**Councillor's Report**

**Councillor Maureen Child, Labour Councillor for Portobello/Craigmillar Ward**

**January 2014**

**20 mph Speed Limits – Agreed in Principle**

The Council’s Transport Committee has been agreed, in principle, that about 80% of Edinburgh’s streets should have a 20mph speed limit. Portobello Community Council’s own consultation is over 70% in favour and that is broadly in line with the feedback we had citywide. My email inbox had over 70% local people in favour of the proposals out of around 40 responses. How this will work in practice, and be rolled out over the next 4 years, has yet to be established and we expect a report to the Transport Committee in March on the practicalities, timescales and costs - but this is largely about encouraging a shift in culture and mindset not putting in more expensive bumps, chicanes and ‘kit’.

**Schools Traffic Consultations**

There are also to be vehicle-free pilots around primary schools at peak periods. There were such a large number of requests from schools to be part of the pilot that 13 were involved rather than the 6 we originally pledged to try. The 13 include Towerbank, Duddingston and St John’s RC Primary Schools. Open sessions are being held to get the views of everyone potentially affected, not least the local residents most affected.

**Portobello High School Progress**

I have been dealing with a few practical issues arising from the construction of the new Portobello High School on Portobello Park. Residents in the Brands were disturbed by noise during the night from the generators. This was quickly dealt with by the contractors Balfour Beatty who erected sound-proofing and solved the problem. Balfour Beatty have also instructed their staff about parking more considerately in local streets around the site, especially as the area also has unrelated Scottish Power works going on at the same time. Because of the winter weather, the project is currently up to four weeks behind schedule. They had hoped to have the steel structure erected by now. But they assure us that there are no unexpected adverse ground conditions and the building is still on target to complete the school in May 2016.

**Castle Credit Union Developments**

Over the last few months, our local Credit Union - a financial co-operative based in the Hays Business Centre - has joined forces with a development group in North Edinburgh in a true spirit of community co-operation. At a well-attended AGM in December, members unanimously agreed to expand the area they cover and modernising a number of the rules. Not least among the changes is the new name: ‘Castle Community Bank’. All this activity is aimed at giving members an up-to-date financial service with the capacity to meet the real needs of everyone. The cooperative is especially intent on meeting the needs of the financially excluded who might be tempted to fall into the traps set by pay-day lenders and loan sharks whose clutches are hard to escape. The regulators, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and ABCUL, fully support the new direction, which is highly innovative. The Board have a number of funding bids in the pipeline and are hoping to be successful so they can take forward even further developments and launch properly by the end of March, earlier if possible.

**New Aldi Comes to Portobello**

Those of us who shop locally in our excellent independent shops will continue to do just that and support our own local Portobello Town Centre. Not for us the ‘Big Four’ Supermarkets and the weekly big shopping stock-up nightmare. But there will soon be a new shop on the block, a bit beyond the main drag, as Aldi have been given planning consent for a store to the west of Kwik Fit. The original big superstore application 10 years ago was kicked out by the Planning Committee and that decision upheld on Appeal because the design did not contribute to our High Street. But this one fronts on to the main road, is smaller in size and the operator claims will complement the small independent stores on the High Street and provide some parking for linked shopping trips. That remains to be seen. The choice is collectively ours – use our small independent stores or lose them. Shop out of Portobello at the Big Four and see our High Street suffer even more.

**LOOPS Launch**

I recently attended the launch of a new service called LOOPs (Local Opportunities for Older People) run by Volunteer Centre Edinburgh in our area. LOOPS aims to help maintain and improve the health and wellbeing of our more isolated older people by offering easy access to the information they need on local services in a friendly, supportive and encouraging way. They are working with local agencies across Portobello/Craigmillar. If you know someone who would benefit for the service or would like to volunteer or help in any way, contact Heather Yang on 0131 603 5144.

**Noise Team – Living With Your Neighbours**

I have had a couple more instances of people finding their neighbours not as considerate as we might have hoped. Speak directly to the neighbours in the first instance – calmly and without getting upset - as they might be unaware they are causing a problem. You might start with a polite note, if that seems too bold. There is Edinburgh Community Mediation Service (ECMS) which is a way of solving the problem informally. ECMS can be contacted on 0131 624 7299. If you need a more formal approach, contact the Council’s noise team on 0131 529 3030. They provide a 24/7 response in partnership with Police Scotland. Phone 101, as and when the disturbance is happening. If the noise level is beyond the legal limit, and is still ongoing, they can take action.

**Hunters Hall Park Cycling Hub**

The project report to build a state of the art cycling facility at Hunter’s Hall Park centred on the Jack Kane sports facility and community wing, was approved by Culture and Sport Committee on 12 December. Work will now get underway to make sure the project is fully funded and delivered as soon as possible. The preferred option was chosen after a positive response to the consultation. This means there will be a BMX track and a velodrome and no net loss of sports pitches. The project is intended to benefit both the local Craigmillar community and the sport of cycling more widely.

**Jack Kane Centre Garden Project**

As discussions were going ahead about what might happen to deliver the cycling hub, the Jack Kane Community Centre management committee were successful in getting £100,000 funding for a community garden and are busy making sure the infrastructure for that is delivered before the end of March. The management committee and project worker hit the ground running and have done an excellent job in making sure the community is fully involved. There is a lot of local interest in playing a part in developing the garden and perhaps other community growing spaces in the future. We had a little bit of a challenge in making sure that the cycling hub project and the community garden will dovetail together – but after a site meeting I helped set up a couple of weeks ago, with Edinburgh Leisure and Counicl representatives, we think we have resolved any potential conflicts.

**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