Councillor's Report

Portobello Community Council

Councillor Maureen Child, Labour Councillor for Portobello/Craigmillar Ward

September 2014

**Portobello High School New Build**

Work on our new school begins on 6 October with survey works and the erection of site hoarding, earth and ground works start a week later. Initially contractors will enter from Hope Lane until the Milton Road entrance is established in about three weeks. They expect to have the steel frame up in December. The project is due to be completed in May 2016 and open for the August 2016 session. Nearby residents, and other parties with a keen interest were invited to meet the architects and the Balfour Beatty construction team last week at Portobello High School's library. Balfour Beatty will work with the local roads team to ensure the impact of construction traffic on its surroundings is minimised.

**St John's Primary School and New Park Consultation**

Now that the site for Portobello High School is settled, the consultation on a new or refurbished and extended St John's RC Primary School can go ahead. Three options are being consulted upon:

Option 1 – Refurbishment and partial new build on the existing site

Option 2 – New build on the existing site

Option 3 – New build on the adjacent Portobello High School site

The remaining site will become an extension to Figgate Burn Park and return to recreational green space, once the needs of St John's are satisfied. The shape and facilities for that are yet to be discussed, determined and taken forward with the Neighbourhood Partnership for Craigentinny/Duddingston, the Ward in which the current school sits.

**Electric Bungalow‘s New Project**

It was a huge blow that the community garden, taking shape at the vacant site in Bath Street, was bulldozed with no real prior notice by (we understand) the previous owner. The site is now the subject of a planning application by a new owner. The community group, neighbours and members PEDAL Portobello Transition Town had their hopes dashed there, but were looking around for a new space to take over for a community growing project. They have set their sights on a verge south of Towerbank Primary School at Wilson's Park. I have put the group in touch with the estates team at the Council who will be able to arrange a lease. I understand the Towerbank school community are keen to work with them.

**Community Asset Transfer**

This kind of local experience helped inform a discussion we had at the Council's Communities and Neighbourhood Committee with the Council's head of corporate property Peter Watton and Nicky Donald, of the community ownership support service in Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS). The Council is developing a policy, in advance of the enactment of the Community Empowerment Bill but hopefully in line with the emerging legislation due to become law in the Spring. The Council has already done some of this locally, for example for Jessfield Bowling Club, Joppa Tennis Courts, Portobello Toddlers Hut and the Community Orchard at Brunstane.

**Portobello Book Festival This Weekend**

Now in its 6th year, Portobello Book Festival takes place this weekend, 3rd to 5th October. All events are free but ticketed. Some events are already full, but it might be possible to pick up a return on the day. Programmes and tickets are available at Portobello Library.

**30 Years Community Partnership with Portobello**

Last weekend, I felt privileged to be invited to help celebrate a wonderful 30 years of St John's RC congregation's friendship with the village of Legho in Tanzania. This relationship has developed hugely over the years and now extends to all the local primary and secondary schools which have links with partners in Tanzania. Visa delays meant we didn't have our four expected Tanzanian visitors with us on the Friday evening. But they will be with us soon, sharing their experiences with staff and pupils, communities and friends in Portobello and East Edinburgh for a few weeks.

**Doors Open Day - St Marks Episcopal Church**

It was good to explore a bit more of St Marks's Episcopal Church and see what plans they have and progress they’ve made in the grounds and building by some intrepid volunteers and congregation members, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The building is becoming quite a hub for local activity and groups offering things like French classes and pilates on week days, and well as being a place of worship in a Sunday. It is a huge challenge, for the community and small congregation, to retain and improve this lovely historic building, grounds and surrounding walls and gravestones. But they seem to be making headway.

**Portobello Village Show**

The annual Porty Village Show was a huge success once again with hundreds of families flocking to enjoy the fun at Rosefield Park. The sun shone again and lots of people bought books to support Portobello Book Festival, signed up to get regular information from Portobello Community Council and bought form the stalls, like Castlebrae Community High School's social enterprise Reds Cafe whose lovely baking and preserves were snapped up quickly. It must take a huge amount of careful voluntary organisation to put the show together each year and our local arts charity Portobello Open Door (POD) are owed a big vote of thanks from all of us.

**Participatory Budgeting for Community Grants Fund**

All twelve local neighbourhoods have a budget to make small one-off discretionary grants to local groups to help with local projects. Portobello and Craigmillar groups have benefited over the years, with support from both Community Councils and Portobello Amenity Society. Up until now, the decisions have been taken throughout the year by the Board of the local Neighbourhood Partnership. For this coming year starting in March 2015, we have agreed to try a participatory budgeting process following the example of Leith Decides and Canny wi Cash which have involved more and more people in helping decide which projects should get funding. The benefits of this process go far beyond the division of the money available, but also help people develop their ideas and find opportunities to build their capacity and network, find further funds and encourage more and more volunteering.

**Brighton Park Market To Go Electric**

The monthly local Portobello Market comes around again next Saturday 4 October at Brighton Park 9.30am - 1.30pm. Organiser Graham Kitchener has been trying for some time now to get an electricity supply to support events like this. Our local Portobello/Craigmillar Neighbourhood Partnership have agreed to grant the money, the Council have found a way to do it, and we are *hoping* the supply will be put in place by December.

**My Contact Details**

My regular reports and updates on local issues are freely available by email. Just let me know if you want to be on my distribution list. I also put hard copies in the libraries to pick up. My contact details are: Councillor Maureen Child | Labour Elected Member | Portobello/Craigmillar (Ward 17) | City of Edinburgh Council | City Chambers | High Street | Edinburgh | EH1 1YJ | Direct Line 0131 529 3268 | Phone/Text Mobile 07718 666 481 or Follow me on Twitter @MaureenChild1