asap.

Barbara Kerr suggested a wheelchair swing (which was missed out of the recent playpark refurbishment).

Teresa Perchard suggested trying to source a 'second hand' bandstand. First step would be to ask Council to search its stores for the original Links bandstand, as the old Saughton Park bandstand had been found.

Masterplan - A question was asked about the current status of the Links Masterplan? Has it been signed off by the Council yet? A further specific question was asked about progress on repurposing the Bowling Green area building, as the building becomes ever more derelict. The Council should clarify its plans – as the Council budget is not yet set, it is not too late to fix the building up as a toilet block.

6. Bins and Street Cleanliness

A Community Councillor asked why the current ‘customer service’ survey to get feedback from residents about the new bin hubs roll out was being carried out via [Changeworks](#) rather than via the Council’s own Consultation Hub, as all surveys are supposed to be?

7. Planning

Johns Lane -An application has been lodged to demolish the old warehouse on Johns Lane (which was originally supposed to be incorporated into the design of new ‘small unit housing’ planned for there). The developers claim that the building has deteriorated and is no longer safe. The Community Council is a Statutory Consultee and will object. This is a frequent manoeuvre by developers to get rid of buildings that stand in the way of their making maximum profits. In this case, planning permission was granted partly because of the incorporation of a heritage building, and should be withdrawn if the heritage building is no longer part of the design.

There was further discussion about the overprovision of temporary homeless accommodation in the Constitution Street and Links area generally. Cllr McVey says it is recognised as poor practice, but although the Council has managed to rehome many, the numbers still in need are just overwhelming. The situation is fast approaching ‘a disaster zone’(and costing many £thousands over budget allocation). Private landlords are evicting tenants (as rent freeze means they can’t raise rents), and people are being priced out of their homes. Temporary accommodation is a poor solution as may be miles away from kids’ schools, for example. It was pointed out that the Council could have built many homes with the huge sums of money they have paid to third party providers of often sub-standard temporary homeless accommodation, over the years.

Ukraine refugees on MS Victoria - How long will this ‘solution’ remain in place? Councillors cannot say at this stage. It was supposed to be short term, but homes have not been found yet for the residents of the ship. Cllr McVey reported that funding problems are creating an ‘impossible situation’ for the Council. For example, 10% of all pupils currently being educated at Leith Academy are now Ukrainians, but no extra funding has been provided to support this. The funding rules (UK / ScotGov) need to change so that money can be released to Councils – COSLA is working on this.

8. Seafield Sewage

This is not the ‘smelly season’ so problems are not being highlighted. The new money from ScotGov will be spent throughout 2023 -2024, hopefully leading to improvements in living conditions for local residents.

9. Updates from Elected Representatives

City Plan 2030 - Councillor Chas Booth reported that the City Plan 2030 is on this coming week’s Council agenda. If approved, it then goes to Scottish Government for approval - which can take up to about 9 months - but after that the city will have its strategic plan in place for the future. There is much to welcome in the Plan, e.g. Low Emission Zone,

protection for the Green Belt, and a presumption against loss of residential housing (though not a blanket ban – commercial uses like hotels, B&Bs have to get Change of Use permission).

Lighting on the Links – He and the other councillors have followed up on the demands of the Living Rent campaign and have asked Council officers about the costs of fully lighting the Links.

10. Open Floor

Barbara Kerr (Leith Festival) drew attention to a free training opportunity for Community Councillors, offered by the Improvement Service, via the Open University. <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/skills-supportOU-CC>

Don & Izzy Crichton complained that the Heras fencing that was cluttering up their road is still there (left by roofers after some chimney work). This has been reported to the Council several times, but no action taken.

ACTION – LLCC Secretary will write again to Council about this.

11. AOCB

Newly co-opted Community Councillor Amy Fairbairn who has a background in public Relations and Communications is meeting with fellow Community Councillors to discuss ideas for developing our website and social media, and improving engagement within the community, possibly starting with a short survey in the new year.

12. Date of next public meeting: Monday 30 January 2023, 6:30pm online.