Merchiston Community Council

Minutes of the Public Meeting of Merchiston Community Council
Tuesday 19th September 2023 at 19.00. In-person meeting.
Venue: Polwarth Tennis and Bowling Clubhouse, Polwarth Terrace, EH11 1NA.

Attendees:
Ian Doig (ID) MCC Chair
Vivien Kitteringham (VK) MCC Vice-chair, Minutes taker
John McKenna (JMcK) MCC
Joan Houston (JH) MCC
Roma Menlowe (RM) MCC
Bridget Stevens (BS) MCC
Mairianna Clyde (MC) MCC
Helen Zealley (HZ) MCC
Councillor Neil Ross (NR) Ward 10
Councillor Val Walker (VW) Ward 9
Sgt Christine Robertson, Oxgangs Community Police Team
Rubén Manse Resident
Vanessa Meaden Resident
Caz Resident
Kay Smith Resident

1. **Introduction by Chair**
Apologies for Absence:
Frances Hawarden MCC Treasurer
Daniel Cairns MCC Secretary
Guy Chisholm
Councillor David Key
Declarations of Interest: None

2. **Issues Raised by Residents**
Residents present raised no issues, however MCC members raised issues from residents not able to attend:
JH Reported the fall of an 83 year old resident highlighting the urgent need to re-slab the undulating, dangerous pavement between Napier University entrance and the communal bins on Colinton Road.
HZ Reports from Albert Terrace that 3 of many holes have been filled – why not the others?
Action Point: Cllrs NR and VW will follow up.

3. **Police Report –** Sgt Christine Robertson, Oxgangs Community Police Team
Explained the restricted availability of community police to attend meetings and more generally, and that detailed community reports are no longer distributed for data protection reasons. Ward level reports reveal no crime hotspots in MCC area.
If residents are fearful, they shouldn't be afraid to call 999. If not currently in fear, use 101, or to bring ongoing problems to police attention use the mailboxes for the community policing teams:
EdinburghCPTSouthWest@scotland.pnn.police.uk (Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart in our area)
EdinburghCPTSouthEast@scotland.pnn.police.uk (Morningside in our area).

Discussion: ID pointed out the dangers of the Polwarth roundabout and mentioned MCC's Polwarth Pavements Project (PPP). RM mentioned help given by a police colleague, who pinpointed many of the issues, and that police are supportive of the project but infringements are insufficiently policed.
VW and VK mention speeding on Ashley Terrace especially outside Craiglockhart Primary School.

Sgt. Robertson: Police can loan out banners to schools or possibly a "pop-up Kirsty" policewoman cutout which can help. We can also ask for more speed checks.
Ward level forums are being set up so police including Chief Inspectors can meet local representatives to discuss issues.
Bikes and scooters: Bike thefts and bikes and e-scooters along the canal were discussed. Police can't pursue motor bikes, e-bikes etc. as yet. E-scooters are prohibited outside private grounds. Police engage with riders (and bad cyclists) where they come across them and also go into schools and engage at events, e.g. when security marking bikes.

4. **City Councillors' Reports**
Cllr NR: **https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/sfc/greenbank-to-meadows/** This consultation is currently open. 3 options are proposed and can also be found online by looking up the Morningside councillors' websites/facebook pages.
Bin hubs are currently being sited in Zone 8, with problems due to proximity to residents' property. Implementation is already ongoing in S1/S2/S3.
Short-Term Lets: Landlords must apply by October 1st, A list of applications can be found on the CEC website. Residents can report STLs with no licence or current application if there's a problem.
Roads: Viewforth is to be completely resurfaced and one side of the pavement widened, so will be closed for a time, scheduled 9/10/23 – 11/11/23 approx.
ID and others refer to locked gate closing off right of way at McLarens, Holy Corner. Our aggravation is noted and passed to our councillors.

Cllr VW: is talking to Scottish Canals about speeding cyclists – especially endangering children walking to/from school - along the Union Canal, but finding them very defensive.
Ashley Terrace road safety: 3 raised areas at crossing points are proposed.
Proposed student accommodation at Dundee Terrace. Can this only be for students, not families?
(This will be discussed fully at the next meeting on 17th October)

5. **Minutes of Public Meeting of 20th June 2023** were approved unanimously. No matters arising outwith those on the agenda.

6. **Chair's Report** (ID) (attach chair's report here)
ID refers to the main points of his report:
- This is our first in-person meeting since lockdown and much has changed causing uncertainty. Covid infections are increasing so it is wise to take care and get updated flu and Covid vaccinations as available.
- We need to decide whether to hold future meetings in person or on Zoom, especially given increasing numbers of Covid infections. Comments are invited.
- We were pleased to welcome a community police representative to this meeting for the first time since lockdown and endeavour to support our local police where we can.
- MCC needs new members, especially younger members. If you might be interested, please get in touch at merchistonchair@gmail.com
- The Edinburgh Union Canal Society is making progress e.g. with hiring out rowing boats, and eventual replacement of the Boathouse is being planned.
- EACC (Edinburgh Association of Community Councils) meetings cover interesting city-wide issues which are open to all. See their website www.edinburghcommunitycouncils.co.uk

Discussion: With one exception the consensus was that Zoom would be better for the remaining meetings in this year.

7. **Polwarth Pavements Improvement Project (Attach report here)**
RM and JMcK: We are at a point where we must decide whether to apply for funding from Sustrans, which would need up to 30% matched funding commitment from CEC. Thanks to our local councillors

for moving things on. There are many questions remaining, in particular whether the community is sufficiently committed to supporting the project, including if it gets knocked back initially because of lack of funding? Sustrans would be less interested in the proposed community hub, but the CEC 20 Minute Neighbourhood team might include that part of the project in its plans. Daisy Narayanan (Head of Placemaking and Mobility at CEC) is invited to the next meeting to discuss further.
Discussion included suggestions for raising funds, e.g., through negotiating planning gain from the Yeaman Place development, community contributions, full funding from Sustrans. ID felt CEC should prioritise committing financial support for this excellent example of community engagement, which has identified improvements that would reduce risks to pedestrians and road users alike, as well as improve the local environment. Some residents suggested that some elements of the community are too transient (lots of student turnover) to fully get behind the project.

8. **Planning Report**
MC, Planning Lead: Dundee Terrace student accommodation planning application – will be discussed more fully at the next meeting. Public can view plans at Fountainbridge Library on 25th September and 23rd October from 3-7pm.
Dalton Scrapyard student accommodation plans have been granted planning permission. It is not yet clear whether ownership of the site has been acquired by the developers.

9. **Licensing Report**
BS, **Licensing Lead:** reported that she had been approached by local business 181 Delicatessen, whose application for a full liquor licence had been supported by MCC. The application had been lodged in June but neither the applicant nor MCC had heard anything since. Eventually CEC Licensing Section emailed that the application would be considered at a meeting of the Licensing Board on 25 September.

10. **Merchiston Leaf Clearing Project (MCLP)**
JH and HZ: George Watson's students will start leaf clearing shortly as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award programme. Last year's volunteers are being contacted and signed up for GDPR purposes.
The use of sturdy paper bags is being considered instead of plastic bags, and extra brown bins for this purpose are also being considered. CEC say the leaves can't be composted because of contamination from the roads but are incinerated at Millerhill to produce electricity.

11. **Tree Conservation Issues –** see attached report.
RM: pointed out that there are only 2 council officers responsible for trees for the whole of Edinburgh. Trees even in conservation areas have less protection than one might expect. It would be important to inform residents about the legal position regarding trees both within and outwith conservation areas and steps residents can take to protect local trees. MCC will explore the possibility of a presentation from a senior member of the CEC trees team.

12. **Treasurer's Report**: Finances are in good order – the only thing to report is that we received £100 less from CEC as MCC's annual grant his year – reasons unknown. Finances are still healthy however.

13. **CEC's Review of Community Councils and Boundaries**
ID: MCC was represented at 2 information sessions. A final, statutory consultation begins on October 2nd.

14. **Other Reports and Correspondence:** None

15. **Any Other Business:** none
Meeting Closed 21:10
16. **Future Meetings** (to be held on Zoom): ***Tues 17th October. Tues 21st November. (No public meeting in December)***