

MINUTES

Monday 29 April 2024, 6:30 pm, online

**LLCC Members Present:** Gail Clapton (Treasurer & Vice Chair), Abigail Cunningham, Angus Hardie, Andrew Mackenzie, Sally Millar (Secretary), Teresa Perchard, Jim Scanlon (Chair), Eileen Simpson

**Councillors:** Councillors Chas Booth, Katrina Faccenda, Adam McVey

**3 members of the public**

**Minute Taker:** Sally Millar

**1. Welcome and Apologies** –Chair welcomed attendees. Apologies were received from Amy Fairbairn, Barbara Kerr, Deidre Brock MP, Allan MacDonald Police Scotland.

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

**Matters Arising** –Carried forward from last month:

**ACTION – Secy will write to Events in Parks & Culture and Communities Committee to make these points and ask for better communication and earlier liaison in future.**

**ACTION – Secy will try to find out how to connect with Community Payback Team (to help with bulb planting)**

**ACTION - Cllr Chas Booth will follow up with Parks Dept. issue of rats in the hedge around bowling green area**

**3. Police Scotland Report** – written Police Report was submitted and circulated before the meeting, and highlights discussed. Successful activity throughout April on driving offences, electric bikes, tracing individuals on warrants, and (Operation Elate) drug dealing. Jim observed that it is difficult and dangerous for Police to stop riders on fast electric bikes. Teresa observed not just electric bikes but bikes on pavements are a problem. Question was asked about where monies go, when cash is seized from criminals? Chair thought it went into a ‘pot’ used for eg work with youth groups

**ACTION – Chair Jim Scanlon will try to find out more about this.**

Chair had participated in an interesting ‘mock trial’ training event for Special Constables, and also picked up some news.

**Future of Police stations?** Consultation on Leith Police Station is still not yet open, but it will go live on the Police Scotland engagement hub sometime soon. Meanwhile, civilian staff from Fettes and from Leith will go to Victoria Quay. Unclear as yet where Armed Response Unit currently at Fettes will go – somewhere in the west of the city with easy access to motorways. No money available to build suitable new facilities, so there is a puzzle as to how new stations fit for purpose can be achieved.

Best Wishes go from LLCC to PC Lauren Munro who is being moved to Craigmillar to work with youth. We welcome PC John Anderson to Leith Links.

**4. Update from Elected Representatives**

**Councillor Adam McVey** – The Scottish Boundary Commission has created a new Scottish Parliamentary constituency which they call ‘Edinburgh North Eastern’. The SNP is campaigning to get them to reconsider and to include ‘Leith’ in the name. Leith will make up about 2/3 of the new constituency and obviously has enormous historical and community significance. See petition at <https://www.change.org/p/support-snp-campaign-to-save-leith-in-the-scottish-parliament>

**Bus Station** – It is VERY concerning that the council sold off the bus-station site back in the 1990s and now the current owner proposes to sell to a developer who would build hotel, or flats etc. on the site, leaving Edinburgh without any site near the centre and the station for a bus station – the only possible options are far out of the city centre. The Council is ‘leaning into this heavily’ to try to negotiate a solution. Sally Millar asked if compulsory purchase is an option? Maybe, or the owner may sell the site.

**Councillor Chas Booth** – Licensing Board. The Links Tavern on Restalrig Road now has licence to admit kids. The consultation about ‘over-provision’ of alcohol is still live on Consultation Hub.

Can't change the law, but a 'Responsible Construction Group' has been formed to try to improve practice by utility companies, repairs etc. in coordinating repairs, advance warning to residents, & communicating, tidying up etc. *City Plan* will come before committee in June. Some concerns, but good news is that the 35% affordable housing (disliked & disputed by developers!) is still IN the Plan.

*Short Term Lets* – Council has resolved not to agree to a 'blanket' approval of all applications for STLs functioning before September 2023.

*Planning* - lots of issues, see below under Agenda Item 6.

**Councillor Katrina Faccenda** – Transport and Environment committee received 'last' Report from Tram team, but committee continues to have concerns and is trying to impose a structure that will mean they have to continue - consult more with Councillors, actually DO the unfinished work and also feedback to Councillors. Report from sight impaired citizens on tactile pavements on Leith Walk very damning. Leith is not doing well on the list of pavement repairs to be done, for now. Unclear currently why some things that apparently are not urgent (replacing perfectly good pavements on Dalmeny Street), get done, while other that are urgently needed, do not. A new 'points system' coming in should mean a fairer way of ensuring pavement repairs across the city.

**5. Open Floor** – No topics raised beyond matters already on the Agenda.

## **6. Planning**

Teresa Perchard gave a summary of planning applications in progress regarding Johns Place, and Johns Lane, as this is confusing.

**9 Johns Place** (owners / developers are K & S Mir - part of Cameron Guest House Group) is proposed to be turned from a 13 bed HMO to a 45 bedroom HMO (by means of knocking through and adding an extension / walkway link out the back to a new development of the garage buildings behind at 15,16 Johns Lane). LLCC objected, Council looks set to refuse, Listed Building Consent was refused). To be reviewed again at a Local Review Body (of Councillors?) in August. All rather unclear -has full planning application gone in yet, or only Listed Building Consent? What triggers a 'Local Review'? What is it? Why does developer appeal to this, rather than to Scottish Government?

**18-24 Johns Lane** - proposal to demolish crumbling warehouse and build 36 or 38 bed Purpose Built Student Accommodation. (Also owned by Cameron Guest House Group) This development was granted permission some years ago for flats, via an entrance on Constitution Street, but this new application should be refused on the grounds of insufficient access via back lane, which is very narrow, amongst other things. Application received 40 objections, 2 in support. However Council seems set to grant permission – why? Again all very unclear. Application due to get a site visit and to go to a hearing (end of May). Chas. Booth may get to sit on the hearing.

**ACTION - LLCC will ask to attend site visit and to make deputation at hearing (to object).**

**3 Johns Place** – different owner, who also owns a similar establishment at 11 Stafford Street. Application to turn this listed building into a 16 bedroom 'hotel' - but has none of the facilities of a hotel (unstaffed, no reception, kitchen or communal areas, self-check-in), neither is it really an apart-hotel nor 'serviced apartments', nor hostel, as the rooms do not have cooking facilities either. LLCC objected and many objections from other local residents. Council set to refuse Listed Building Consent and application for Change of Use (from office buildings); basically the application was defective as developers failed to include sufficient information on a number of fronts, including safety, and especially about 'operational intent' i.e. how the hote' would be run. Owners revised their plans but are now still faced with either appealing or resubmitting a fuller application.

A local resident / neighbour argued on behalf of the owners' plans, claiming that the building is not suitable for offices and there is no demand for offices in the area, and that these owners would not be creating more HMO homeless accommodation, but a much more upmarket establishment. He was informed that the decision maker here is the Council not LLCC, and that comments supporting the application should be submitted to the Council DMSC.

LLCC is concerned about the number of applications for B&Bs/ HMOs/hostels/ hotels/PBSA in the area – amounting to over-provision, skewing the balance between 'residential' and 'commercial' properties.

Gail Clapton asked if it would be possible to see a complete a list or a map of ALL the properties in our area that are currently hostels / hotels etc., and those that are proposed.

**ACTION - Teresa Perchard agreed to try to produce a list (this is likely to need ongoing editing)**

**Nobles Bar stained glass windows** – It seems that Nobles do still have the stained glass windows that they removed, but now do not intend to replace them. (They had originally been hoping for grant money to help with reinstatement, but did not get any). Council seems disinclined to enforce the terms of their planning permission, which was to replace them. LLCC considers this a serious breach of heritage obligations within the Conservation Area, and thinks that CEC should enforce their own Planning regs.

**ACTION: LLCC will contact LH&N CC to try to agree joint action on pursuing this matter.**

**ACTION: Cllr Chas Booth will contact Council Planning Enforcement again, re this.**

**Living Rent** – Cameron Scally of Living Rent invited the CC members to a ‘Town Hall meeting’ to be held on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May at Duncan Place (6:30-8.30) to discuss student accommodation in Leith replacing/ displacing homes for people. Many Councillors, Planners, MSPS and MPS have been invited, and it is intended to build a campaign upon this meeting. Living Rent has concentrated so far on objection to the proposed student accommodation and build to rent plans for Salamander Place, but there are many other sites in Leith designated for purpose built student accommodation (PBSA) at the expense of social housing and/or affordable housing. Student accommodation is a massive ‘cash cow’ for developers, students have fewer tenancy rights. Chair noted that there is very little ‘space’ left in Leith now as possible development sites for housing. Teresa Perchard noted that CEC Planning had recently refused an application for PBSA at Ratcliffe Ter. which might indicate that CEC is finally taking broader considerations into account when evaluating applications?

**Seafield Master Plan** – Angus Hardie reported that the work on the Seafield MasterPlan (development of the coastal strip from Seafield along to Portobello) has gone into abeyance due to awaiting results of new / ongoing studies into wave levels, coastal erosion, sea level rises etc. The recent storms have highlighted how vulnerable buildings this close to the sea would be. The 2030 City Plan may be amended to re-allocate this area as an area designated for ‘development opportunities’ rather than for housing - it was originally designated as “urban area housing-led mixed-use site”)

**Place Plan** -the suggested meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> May to discuss possibly creating a Local Place Plan for Leith / part of Leith, has been postponed, due to problems securing speakers. A Place Plan could be a way (as per National Planning Framework 4) for the community to have a say over how they want their local area to develop - given that communities have no right to appeal against Planning decisions (though developers do have such a right).

**ACTION – To re-organise for a date further in the future. Speakers to include Anna Grant (CEC) and someone from Planning Aid Scotland (PAS).**

## **7. Travel, Transport & Mobility**

**The results of the LLCC survey of LTN / CPZ** is currently being analysed, and should be ready soon. Decisions on the ETROs that Leith Connections are pursuing, are ongoing meanwhile. Next steps in the Leith Connections project are to do with cycle route, and will mainly affect Henderson Street and Sandport Bridge. There is already congestion around Cables Wynd, as traffic can’t get in or out easily.

**Traffic on the Shore / Bernard Street/Commercial Street/Lindsay Rd. route** – this is currently very congested, partly due to lots of temporary traffic lights. There is also something wrong with the traffic lights sequence at Constitution Street / Baltic Street / Bernard Street, which means that traffic going east cannot turn right into Constitution Street as the traffic going west continues forward after the lights have turned red on the eastbound carriageway, so vehicles sit in the middle of the road blocking the tramlines in both directions. Adjustment of the traffic light sequence and/or a yellow box is needed?

**ACTION – LLCC will write to request review of this junction.**

**Pavements on Hermitage Place** – LLCC sent in a letter highlighting the terrible state of the pavement alongside the Links (Vanburgh & Hermitage Place, Claremont Park) which are reduced to a narrow strip due to encroaching grass and mud, are often badly flooded, bumpy tree roots etc.

**ACTION – Secy will follow up letter, to see what action has been taken – if any?**

## **8. Parks & Greenspaces**

**Public Toilets** – Tender / contracting process is now underway with designers and builders of toilet block Working Group will be consulted again as part of the procurement process. All This will take longer than planned, so permanent public toilets unlikely to be in place until the end of the year. Therefore temporary public toilets will be installed again this year, for the summer.

**ACTION: Secy will write to Councillors to try and get a firm date for temporary toilets, also to remind CEC re signage.**

**Litter Pick** – LLCC & Duncan Place carried out the spring (quarterly) a litter pick on the Links on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April, good turnout overall, and Links left sparkling clean. (A hot day immediately afterwards drew many park users and left the Links covered in litter once again.....)

## **9. Community Council elections, Governance Scheme & Boundary Review**

Still no date set for CC elections. These will take place after the Review has finished (August 2024?) Second Phase of the Consultation is open (on Council Hub) until 3<sup>rd</sup> May). LLCC has written to request small boundary adjustment, so that LLCC boundary aligns with Ward 13 boundary, i.e. along the Restalrig Railway Path, rather than bulging out to take in the Alemoor estate.

LLCC needs new members – younger if possible – and will need a new Treasurer as Gail Clapton is stepping down at AGM.

The LLCC AGM will be held on 24 June 2024 (not May).

## **10. AOCB**

**Seafeld Sewage Works** – Happily, the reporting / complaints system on the LLCC website is finally fixed, thanks to the help of Dr. Bruce Ryan. Eileen Simpson will write a short piece for LLCC website to remind local people to send in their reports, which are increasing as the weather improves.

**Edinburgh Bus Users Group (EBUG)** – AGM of EBUG will take place on 6<sup>th</sup> June, with David Begg as speaker, St. Augustines, George IVth Bridge.

**11. Next meeting: Monday 27 May 2024, 6:30pm, in person at Duncan Place.**