

MINUTES

Monday 29 January 2024, 6:30 pm, in-person, Duncan Place

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

Councillors: Councillors Adam McVey (online)

4 members of the public

Minute Taker: Sally Millar

1. **Welcome and Apologies** –Chair welcomed attendees. Apologies were received from Councillor Chas Booth, Deidre Brock MP, Chrissie Reid, Andrew Mackenzie, Rhona Alcorn.

2. **Adoption of Minutes** Adoption of Minutes of November 2024 meeting proposed by Abigail Cunningham and seconded by Gail Clapton. Available at <https://leithlinksc.org.uk/>

3. **Police Scotland Report** – Police Report circulated by email, and available at <https://leithlinksc.org.uk/>. Chair read out salient points, including drug arrests made on Duke Street.

Amy reported that things are now OK on Duke Street for those tenements that have installed keypad entry systems at the street door, but still problematical for those that have not (drug taking etc. in hallways and stairs). The expense is not great, and seems to be worthwhile. The Council owns some flats and should be contributing to the cost of these security systems.

Future of Leith Police station? Chair had enquired and been informed that the building was sold by the Council to the Police in 1982, however the Council retains ownership of the old Town Council Chamber (3rd floor).

It is still unclear whether or not Leith Police Station is to be vacated and closed. One report had said it was, then later another seemed to imply that only Portobello and Craigmillar were due to close. Leith based Police Officers have themselves not been told. There has been gossip circulating that Police might move into the underoccupied Victoria Quay building.

ACTION: Chair Jim Scanlon will write to ask Councillors and Police Scotland for a clear statement on this matter to be issued to the Community Council.

4. Update from Elected Representatives

None present (Adam McVey joined later).

Christmas Tree for Leith, 2024 – Chair expressed extreme disappointment at the fact that Leith (Kirkgate) had had no Christmas tree or decorations, in sharp contrast to other ‘town centres’ in eg. Davidsons Mains and elsewhere. The tree and (meagre, and only partially-functioning) lamppost decorations at Taylor Gardens are no substitute since that is not the ‘heart’ of the Leith community. And the small fir tree planted there will not be ready in ‘a year or two’ as Council officers claim, it will take at least 15 years. Meeting agreed that a campaign should be started early (now!) to ensure better Christmas decorations for 2024, with suggestions to contact Leith Rotary, Leith Trust, Light Up Leith and Leith Chamber of Commerce as possible partners

ACTIONS: Chair Jim Scanlon will write to Councillor Katrina Faccenda, who had indicated some support on this matter, to start discussion with Council about plans for 2024. If Katrina can’t unearth this information, Teresa Perchard will work on finding out what the Council budget is, for town centres’ Christmas decorations.

Chair Jim Scanlon will contact someone at Davidsons Mains to find out how they achieved their decorations, roughly what the costs were, and how they were found.

5. Open Floor

A member of the public had come to find out more about / discuss road closures around the area. With a background in construction and utilities, he was outraged by how many badly planned roadworks are currently causing mega congestion in Leith. He felt the Council has lost control and needs to manage utility companies better so they cannot

cause traffic chaos in this way. He was also concerned about new plans to alter the junction at MacDonald Road / Bonnington Road to benefit cyclists, as these will all just get destroyed again soon when large scale construction work starts at Powderhall. He was advised to contact the Leith Central Community Council about this, in whose area this falls.

6. Travel, transport, mobility (previous discussion flowed on, on this theme, resulting in this item being moved forward on the agenda)

Meeting agreed that ad hoc road repairs (mainly by utility companies?) cause chaos. It is particularly galling when you pass and see no-one working there. Is there a list that the CC can get hold of, that indicates when works will be carried out in our area so that residents can be warned in advance? Councillor Adam McVey thought there was the Capital Programme covering big Infrastructure projects (prioritised according to a scoring system) and also – maybe – a list of smaller capital and revenue jobs to be done, by ward.

ACTION – Councillor Adam McVey will ask Council Officers to forward such a list, if it exists.

CC can start to make its own list of road resurfacing works urgently needed in our area. For example, Restalrig Road between Prospectbank Road and the Ripple (actually right up to the Sleigh Drive roundabout); Blackie Road, Clarebank Crescent, and many more. Suggestions welcome.

Pavements – It was pointed out that many pavements also need urgent repair, in particular all along Vanburgh / Hermitage Place, where grass is encroaching over the paved surface, tree roots make the pavements bumpy, surfaces are crumbling, there is frequent flooding. Cyclists use this pavement as a cycle path. It is virtually impassible for pedestrians, and cars parked alongside 24/7 mean that you can't even walk on the road.

ACTION - This should be reported using FixMyStreet

Teresa Perchard asked if Councillor McVey could find out if there are any plans to refurbish this stretch of pavement? It was suggested that since Sustrans always seem to be able to find money, that they could be asked to fund refurbishment of this active travel route. Councillor McVey said that all such works had to be taken up first by Council who might then bid into Sustrans for funding (actually, Transport Scotland monies) however that system is due to close soon anyway. Barara Kerr, who works for Sustrans, explained that funding will in future come from the Active Travel Transformation Fund which will not be administered by Sustrans. Sustrans is currently repositioning itself as an organisation, to support and advise rather than to fund directly.

Johns Place – the Leith Connections mural is already quite faded.

ACTION- LLCC Secy will ask Miles Wilkinson what plans and funding provision is there to refresh and maintain it?

LLCC survey of LTN / CPZ - Barbara reported 264 responses to this so far, which is a reasonably good response rate. Current plan is for the survey to run until the end of February, with collation of results and report writing to take place in March. So far on a very rough analysis (which the Google forms does automatically) – without going into any of the specifics per street - it looks like the survey is being completed by the 'right' people (inside and on the perimeter of the LTN). Responses so far appear to be – predictably - mixed, in terms of supporting / opposing / not sure, so the details of street by street experiences, and suggestions for improvement, will be very important.

7. Planning (reordered from 6 on the Agenda)

A planning application is in for 4 Johns Place to be turned into a hotel. This is tentatively supported, as it is better than student accommodation or temporary homeless accommodation, which is already over-provided in the area.

LLCC is objecting to a planning application to change the building behind the Latto garage on Johns Lane into student accommodation. These would be tiny rooms, with no communal space, and are not needed given the applications going in all around the area for large PBSA such as behind the Corn Exchange and at Salamander Place, and the great distance away from any university.

A discussion followed about purpose built student accommodation in Edinburgh in general, rented out at c. £200+ per week. This is actually far too expensive for home students, but they can get pressured into seeking funding through student loans, which is a goldmine for developers as it is a reliable government backed bottomless 'well' of funds, but which means for students that their loans go up to astronomical levels that they will never be able to pay back. A member of the public attending, who works for Edinburgh University, stated that almost all of these student rooms go to

international students, whose numbers have massively increased in recent years as the Universities need the funds generated by them. As such, they do NOT ease the pressure on local housing for rent as peddled by the common 'narrative', as these students would not have been here before/ would not have been renting rooms in local HMOs. Each planning application cites a need, and lack of such facilities nearby, but if you put them all together there are hundreds of student rooms planned eg, Constitution Street, Salamander Place, Manderston Street, Steads Place, and all up Leith Walk. Meadowbank, Abbeyhill, and now Beaverhall etc. The Council policy has not been updated, and currently the Council does not even seem to be following its own original policy by accepting so many in such heavy concentrations, and so far away from universities.

ACTION – LLCC agreed to participate actively in campaigning against more PBSA locally. It was agreed to team up with LCCC, LH &N CC and N&BCC.

A planning application has been submitted to develop another Tesco in the old motorbike shop on the corner of Queen Charlotte Street and Johns Place. LLCC is just starting to collect views on this.

(A new Tesco Metro is also just now moving into the 'red sandstone shops' at Steads Place. Gossip is circulating that the big Tesco at Duke Street is to close, but apparently this is not so. Tbc)

There is talk of a new NHS GP surgery to be based in Ocean Terminal, which could be very valuable for the large new population moving in to the new housing in that area. Population of Edinburgh as a whole is projected to be 670,000 in 2030, so much more NHS provision (doctors and dentists) needed.

The Foot of the Walk Wetherspoons pub is up for sale, but will continue trading until sold. Presumably the planning permission received to develop the 'beer garden' (the old 'Skivvies' site) will lapse in due course as it has not been started.

Leith St. Andrews Church (bottom of Easter Road) is being sold off too. It includes two good halls and a kitchen that have been very useful as community spaces, so it is a painful loss to the community.

8. Bins – Teresa Perchard reported that the bin hub on Mitchell Street is to be moved. Siting of hubs on Links Gardens was discussed. Teresa is having trouble getting any response from Council Officer responsible, but will persist.

9. Parks & Greenspaces – a number of trees and large tree branches came down in recent gales, dealt with quickly by the Council.

AOCB

Leith Chooses Results evening will be held on 22nd February at 6:30, Leith Community Centre, all welcome.

10. Next meeting: Monday 26 February 2024, 6:30pm ONLINE only

