Merchiston Community Council —Minutes of Public Business Meeting (Zoom meeting)

Date: 15 February 2022

Chaired by Ian Doig, Chair of Merchiston Community Council (MCC)

Started: 19:02.
Ended: 21.15

Present:
MCC Members: Ian Doig (ID, Chair), Vivien Kitteringham (VK, Vice-Chair & Zoom host), Frances Hawarden (FH, Treasurer), Mairianna Clyde (MC), Joan Houston (JH), Roma Menlowe (RM, Minute taker), Ewan Klein (EK), Declan Murray (DM), Bridget Stevens (BS).

Councillors Melanie Main and Neil Ross; Dan Parker (DP, Scottish Green Party candidate for the Morningside ward); Christopher Cowdy (CC, Conservative Party candidate for the Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart ward)

Residents: Marian Lartey

Apologies:
Helen Zealley, Daniel Cairns (Secretary), Navid Saberi, Amelie Lacey (Associate), Henry Reynolds (Associate); Ian Murray MP; Cllr David Key; Megan McHaney (Scottish Green Party candidate for Fountainbridge/ Craiglockhart ward)

Business Meeting

1. **Introduction** — Ian Doig, MCC Chair.
   There were no declarations of interest.

2. **Minutes of last meeting**: The minutes of the meeting on 18 January 2022 were agreed as an accurate record and approved, subject to one correction in relation to CC's prospective Ward.

   Matters Arising: none**.**

3. **Chair's Report** —ID: The report (Paper A) was noted. On Covid, ID noted that caution was still required despite the downturn in serious illness: infections continued to run high and there was a 10% rate in re-infections. MCC would continue to meet virtually meantime. ID drew attention to the Highway Code changes, affecting all types of road users and with the aim of improving road safety. Links to details of the changes are given in the Chair's report. ID also drew attention to Scotland's Census, to be held on Sunday 20 March 2022. All households will receive instructions for participation, which can be fulfilled online. ID's report includes links for further information. ID pointed to the need for a mapping exercise on defibrillators in

Merchiston. Cllr Main supported this exercise and suggested we also think about training in their use. ID would consider how best to take this forward. Finally, he stressed the importance of Councillor participation in community council meetings. Their support was crucial to MCC endeavours and, as important, Councillor attendance enabled residents to pose questions direct to those accountable and offer constructive challenge.

4. **Licensing Report** — BS

BS said there had been no new applications nor applications for extensions. Nor had there been any complaints about licensed establishments in the last period (other than continuing complaints about the canopy over McLaren's at Holy Corner, which was a planning rather than a licensing issue). BS would visit the new Myreside Pavilion shortly and drew attention to the fact that it was fully accessible.

5. **Planning** — MC

There was no news on application 21/06791/FUL at 36—38 Yeaman Place for a pizza restaurant with carry—out facilities. MCC had sought statutory consultee status but a planning officer had not yet been allocated to the case. This case illustrated the complex repercussions arising from historic changes of use from retail to residential. Properties adjacent to the proposed bistro had at one time been shops but had been approved as dwellings. Residents in those dwellings had reasonable expectations that neighbouring developments would be compatible. A key question was whether the planning authority would uphold those expectations.

All other applications of recent interest to MCC were still pending, including the pink canopy at McLarens (21/04866/FUL). A site visit by CEC Planning Committee members had been organized in relation to 8 Napier Road (21/05149/FUL).

6. **Climate Emergency: Proposal** — DM

The actions agreed at the last MCC meeting had been taken: DM provided screenshots of MCC's listing on the relevant websites – the Scottish Civic Charter Climate Assembly; the Climate Emergency Declaration database (an international listing); and the Climate Emergency UK. While these listings did not of themselves commit signatories to specific actions, they sent a strong signal that civic society was aligning itself with environmental causes. They also helped to raise the profile of the climate emergency.

DM would offer a presentation on this topic at a future meeting of EACC (date not yet certain). EK remarked on the need to embed climate awareness into all MCC ongoing business; and to alert other organizations to MCC's declaration. He also pointed out that some activities, such as air travel, were much more impactful on carbon drawdown than other activities such as recycling. This didn't mean that recycling was unimportant, simply that other activities have a more serious impact.

Cllr Main welcomed the MCC initiative, which had been warmly endorsed by the Leader of the Council at a recent meeting. Marchmont CC was interested in making a similar declaration.

MCC might consider using the 'impact tool' which calculates the carbon footprint for each local area down to ward level – she would send the link.
ID thanked DM and EK for the progress they had made on this issue. EK would update the MCC website to report recent actions. Members were happy that DM & EK should follow up with EACC in due course.

7. Transport —DM

a. DM reported that an objection to the lowering of the speed limit on the Western Approach Road had been rejected at the January meeting of the Transport & Environment Committee. By means of a TRO, the speed limit would therefore be changed from 40mph to 30mph in the near future.

b. Morningside CC were keen to mount a survey on how people travel to Morningside Road and where their journey starts. They asked if MCC would collaborate on this. After discussion it was **agreed** that MCC should work with Morningside CC on the shaping of the survey (which might be extended to include Holy Corner). DM would take this forward. EK remarked that such surveys were very resource intensive and clear goals would be essential. Cllr Main observed that *Living Streets* had done surveys in the past and were a good source of advice on how to shape, resource and implement them.

8. Polwarth Pavements Improvement Project: Progress Report — RM:

MCC's application had been resubmitted to the SW Community Grants panel, which would consider bids at its next meeting at the end of March. RM & DM had addressed the panel's previous points of concern, though they remained very keen to engage with CEC's Transport and Road Safety Team, whom Cllr Main had been trying to enlist. Cllr Main assured the meeting that the officer in question would be in touch on his return from leave the following week. RM reported on the steady stream of helpful and constructive comments made to the project's email account. A summary of these (anonymised) would be offered to the next MCC meeting. Broadly speaking, the key points of concern focused on pedestrian crossings; safe routes to school; HGV misuse of residential streets; traffic noise and speed; cyclist safety especially around Walker Bridge; pavement condition, littering and dog fouling; cycle storage and access to the canal.

Several respondents had expressed interest in becoming more fully involved in the project. This was welcome: DM & RM would consider how best to enlist them while ensuring that MCC remained in charge.

9. CEC Waste Management

RM offered a brief overview of CEC's Waste Management Strategy and the proposals for communal bin hubs. The main points were as follows:

a. The strategy was driven by CEC's commitment to net zero by 2030 and by its perception that residents had 'lost confidence' in the current communal bin system.

Many bins regularly overflowed; the receptacles were old, dirty and often damaged. The hardware needed replaced. CEC had been awarded a £7.7m grant from Net Zero Scotland to implement a new system. Much of the equipment and vehicles required to implement the new strategy had already been purchased. For background, members should refer to this key document - https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/s14507/Item%207.5%20-%20Communal%20Bin%20Enhancement.pdf

b. New 'communal bin hubs' would replace all existing communal bins and (controversially) would be extended to areas of the New Town and World Heritage Site which currently benefit from door step collection through gull-proof sacks and recycling bins. Areas now receiving kerbside collections, such as some parts of MCC's area, would not be affected. Implementation would be phased: the new hubs were already being installed in Leith; Shandon would be in Phase 2 and Southside in Phase 4. The project was scheduled for completion in around 12-18 months. The location of the bin hubs would be determined through Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), to which objections may be made but only on grounds of health and safety or traffic management.

c. 'Hubs' would comprise bins for non-recyclables, mixed recycling, glass and food. They could be up to 8 metres in length. Each hub was expected to serve around 50 households. Refuse uplifts would be increased in frequency and might be as frequent as every two days, depending on usage. Hubs would be 'housed' to keep bins in place but little information was available on the design of the housing. Maps of proposed hub locations had been published with an online consultation in autumn 2021. The main ones covering MCC's area are available through the links below:

https://www.pclconsult.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/S4-1.pdf
https://www.pclconsult.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/S3-1.pdf
https://www.pclconsult.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/SHANDON-1.pdf

d. Community Councils and heritage bodies had made strenuous representations to the CEC Transport & Environment Committee about the impact of the new hubs on the streetscape in the World Heritage Site. Save for one minor adjustment to the colour of bin lids, CEC had rejected all their suggestions for modification and compromise and had ignored copious research, by those bodies, on waste management solutions adopted in other European cities with high heritage value. Other community councils have also voiced concern over the lack of proper engagement by CEC officials, over the Council's apparent unwillingness to debate matters of principle or of implementation, and over the impact of such a high-handed approach on residents' commitment to recycling.

e. Many streets in MCC's area would be affected by the changes, which were still not widely understood. If CEC were impervious to adjustments to the principles of the new system, all that was left to debate was the location of the hubs – a matter that would set neighbour against neighbour in a most damaging way. MCC might want to consider adding its voice on specific points. First, CEC had made no commitments on bin cleaning or upkeep, which would be essential if residents were to be confident in the new system for the longer term. Secondly, the hub housing would have to be acceptable in the streetscape – no details about this were available but CEC should be

pressed for information and to consult properly on this, area by area. MCC might also press CEC to explain the efficiency of a hub system when different vehicles were likely to be used to uplift different categories of waste. Further, MCC might want to defend the interests of neighbours with street-facing bedrooms and argue that glass collection from street-based bin hubs is simply unacceptable on grounds of noise and disturbance. Lastly, MCC might press CEC to say whether it has modelled the revenue implications of the new system and can confirm that frequent uplifts and regular cleaning are affordable within forecast revenue budgets.

f. There remained the question of how MCC might best support residents in its area who might face the deeply unwelcome prospect of an 8 metre bin hub on the street immediately in front of their dwelling. What role could it sensibly and constructively play? Lastly, MCC needed to consider whether, and if so in what form, to lend support to other CCs across the city who were pressing CEC to reconsider its approach.

There was a full discussion, with members expressing a variety of opinions on the principles and operation of the strategy. There was unanimity on the question of achieving net zero: the city had to make strenuous efforts in that direction. There was also agreement that the old black communal bins had to be replaced quickly: they were dirty, ugly and damaged. But members were sceptical that CEC had made a persuasive case for bin hubs as now proposed. Their monumental size would make them a very intrusive and disfiguring feature in many streets. Glass deposit and collection from points close to rooms where people might be sleeping (day or night) was not acceptable and must be re-thought. There was a strong case for pressing CEC to re-open consultation on the strategy - not just for MCC's area but city-wide. The online consultation in autumn 2021 had been poorly advertised and short. Very few residents, in any area, had realised the full impact of the proposed changes.

ML, a resident who had attended MCC's last meeting and briefed members on the proposals for her street and the predicament facing her family, reminded the meeting of the impact of the proposed communal bin hub on her property. An 8 metre long hub would extend along the whole frontage of her flat. In her street, the current 6 bins would be replaced by 24 bins. The rationale for that was not clear. She was extremely anxious about bin maintenance: the current bins were neglected, a magnet for graffiti, and an eyesore – yet CEC had made no commitment on the upkeep of the new hubs. She was a strong supporter of recycling: CEC's aims were laudable, but their approach to implementation had been 'shoddy'. Her family was unsure whether 'life would be bearable', if the new hub covered her entire frontage.

Cllrs Main and Ross offered to support residents as they grappled with the implications of the strategy. They acknowledged that CEC had to boost recycling and that the current landfill bins were urgently in need of replacement. But it was clearly problematic when large numbers of bins were proposed for outside one private property: the hubs were a 'leviathan' and a tough prospect for many. It was desirable for glass collection to be kept away from residential areas. MCC might want to ask for a CEC official to attend their next meeting. The broader question of how to exert influence on CEC was difficult, especially in view of the rejection by the Transport & Environment Committee of the concerns of neighbours in the New Town and Broughton. Both Councillors appreciated ML's

predicament and sympathised with her concerns. They also noted that TROs, though offering fewer grounds for objection than planning law, were an appropriate instrument in this case: every comment made against a TRO had to be reported to and assessed by CEC.

ID noted, with concern, that although a senior manager from CEC's Waste Management Department had recently given a presentation to a public meeting of MCC, the CEC manager had made no mention at all of the new waste management strategy or of the huge new communal bin hubs that are to be rolled out throughout the city. It was a very odd omission, especially since CEC was on record as wanting to help residents 'embrace the zero-waste hierarchy'. Good engagement was key to this.

After further discussion, it was **agreed** that (i) maps showing the locations of the proposed bin hubs should be uploaded to the MCC website. RM would pass the relevant material to ID. (ii) MCC should write to the Convener of the Transport & Environment Committee to express its extreme dissatisfaction with the design concept (the 'hubs'), and with the implementation process. MCC would ask for consultation to be re-opened city-wide, given the growing disquiet being expressed by CCs across the city and given the importance of good engagement to the eventual achievement of recycling objectives. MCC would make clear its support for the overall goals of the strategy: its criticisms would be focused on the methods used to advance it, the design concepts, and the failure to properly listen to the people on whom the Council depended for effective implementation. [ID would consult members on a draft in due course.]

10. Treasurer's Report — FH

There was a healthy balance of just over £3k.

a. A standing order for membership of the Cockburn Association had just been sent out. The annual payment of £50 to FOMBL would be activated on 1 April.

b. FH with ID would investigate further the scope to move on to a wholly digital banking system and electronic payments. FH was exploring the audit implications of such a move. ID noted that EACC was itself considering online banking management. On a matter of detail, he noted that MCC's contribution to the Bruntsfield Community Hub – a mere £3 – would shortly be renewed.

c. BS reported on the proposal, aired at the last meeting, that MCC should contribute to the commissioning of a new bench in the public garden associated with Polwarth Church. She had consulted members on the details of the project and had received positive support. It was **agreed** that BS would submit a proposal for grant funding of the bench to the SE Community Grants Fund. If the panel refused to fund the whole amount, MCC would discuss again whether to bridge any funding gap from its own resources. The total cost of the bench was under £1000 and it was hoped the panel would agree it offered an excellent use of their funds.

11. City Councillors' Reports

Cllr Main reported that the crisis in social care, though still severe, was now less critical than before Christmas, when several private operators had handed back contracts to the Council. All the same, around 1000 individuals were still waiting for a care package. The big issue now

facing the Council was the budget: her forecast was that, while 2022-23 would be just manageable, later years would extremely difficult and the City would face another funding crisis.

ID proposed a vote of thanks to Cllr Main for her outstanding 10 years of service to CEC and to our community. It was sad to see her standing down but MCC wished her all the best. This was warmly endorsed by everyone.

Cllr Ross was heavily involved in the upcoming budget debate. The Culture Committee had recently reached decisions on a couple of items of possible interest to MCC including cemetery management and the installation of replica jawbones at the Meadows. He welcomed the return to service of Bus no 45, re-started from end-January.

12. Issues Raised by Residents – none other than those raised above.

13. Other Reports

None. [The issue of graffiti, raised previously, will be revisited at the next meeting.]

14. Any other business

RM invited members to consider supporting the community grocery Dig-In at Bruntsfield. They had done sterling work during the pandemic in supporting customers with deliveries and now needed additional supporters on their management committee. Anyone interested should speak to the shop manager. ID drew attention to the Fountainbridge Greenworks Initiative, promoted by the Fountainbridge Canalside Community Development Trust. MCC had invited them to present to a future meeting, probably in May. At its next meeting, MCC hoped to welcome Andrew Burns' presentation on the Union Canal, past present and future.

15. Future MCC Public Meetings 2022

15th March, 17th May, 21st June, 20th September, 18th October and 15th November. There will be no public meeting in April, July, August, and December.

Action Log

Date Started	Action	Owner	Status / Target Date
2022-2-15	MCC to write to Transport & Environment Committee about communal bin hubs	ID to send	
2022-2-15	To pass bin hub maps to ID	RM EK to post on MCC website	Done

2022-2-15	To engage with Morningside CC on their travel survey of Morningside Road	DM	
2022-2-15	To brief EACC on climate emergency work	DM & EK	
2022-2-15	to update website on climate emergency declaration	EK	
2022-01-18	MCC to contact New Town & Broughton CC about bin hubs	?	?
2022-01-18	ID to write to the Police about anti-social behaviour and press for Police representation at MCC meetings.	ID	Ongoing
2021-10-19	Consider response to move by private hire taxi group to be given access to bus lanes and bus gates	NS	
2021-10-19	Explore ways of recruiting new members for MCC	ID	Ongoing
2021-11-16	Respond to licensing application by Sainsbury's Dundee Street	BS	
2021-11-16	Place the declaration, with wording close to that proposed by DM, on the MCC website, together with an invitation for comments.	EK, DM	Completed
2021-11-16	Draft response to Scot Gov consultation on aviation strategy	DM	Deadline 21 Jan 2022
2021-11-16	Initiate discussion on possible uses of funds in MCC account	ID	For January 2022 MCC meeting.
2021-11-16	Put MH in contact with relevant people in Polwarth area	BS	

Merchiston Community Council

Paper A

Chair's Report – 15th February 2022 Public Meeting

1. **Overview** – Scottish Government recently announced that *"Scotland is through the worst of Omicron"*. Covid risks are currently receding as far as life-threatening and serious illness, but risks have not been eliminated. There continue to be thousands of new Covid cases each day, plus high transmissibility risks and Long Covid illness, all still causing concern and pressure on NHS GP and hospital services. There was also a recent Public Health Scotland report that "*35,000 people who tested positive for Covid in Scotland have had the virus before*". (i.e., almost 10% of positive PCR tests at end of January 2022 were re-infections).

   Current advice is to continue to minimise exposure to risks, including air-borne infection risks in public places, and to wear an effective mask when in proximity to other people.

   The most authoritative independent statistics and in-depth analysis of Covid cases throughout the UK is available from The Office For National Statistics (ONS): https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases

   MCC proposes to continue to hold virtual meetings meantime because of potential Covid risks in confined spaces. Also, MCC's previous meetings venue, Polwarth Tennis and Bowling Clubhouse, has been undergoing renovations and it is unclear when it will become available and the risk management arrangements in place.

2. **Highway Code Changes** - Four new rules and 49 changes to the Highway Code were introduced from 29th January 2022. Changes affect all types of road users, with the objective of improving road safety. Changes include a new risk-based 'Hierarchy of Road Users' that places more responsibility on drivers of vehicles to look after more vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists.

   Concerns have been expressed that these "well meaning" changes have not been fully assessed and may cause confusion and additional accidents.

   Key changes:
   - Hierarchy of road users
   - People crossing the road at junctions
   - Walking, cycling, or riding in shared spaces
   - Positioning in the road when cycling
   - Overtaking when driving or cycling
   - People cycling at junctions
   - People cycling, riding a horse, and driving horse-drawn vehicles on roundabouts

- Parking, leaving vehicles, and charging vehicles

Graphics which illustrate the Highway Code changes:
www.dropbox.com/sh/q77u74wqwjhkgpr/AACysxIsALqasfqwI1FRd7dxa?dl=0

Full list of changes:
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-highway-code-8-changes-you-need-to-know-from-29-january-2022

3. **Census 2022 –** Scotland's census will take place on **Sunday 20th March 2022**. Censuses are normally conducted every 10 years. In England and Wales, the census took place in 2021 as scheduled; Scotland's census was postponed from 2021 to 2022 because of Covid.

   Censuses provide authoritative data for forward planning of public services, including immigration and emigration statistics, monitoring population growth and decline in different parts of Scotland, future demand projections for school pupil numbers, NHS hospitals, GP services, care homes and other public services.

   For the first time, census returns will be predominantly online, rather than mainly by door-to-door enumerators; Covid risks have also been a factor in this change. Special arrangements will be made for those who cannot complete the census online.

   I was formerly a Board Member of the National Records of Scotland (NRS), which manages Scotland's censuses, as well as statutory keeper of Scotland's historical archives, and managing Scotland's People genealogy service. I participated in planning the census, including gearing up enlarged IT capabilities to handle "big data" census statistics, operational logistics and risk management, and planning for teams of statisticians and analysts who interpret, publish, and archive the census statistics.

   Census Summary (Source: Scottish government information): *"The census will open at the end of February 2022. We will write to every household in Scotland with instructions for taking part. Census day will be Sunday, 20 March but you will be able to complete your questionnaire as soon as you receive your letter. You will be able to do this online using instructions we will include in the letter. You will be able to order a paper questionnaire online or over the phone if you prefer to complete the census this way. If you stay somewhere like a hall of residence, a care home or a hostel, the person who manages your accommodation will provide you with instructions for how to take part."*

   Information: https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/taking-part-in-the-2022-census/scotland-s-census-2022/

4. **Defibrillators –** An increasing number of defibrillators are being installed in public places; I noticed one outside Waitrose in Morningside, and available 24/7. I suspect the level of awareness amongst the public about locations and how to use

defibrillators is low. I also wonder whether there are sufficient defibrillators available in Merchiston?

Researching local defibrillators and public awareness might be a useful project for MCC. First step would be to research what defibrillators are already installed, map where their locations, how the public can obtain information about location and use, and whether any additional local defibrillators would be beneficial. Possibly a useful research project and learning opportunity for our young Associate Members?

Internet information: *Question - How do you know where your nearest defibrillator is?*
***If you call the emergency services and provide your location**, the operator should be able to tell you where your nearest defibrillator is, if there's one in reach and give you the code to access it. That's only if they've been informed about its location though.*

Information: https://www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/i-need-to-know/defibrillator-guide-for-first-time-buyers/

5. **Participation in MCC Public Meetings** – MCC's role includes providing an independent and non-political forum for discussion and scrutiny of local issues and we welcome a wide range of stakeholders to participate. At MCC's public meeting on 18th January, we welcomed several residents who participated constructively in discussing issues of concern, including the controversial planning application for a pizza restaurant at 36 Yeaman Place, CEC's impending changes to waste collection that include huge communal bin hubs in residential areas, and a complaint about graffiti. These issues will be discussed further at MCC's future public meetings.

   Regrettably, no City Councillors logged in at our January public meeting. The 7 Ward Councillors covering both Meadows/Morningside (Ward 10) and Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart (Ward 9) are invited to participate in MCC's public meetings; several often do, but regrettably no City Councillors participated in January's public meeting. A further concern was that yet again no Police report was received.

   MCC public meetings provide opportunities for MCC members and residents to ask questions of the relevant authorities and to seek clarifications and assurances. It is hoped that participation can be strengthened for future MCC public meetings.

6. **Chair's Meetings as MCC 's representative:**

   - 13th January - SW Locality Community Planning Partnership. Issues discussed included update report on SW Neighbourhood Networks, and progress reports on SW Locality Improvement Plan (LIP) five priority action themes.

   - 20th January – EACC Special Meeting. Main item discussed was a proposed new constitution for EACC. Several issues proved controversial, including representation and selection, so other items on the agenda had to be

rescheduled to future meetings. EACC has expressed interest in discussing MCC's Climate Emergency Project and MCC has offered a presentation to EACC – probably March or April EACC meeting. Declan Murray is liaising with EACC for MCC

- SW Community Grants Funding Panel – Next meeting rescheduled to 24th March (tbc)

Ian Doig. MCC Chair. February 2022