



PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the 288th meeting held on 25th April 2011 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall

Present: Tom Ballantine, Archie Burns, Diana Cairns, Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, Peter McColl, Joe Madden (Portobello Open Door), Lawrence Marshall (Portobello Older People's Project), Brenda Molony (*Portobello Reporter*), David Scott (Portobello Community Centre), John Stewart (PAS), Nick Stroud, Ros Sutherland (PPAG), Anne Ward (PCATS), Sean Watters (Towerbank Parents Council), William Wilson, Frances Wraith (Brightons & Rosefield Residents).

Apologies: Sandra Blake, Celia Butterworth, Cathy Cherizard (CEC), Lilian Graham, Caroline Hosking, Nelson Johnstone, Margaret Munro (Portobello History Society), Andrew Patterson (Portobello Council of Churches), Leon Thompson, John Young (Portobello Police).

In attendance: Cllr Mike Bridgman, Cllr Maureen Child, Sheila Gilmore M.P., Cllr Stephen Hawkins, Ben McLeish (Gilberstoun Residents Association).

288.1 Chair's welcome

John Stewart welcomed everyone, especially as this was a public holiday for many, and asked that discussion be kept succinct so the meeting could finish at 9:30; to help meet this aim he proposed dropping all but the most urgent items from the agenda.

On behalf of the Community Council he thanked Tom Ballantine, Andrew Patterson and Leon Thompson for organising the highly successful hustings the previous week. Stephen Hawkins observed that more could have been made of this opportunity to promote the Community Council's contribution to Portobello life.

288.2 Police report

John Young was on leave but had circulated the latest newsletter from the Safer Neighbourhood Team, which highlighted the need for owners of garden sheds to take particular care to secure their goods, and the continuing proactive work of the police to combat antisocial behaviour involving alcohol and knives.

288.3 Environment Update

Cathy Cherizard was on leave, but submitted a report by email. The City Council has arranged a public meeting to discuss traffic and parking management for Bath Street, Bellfield Street, Marlborough Street, Regent Street and Straiton Place, at 7pm on 25th May, in the Town Hall. An official information leaflet inviting local residents to the meeting had been designed and would be distributed in May.

William Wilson expressed concern that any restrictions on parking and traffic in one area would increase problems in neighbouring areas, and suggested that any plan should cover the entire neighbourhood. Stephen Hawkins pointed out that the meeting would be open to everyone in Portobello, and Maureen Child observed that this meeting was only a first step, and there would be plenty of opportunity for subsequent discussion and comment before statutory procedures were initiated.

Cathy herself has been promoted to Acting Business Manager for the East Neighbourhood, with a wider remit than the Environment Team which she has been representing at the Community Council. Her replacement would be Kathryn (Katie) Quinn, and Cathy offered to attend our May meeting with Katie to introduce her. This offer was accepted with pleasure, and the Community Council offered Cathy their congratulations on her promotion and their thanks for all her hard work for Portobello.

288.4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was noted that Margaret Williamson's name appeared in both attendance and apologies lists; she had in fact been at the meeting. With this correction the minutes were accepted: proposed by Anne Ward, seconded by Diana Cairns.

288.5 Matters arising

288.5a ‘Human Trafficking’ in Edinburgh (287.2). Sgt Young is making enquiries about this; ongoing.

288.5b Public meeting to discuss traffic issues (287.3). This has been arranged for 25th May; Cathy Cherizard would be circulating details, and would like suggestions from Peter McColl on who to invite.

288.5c Seat at Town Hall bus stops (287.5a). Diana Cairns contacted Jim Hunter about this, and since he could find no reports of antisocial behaviour connected with the previous seat he was prepared to reinstate it, though now had to find a spare one.

288.5d Bus shelter in Milton Road East (287.5b). Nick Stroud had written to the City Council as requested, asking that the bus shelter in Sir Harry Lauder Road be moved to Milton Road East.

* **Action: Nick Stroud to follow up the letter about the bus shelter.**

* **288.5e** Community Council constitution (287.5c). Diana Cairns reported that the City Council had requested further information to support the change we wanted; she would draft a letter and circulate it for comment.

* **Action: Diana Cairns to write to Michael Driscoll of the City Council explaining our reasons for wanting 50 rather than 20 people as the number to require a special meeting of the Community Council.**

288.5f Double yellow lines in conservation areas (287.5d). Diana Cairns was still seeking an acknowledgement of the letter she had written to the City Council on this subject.

288.5g Consultation on Police and Fire & Rescue services (286.8h). John Stewart thanked Stephen Hawkins for circulating information about the consultation on Scotland’s police services. *See items 288.9 and 288.10.*

288.5h Joppa Tennis Club constitution (287.7). Tom Ballantine had provided text as requested, and Leon Thompson had circulated the revised constitution as requested.

288.5i Community Council Website (287.9). Maria Devoy had told Nelson Johnstone how to send information to the Party website, as requested, and Joe Madden had made the Community Council website public, as requested.

288.5j Kinnaird Park planning application (287.10c). David Hamilton and John Stewart had drafted and submitted the Community Council’s response, as requested.

288.5k Donation to Cruden Cup golf competition (287.11a). Our £10 donation had been sent and acknowledged.

288.5l Maintenance of Harry Lauder memorial garden (287.11c). Jim Hunter had replied to John Stewart suggesting that PEDAL take on maintenance of the garden, in return for rent-free use of Brighton Park for the organic market, but John felt that the Council should maintain Council-owned land, to which Peter McColl agreed on behalf of PEDAL.

* **Action: John Stewart to write back to Jim Hunter, asking again that the City Council keep the Harry Lauder Garden tidy.**

288.5m Ideas on community consultation (287.11d). John Stewart thanked Sean Watters, Sandra Blake and Maria Devoy for discussing this issue and circulating a summary. *See item 288.7.*

288.6 Agree Agenda and AOB

A couple of items were identified for discussion under AOB. It was agreed to omit much of the usual business to allow a prompt finishing time.

288.7 Community consultation

Sean Watters summarised the main points of his meeting with Sandra Blake and Maria Devoy. We need to recognise the shift in the role of community councils, and to find new ways of representing local views. He suggested setting up a sub-group which would start with a community consultation to identify priority issues. Advice on consulting with communities is available from the City Council and ASCC. The Community Council could act as a link between other local groups.

There was general support for doing some kind of consultation with our community. It was recognised that there is already a great deal of energy in Portobello for initiating projects, such as Big Things on the Beach, PAS, PEDAL, POD and Rowporty, and that the Community Council had a role in communicating other groups' initiatives. Consultation would enable the Community Council to represent local views as required by the City Council, rather than guessing local views or simply presenting those of its own members. Some people were concerned about how such an exercise would be conducted, believing that questions would have to be carefully thought out, and that we might need to seek professional help in designing and analysing questionnaires.

John Stewart summarised a lengthy discussion by pointing out that the new website and dedicated section of the Library would be publicised in the *Portobello Reporter* in June, by an article which Diana Cairns agreed to write. It was generally agreed that it would be useful to set up a sub-group, with a remit reflecting the need to promote the Community Council and to gather local opinion. Ten people volunteered to join this sub-group: Sandra Blake, Archie Burns, Diana Cairns, Maria Devoy, John Stewart, Nick Stroud, Ros Sutherland, Anne Ward, Sean Watters and Franny Wraith.

- * **Action: Diana Cairns to write an article for the *Portobello Reporter* to advertise the Community Council's website and presence in the Library.**
- * **Action: Diana Cairns to organise a meeting of the sub-group.**

288.8 Protocol for use of email

Joe Madden asked if any policy governed the Community Council's use of email, as he had been disappointed in the inflammatory tone of some messages sent in the previous month. It was generally agreed that email should be used only to circulate information, not to conduct arguments, and that messages should be polite and well-mannered. Diana Cairns pointed out that the Code of Conduct for community councils requires this standard of behaviour and mutual respect.

288.9 Police Service consultation

288.10 Fire & Rescue Service consultation

Stephen Hawkins had studied the police consultation document and circulated a summary and a set of questions for the Community Council; John Stewart thanked him for his hard work. Stephen said that budget cuts would force some change on the police, the status quo not being supportable, but that important information on how the consultation's proposals would save money was missing from the document. Mike Bridgman summarised the position taken by COSLA in two papers submitted in response to the consultation. Both consultations centred on creating single country-wide police and fire services, thus losing local accountability, but failed to produce convincing demonstrations of the resultant benefits. Tom Ballantine said the Community Council couldn't produce a competent response without studying a mass of detailed information, so it would be absurd to take sides in this case. Sheila Gilmore agreed that the consultations were contentious and highly political, and beyond the compass of community councils. Ben McLeish observed that it would be wrong to make a decision in the absence of a compelling business case, and that private mergers were only undertaken when clearly beneficial, while mergers of public bodies rarely seemed to deliver improvement. It was generally agreed that the current distributed arrangement had evolved to match demand, and that the proposed change was to save money, not to deliver benefit.

Stephen Hawkins agreed to write the same letter in response to both consultations, saying that we were not persuaded by the arguments put forward, could not find essential information to support the proposed changes, and regretted the loss of local accountability; he would circulate the draft in time to receive comments before submitting it by the deadline of 5th May.

- * **Action: Stephen Hawkins to draft a response to the two consultations.**

288.11 Reports

Most of the reports were deferred to the next meeting to save time.

288.11a Police: *See item 288.2.*

288.11b Environmental Update: *See item 288.3.*

288.11c Planning: John Stewart reported that the Gilberstoun Residents Association had requested the Community Council's support for their objection to a proposal to build a shop on vacant land on the estate. It was generally agreed that it would have been beneficial to include a shop in the original plan for the estate, and there was some anxiety about the possibility of exporting antisocial and traffic-related problems to the rest of Portobello. It was therefore agreed to object only to this specific proposal for a shop.

- * **Action: Diana Cairns to write to the City Council Planning Department objecting to this particular proposal for this specific site.**

288.12 Any Other Business

288.12a Local project proposals

The City Council has £90,000 to spend on improvements to footways, cycleways and roads in Portobello and Craigmillar, and has asked for suggestions for projects. Nick Stroud suggested that disabled access to the beach and sea would be an ideal project, and it was agreed that he could put in an application for this from the Community Council. John Stewart pointed out that individuals could put in their own suggestions, also.

- * **Action: Nick Stroud to request the provision of disabled access to the beach and sea.**

288.12b Community Council coat of arms on Heritage trail leaflet

John Stewart reported that the Portobello Heritage Trust and Amenity Society had obtained funding to publish and freely distribute a heritage trail leaflet for Portobello, and that there was space on this for the Community Council's coat of arms. This was agreed.

- * **Action: John Stewart to include Portobello Community Council's coat of arms on heritage trail leaflet.**

288.13 Future meetings

Meetings are held on the final Monday of each month, except July and December, at 7:30pm, in Portobello Baptist Church Hall, 185 Portobello High Street, Edinburgh EH15 1EU.

The next meeting is on 30th May 2011 *** this meeting will be preceded by the 29th AGM ***

Subsequent dates are: 27th June 2011
29th August 2011 (no meeting in July)
26th September 2011