Merchiston Community Council: Minutes of Public Meeting (Zoom meeting)

Date: 15th March 2022
Chaired by Ian Doig, Chair of Merchiston Community Council (MCC)

Attendance:

MCC Members: Joan Houston (JH), Declan Murray (DM, Minute taker), Ian Doig (ID, Chair), Daniel Cairns (DC), Vivien Kitteringham (VK, Vice-Chair), Bridget Stevens (BS), Frances Hawarden (FH, Treasurer), Mairianna Clyde (MC), Roma Menlowe (RM, Zoom host), Henry Reynolds (Watsons Associate), Amelie Lacey (Watsons Associate)

Elected Representatives and Candidates: Cllr Neil Ross, Christopher Cowdy (candidate)

Residents: Ruben Manso, Annie Pollock.

PRESENTATION: ***Celebrating the Union Canal's Bicentenary,*** by Andrew Burns, Chair of the Edinburgh Union Canal Society (EUCS), followed by open discussion.

Andrew outlined the history of the Union canal, current and future developments. He informed the meeting that bicentenary celebration activities planned include on 20th May at Harrison Park Boathouse and on 21st May at Linlithgow Canal Basin. There will be a flotilla of boats, marquees etc.

Members agreed to arrange an MCC exhibition presence at the Harrison Park Muster Point. Noted that Bridget is MCC's representative with EUCS.

Action Point: Communications Group plus Bridget.

Weblink for further information: www.flotilla200.live

BUSINESS MEETING

1. **Introduction** – Ian Doig, MCC Chair

   Chair asked if there were any declarations of interest for items to be discussed; none declared.

2. **Minutes of Public Meeting on 15th February 2022** were agreed as a correct record and approved. **Matters Arising:** None

3. **Chair's Report (ID)**

   ID requested that the meeting spend some time discussing the Ukraine crisis. ID had taken the preliminary step of checking the legality and appropriateness of a donation to support

humanitarian aid for Ukraine with CEC governance staff and had received the following positive response: " - - *In the current circumstances it would be very understandable for your Community Council to demonstrate your communities support of Ukraine through a donation, and I do not foresee this creating an issue in the annual accounts that we received for this period."*

RM had circulated a list of potential ways to help Ukraine and spoke to options available. ID stated that the first decision in principle was whether MCC would make a donation. If so, whether to make a one-off donation or several, the latter recognising that needs may change when refugees arrive in Edinburgh, including from Kyiv, a twin city of Edinburgh. Treasurer FH informed members that MCC's annual grant from CEC is £1,100, so she projected that MCC will have ample funds of around £4,000 in April.

ID suggested that MCC make an immediate financial donation to support humanitarian efforts and may in due course consider the matter further as the Ukraine situation develops. He stated that a donation should preferably go to a respected and broadly-based charity with previous practical experience in humanitarian relief responses. DEC (Disasters Emergency Committee; a consortium of 15 major charities) was mooted as an option.

Chair sought approval in principle to a donation by MCC. Members used the Zoom Chat function to indicate Yes or No; approval was unanimous for Yes in principle to a donation.

Second decision was whether a donation should be made to DEC and members again indicated agreement.

Third decision was the amount. ID initially suggested £200 or £400. DM asked if we would be committing to the same amount for both the first and second decisions; ID replied that MCC can review further donations as a later decision down the line. VK suggested £200 or £250 now, and then at least that if not more later, for example when refugees reach Edinburgh. MC suggested, as two possible recipients of a later donation, the Ukrainian Association on Royal Terrace, and a Ukrainian Church (Dalmeny Street) in Edinburgh. RM pointed out a practicality that the Ukrainian Club in Edinburgh has been overwhelmed by in-kind donations and that the Ukrainian Church is a branch of a wider UK church.

BS suggested £400 now to one of the Edinburgh Ukrainian organisations. DC suggested instead that further discussion should take place offline. ID disagreed because the Ukraine situation was extremely urgent and MCC needed to move fast, since next MCC public meeting would be 17th May, 2 months ahead. A further reason is that all decisions by MCC must be taken in public meetings, not offline in private, especially financial decisions. NR informed the meeting that CEC Full Council will meet that week and agree a cash donation to DEC, plus other supporting actions.

BS then formally moved a proposal of £400 and ID seconded that. ID summarised the discussion to this point: agreement to make an immediate cash donation of £400. An option considered was to give it locally to the Ukrainian Church in the UK - any against? DC was against and said MCC was rushing this too quickly and not doing full research; DC suggested holding another public meeting next month or hold on to money until refugees arrive in Edinburgh; this view was however not supported by other members.

VK proposed the donation go to DEC as they are well-respected and have a strong track record in supporting disasters, are skilled and have resources, whereas she was not sure

what Ukrainian Church is like – and if it's a UK-wide church then it's not local anymore – so if not going local then VK suggested the donation should go to DEC. ID said his preference was to donate to DEC, because it is an organisation that is well respected, and is the humanitarian organisation used by CEC and many other major organisations.

ID therefore re-proposed a donation of £400 to DEC, seconded by Vivien; this proposal met with support from members by a large majority, with one member against.

DECISION - £400 contribution to DEC Ukraine Humanitarian Relief Fund, to be paid immediately.

ID continued his Chair's report:

- Navid Saberi has resigned from MCC due to work commitments.

- ID raised topic of defibrillators – everyone agreed that a map of defibrillator locations in the MCC area would be good, but we would need volunteers to take it forward; members agreed to follow it up offline.

ID reported on various meetings he had participated in, incl. EACC.

4. Licensing Report

BS said that no new alcohol licences had been submitted since last meeting but that there are a few new applications coming up in a few days and BS will look at and circulate any relevant applications. (Post meeting note – there had been none)

BS had spoken to residents and drafted an objection on behalf of MCC to Dalton's scrapyard application for an extension to its licence to process scrap. BS had followed it up today and was told the application hasn't been processed yet by CEC. BS said Dalton's scrapyard licence application would be for 3 years duration, which is most unusual as it is normally for one year. BS said there was a rumour the scrapyard application had been withdrawn.

5. Planning Report

Yeaman Place Lane - Discussion took place about recent plans circulated by a developer for student housing at Yeaman Place Lane. DM had taken part in pre-consultation run by developers and had asked about sale but was not given an answer. Resident, Ruben Manso, stated that yesterday residents had received a letter from Joanna Cherry MP asking for views on the plans as well. RM explained that the "consultation" was just an online webchat event; a planning application had not yet been submitted to CEC so far, as far as MCC is aware. Another resident, Annie Pollock, had heard nothing about the" consultation". VK was able to explain that there were two different issues that the discussion was confusing: the church further along canal, off Gilmore Place is a different development.

8 Napier Road - NR explained that a CEC site visit had taken place to 8 Napier Road to consider the planning application for a new house to be built in the garden. ID expressed disappointment that MCC had not been invited by CEC to attend the site visit, as should have happened.

(Post meeting note: 8 Napier Road planning application has since been granted by CEC).

6. Climate Emergency project

DM said there was not much to report here. DM has written to University of Exeter developers of a carbon footprint impact tool to see if possible to get breakdown according to Community Council boundaries, not just CEC ward boundaries.

7. Transport Report

DM reported back on an action from the January meeting about electric vehicle charging points. There are 4 in our community council area (1 at Best Western, Bruntsfield Links; 3 at Fountain Park). These are a mixture of charging speeds.

8. Polwarth Pavements Improvement Project

RM explained that the CEC SW Community Grants Funding Panel would be meeting tomorrow. RM and DM will attend to present their application. RM explained that they had also had a constructive meeting with Andy Edwards, Senior Road Safety Officer at CEC.

(Post meeting note: grant of £3,795 from CEC SW Funding Panel was approved)

9. Waste Management

ID had hoped that MC would be online to update on this but, by that point in the meeting MC had departed to attend another meeting.

10. Treasurer's Report

FH said there was nothing new to report – no new financial activity reported.

11. Councillor's Report

NR reported that, in Lord Provost report, funding will be available for local community groups for funding for up to £500 via community councils to host street parties on Sunday 5th June for the Queen's Jubilee. FH asked, are we seriously considering spending £500 of public money on street parties when people are dying in Ukraine? NR said that CEC had allocated £20,000 in total for Jubilee street parties, and said that CEC are also offering £100,000 for resettlement of Ukrainian refugees.

HMO licences will require annual renewals with CEC.

Police Scotland are running a consultation on service priorities for policing.

11. Issues raised by residents

None.

12. Other reports

BS reported that bid she submitted to SE Community Grants Fund for the Canalside Bench Project was successful with a grant of £975. Other successful bids for the SE Community Grants Fund were: Eric Liddell Centre, Astley Ainsley, Morningside Community Council and FOMBL.

13. AOB

ID reported that EACC (Edinburgh Association of Community Councils) had written to all community councils in Edinburgh to request a financial contribution towards the running costs of EACC, which does not receive grant support from CEC or Scottish Government. Members of MCC were supportive

of the current good work of EACC. ID proposed a contribution to EACC in principle; the appropriate amount was unclear, so it was remitted to ID as Chair to consult MCC members and EACC.

(Post meeting note: Through consultation, several members proposed that MCC should contribute £50 to support EACC running costs. A donation was agreed in principle at MCC's March public meeting and the amount paid will be reported at the next MCC public meeting on 17th May).