

## Minutes of the meeting of Leith Central Community Council held in the McDonald Road Library on Monday 25 March at 7.00pm

Agreed actions are *italic underlined*.

### Attendance

Charlotte Encombe	LCCC and Greener Leith
Anne Finlay	LCCC
Roland Reid	Secretary LCCC
Julian Siann	LCCC
Harald Tobermann	LCCC
Alex Wilson	LCCC and Leith Business Association
Liz Ballantyne	resident
Bruce Ryan	minutes secretary (probationary)
Nicky Brown	(Senior Housing Officer, temporary accommodation department, CEC)
Cllr Angela Blacklock	Leith Walk Ward (Labour)
Cllr Nick Gardner	Leith Walk ward (Labour)
Sophie Brown	Friends of Pilrig Park
Ella Taylor-Smith	Broughton Spurtle
PC Simon Daley	Lothian & Borders Police

### 1.0 Introductions and Announcements

Roland Reid, Secretary, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### 2.0 Apologies for absence

Ann Munro	Treasurer LCCC
Juan Garcia Navarro	LCCC
Cllr Maggie Chapman	Leith Walk (Scottish Green Group)
Peter Mellors	resident
Cllr Deidre Brock	Leith Walk (SNP)
Mark Lazarowicz MP	North Edinburgh (Labour)
Malcolm Chisholm MSP	Edinburgh North and Leith (Labour)

### 3.0 Approval of minutes of the meeting of 25 February 2013

Correction re Shrubhill House is now included. Approval proposed Charlotte Encombe, seconded Anne Finlay

### 4.0 Community Police Officer's Report

- Homeless people using Hopeton Gardens. Inclement weather has reduced such events, so it is difficult to quantify effects of police and CEC efforts
- Complaints about nuisance drinking and music in Montgomery St Park. People involved volunteered to leave when approached by police, who had not observed any antisocial behavior. Police will continue to monitor and take action as necessary.
- PC Daley now moving to desk job.

- R Reid mentioned that there had been 3 break-ins in Ann Munro's area. PC Daley will look into this.
- R Reid noted LCCC's appreciation of PC Daley's advice and support over the years.

## 5.0 HMO Licensing

C Encombe had arranged for Nicky Brown to speak tonight. They know each other because CE lives near a property used by CEC for temporary accommodation.

NB's main points

1. There is a distinction between hostels and B&Bs. CEC buys B&B services from landlords. CEC receives (on average) 1 complaint every 4 years per B&B: most are very well run.
2. Guest houses for tourists etc do not need HMO licenses.
3. Homeless people mentioned in item 3.0 are generally not CEC 'customers' – managers of B&Bs agree that most of their customers do not give rise to problems. (PC Daley also said most B&B customers are not problematic.)
4. If there are congregations of homeless people at certain times, this is most likely because missions have fixed mealtimes – such people are also not B&B customers.
5. CEC refers homeless people to 34 B&Bs around the city, housing approximately 950 people each night. CEC wants viable alternatives – it has a duty to house people and wants to move them on to better situations.
6. B&B must – and do – provide breakfasts.
7. (In response to question from C Encombe), temporary accommodation properties are **not** all in Leith. However, certain areas (e.g. Leith and Minto Street) are likely to have more because they have more suitable properties.
8. In NB's time, number of such properties used in Leith has fallen, despite increased demand in Edinburgh.
9. (In response to H Tobermann), CEC is not currently accommodating people outside the city – but would do if safety required this and/or if requested by the neighbouring local authorities which have entered into a concordat with CEC.
10. (In response to H Tobermann), if other councils refer people to Edinburgh B&Bs, they generally tell CEC. Currently no such referees.
11. How HMO licensing works
  - a. CEC inspects applicant properties, then gives guidance on renovation, management
  - b. 21-day notice is needed. Such notices are not legally obliged to state purpose of HMO, but CEC believes notice of purpose is good practice, so informs neighbours.
  - c. If HMO licence given, and property is to accommodate homeless people, CEC visits weekly, checking building, speaking with managers and customers (e.g. advising on housing bids)
  - d. Also community liaison visits to neighbours, informing e.g. who to contact if there is antisocial behavior.
  - e. Also bi-monthly full 'management visit'.
  - f. Check with each property every morning about who stayed and whether any issues occurred.
  - g. CEC **will** inform neighbours if they are considering using a B&B for homeless accom.

H Tobermann asked why this mechanism does not swiftly cure issues (such as that faced by C Encombe which took 5 years to resolve) and whether there was disconnection between HMO licensing and other parts of CEC – is legislation change needed, do inspectors have the tools to nip issues in the bud, e.g. by checking with neighbours?

NB admitted there have been faults but things are improving: the manager of the property in question was partly to blame. Cllr Blacklock concurred.

CE suggested relationship between management and neighbours is difficult: management can be intransigent. Also that she had seen nothing in HMO applications about consideration of neighbours.

R Reid suggested that it's difficult to predict whether any particular potential HMO will be problematic but perhaps the proposed number of occupants would be indicative.

Cllr Gardner suggested that neighbours can object to HMO license renewals if there have been problems (NB offered to send on information about how to raise such objections) – and that there are other ways of resolving such issues, e.g. better information. Also letting agencies communicate with each other about e.g. problematic customers.

Ann Finlay and Alex Wilson described experiences where neighbour pressure and complaints to CEC HMO licensing cttee finally resolved issues.

## **6.0 Leith Walk Repairs**

H Tobermann reported his shock and dismay that while £5m was allocated to renew Leith Walk in 2011, no work has been done apart from some work on Constitution Street – and no date has been set for work on the upper part of Leith Walk

Cllr Gardner responded that £5m is not a large amount of money (e.g. it won't stretch as far as signalized T-junctions) – CEC is hoping for more from Sustrans. Work would be in 3 or 4 stages, to minimize disruption. Each decision needs formal approval, priorities being

1. finishing utilities
2. repairing pavements & roads (which needs
  - i outline design approval
  - ii consultation
  - iii final design)

The stage up to Pilrig St has outline design approval, and final design needs to be approved by September. The matter has been devolved from CEC's transport cttee to a local working group which is working in consultation with local bodies.

The stage from Pilrig St to Piccardy Place has outline principles – the possibilities (e.g. cycling facilities) are dependent on Sustrans finance

H Tobermann and many others reiterated their strong dissatisfaction with the 2-year delay and the overall system and the severe deterioration of the road surface (which is likely to get worse given the recent weather). LCCC's general feeling is that resurfacing is needed immediately.

It was questioned whether CEC is currently facing claims due to damage to vehicles and whether such actions would be more expensive than the £5m allocated to Leith Walk. It was recalled that the tram contractors had been unable to obtain plans from CEC. The point of consultation was queried – are they simply a way of delaying matters?

C Encombe suggested inviting CEC's transport convener to speak to LCCC. HT suggested another month's potential delay was not appropriate – fixing (tram work) damage should start immediately, using the now-available funds until they were exhausted to (i) fix pavements, (ii) fix road surfaces (iii) anything else.

Cllr Gardner suggested one issue was who to (not) satisfy – should all groups get some of what they want or should one group be more satisfied at other groups' expense? (For example, cycle lanes need special cambering and surfaces.) He agreed there is an 'almighty mess' but observed that CEC aims for the right solution, after the disasters of the tram works, using consultation.

C Encombe requested that Cllrs to be forthright – Cllr Blackstock agreed that the road needs resurfaced.

H Tobermann noted that the matter had been delegated to non-transport experts and had asked CEC for evidence of expertise (e.g. GANTT charts and hence projected costs) – these had not been forthcoming despite repeated promises from CEC. Further, BT Openreach had delayed exchange upgrades for a year, possibly due to the delay to restituting Leith Walk. Following a suggestion from R Reid, HT will express LCCC's dissatisfaction with the situation and request for hard evidence of plans. A Wilson asked to add Leith Business Association's dismay to this letter.

## **7.0 Community Council Elections and May AGM**

### **7.1 Appointment of Election Returning Officer**

LCCC (and all other CCs) need to appoint an independent ERO. R Reid has asked the McDonald Road Librarian if she can take this role – the meeting approved this choice and the Librarian is currently awaiting her manager's approval

### **7.2 Appointment of Post Holders**

R Reid pointed out that LCCC needs 'new blood' in the office-bearer positions. (He intends to stand down, having been on LCCC since 1998.) He was thanked for his work for LCCC.

The meeting approved a subcommittee (H Tobermann, R Reid, C Encombe and Anne Finlay) to 'source' replacements. RR will ask Edinburgh CCLO for job descriptions. CE agreed to publish these online.

Cllr Garner suggested a joint recruitment drive with nearby CCs and advertisements at suitable public events

## 8.0 Matters Arising

### 8.1 Leith Decides

Summed up as a good opportunity for publicizing CEC and LCCC

### 8.2 Shrubhill House/Temp. use funding bid.

J Siann reported that there was almost unanimous enthusiasm for a temporary garden in this building's forecourt – the dissident 'vote' coming from the owners (Unite) The current plan would cost £55k. (Forestry Commission had just rejected a funding request but JS has other sources in mind.)

Because Unite has lodged a planning permission application with CEC, and bearing in mind strained relations between Unite and LCCC, Cllr Blackstock suggested JS write **as an individual** to the head of CEC's planning cttee, asking that renewal be tied to implementing the proposed garden.

### 8.3 Bridge over Powderhall Rail Line

The window for applying for planning permission closed today. Cllr Gardner noted that permission had not been granted for storing refuse, and since it was unlikely that the owners would put in an application to do so, CEC would be likely to take action.

### 8.4 Pilrig Conservation Area Proposal

S Brown reported that the first meeting of Friends of Pilrig Park would take place on 15 April. She has a draft improvement plan and hopes that the meeting will agree key points for talking with council and deciding FoPP's initial actions.

H Tobermann suggested FoPP becomes a representative group on LCCC.

PC Daley suggested that in view of neighbouring break-ins, L&B police involvement would be appropriate – and that FoPP should build relationships with similar organisations around Edinburgh.

### 8.5 Concessionary Fares on Trams

CEC is currently lobbying the Scottish Parliament that there should be concessionary fares. No decision yet.

## 9.0 Open Forum

- H Tobermann suggested that LCCC should advertise in the *Broughton Spurtle*. *R Reid will ascertain costs* and suggested tying in adverts to LCCC's succession strategy. *LCCC agreed to vote on this matter next meeting.*
- *Marketing Leith* now exists. Designs for new signage, promoting Leith as part of Edinburgh – a World Heritage City – were displayed.
- Greener Leith will meet Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March at 7:30.

## **10.0 Officers' and Councillors' Reports**

### **10.1 Chair**

no report

### **10.2 Treasurer**

No transactions, therefore balance as February report

### **10.3 Secretary**

no report

### **10.4 Planning**

CEC plans to review the concordat between developers, CCs and CEC's planning department. C Encombe and H Tobermann mentioned that making planning comments is difficult and that it is not stated whether CC comments have more weight than other comments. J Siann noted that CCs have limited resources and can only be advisory.

## **11.0 AOCB**

None

## **12.0 Date of Next Meeting**

22 April

27 May (AGM), 24 June, 26 August, 23 September, 28 October, 25 November,

16 December, subject to CC election dates

Meeting closed 9pm