Merchiston Community Council

Minutes of the Public Meeting of Merchiston Community Council
Tuesday 17th October 2023 at 19.00. Online Zoom meeting.

Attendees:
Ian Doig (ID) MCC Chair
Vivien Kitteringham (VK) MCC Vice-chair
John McKenna (JMcK) MCC, minutes taker
Joan Houston (JH) MCC
Roma Menlowe (RM) MCC
Bridget Stevens (BS) MCC
Frances Hawarden (FH) MCC Treasurer
Guy Chisholm
Daisy Narayanan CEC Head of Placemaking and Mobility (DN)
Rubén Manso Resident (RBM)
Caz Resident
Kay Smith Resident (KS)
Klaus Glenk Resident (KG)
Mary Breatnach Resident (MB)
Alex Orr Representing Glencairn (AO)
Rupert Fleming Representing Glencairn (RF) *Flow Design*
Daryl Teague Representing Glencairn (DT)
Hugh Shepard Representing Glencairn (HS) *Scott Hobbs Planning*

1. **Introduction by Chair**
Apologies for Absence:
Marianna Clyde (MC) MCC
Helen Zealley (HZ) MCC
Daniel Cairns MCC Secretary
Cllr Val Walker

Declarations of Interest: None

AGENDA:

1. **Police Report** – Police Scotland representative was invited to attend but no attendance meant this section skipped for this meeting.

2. **Polwarth Pavements Project (PPP) -** RM and JMcK gave presentation on Polwarth Pavements project to Date. The extensive work that has been done with safety issues being the prime problem flagged by residents. However, listed in presentation were many issues associated with Polwarth roundabout. (see presentation). RM highlighted that CEC seemed to undertake projects with little inclusion of residents and Community Councils. Things happen rather than consultations for what is important undertaken by CEC. Case in point being extensive pavements work in Polwarth Gardens taking place which effects the PP possible solutions. RM pointed out the lack of response from some in CEC, lack of coordinated thinking and regrettable but real lack of CEC money for important issues such as PPP. RM appreciated the lack of funding but highlighted possible funding from Sustrans, which, if obtained, could CEC find the 30% shortfall for PPP? Possible financial contribution to community projects from developers on major projects underway in MCC area

(suggested as a prerequisite for obtaining CEC planning permission)? RM said we had a once in a 50-year window to take advantage of Sustrans and other funding sources.

DN explained her role and her hopes for better coordination within CEC, stating she was short of staff and had lost 6 personnel over recent months. After receiving PPP report she has ensured circulation and cognisance of the report within her department and CEC. She recognised a need for better communication between residents and councils, plus better coordination within CEDC and this was work she has started on. She is also responsible for the George Street and the Lothian Road traffic reduction projects plus the new bus/Tram routes, active travel and 20-minute neighbourhood projects. She admits that the PPP fits perfectly into this remit. She appreciated us bringing the issues and the plans within the presentation to her attention. Her job is to "join the dots" and make sure of a cohesive approach and, while she stopped short of definite financial commitment, she recognises our frustration and work to date.

(1.2 billion has been allocated for 6 bridges, pavement widening, dropped kerbs over the coming years in CEC, so we may be able to fit into a funding somewhere)

Q&A for Daisy – ID was primarily concerned by safety concerns in PPP, with JMcK giving anecdotal evidence from street consultation of frightening traffic/pedestrian/wheeler incidents. RM stated our disappointment on behalf of residents that no consideration of PPP issues were or have been given. RBM What is the point of resident-driven groups if CEC does not cooperate or listen. DN noted Sustrans, for whom she previously worked, has £180 million for projects so the 30% CEC involvement to co-fund is something we will look at, but she again stopped short of definite commitment. However, her team now has total visibility. ID made the point that the PPP report aligned closely with several CEC policies, including traffic reduction in residential areas, encouraging walking and wheeling instead of vehicle use, 20 MPH speed limits, 20-minute neighbourhoods, and improving local environments and public safety and wellbeing. CEC should not have to have a 100-page report from MCC to recognise the roundabout problems. DN accepted the safety concerns. ID thanked Daisy and hoped the constructive dialogue and quest for funding will continue.

3. **City Councillors' Reports** – No councillors attended so no report.

4. **Minutes of Public Meeting on 19th Sept 2023** - Approved. **Matters Arising** - None

5. **Chair's Report** - Ian Doig, Chair. Chair's written report had been circulated to members.

   Discussions on ongoing McLaren's Blocked Right of Way. Further complaints received from residents about locked gate which is completely blocking the right of way. CEC has noted infringement of planning consent. Message received by MCC from CEC: *"The case is still currently under consideration. Specifically, we have identified a breach of planning control and we are now considering if enforcement action is reasonable and proportionate. The expected decision date is 9th November."*

   Police Update - SW Community Policing Team have notified CCs that they no longer have sufficient manpower available to participate in CC meetings. Instead, SW Police Division is organizing a new series of "Ward Forum" meetings, aligned to CEC Wards – further information in Chair's October report. Police will also distribute quarterly newsletters.

   £250 for Leaf Clearing project reception at Polwarth Parish Church approved. MCC team will organise venue, date, invitations etc. ID suggested invitations could also be extended to residents and others who participated in the PPP and other projects. This would broaden awareness and raise profile of MCC.

6. **Planning: Dundee Street/Dundee Terrace - Proposed Development by Glencairn Properties** – Glencairn invited to outline their proposals

   Presentation from Alex Orr (AO), Rupert Fleming (RF) and Daryl Teague (DT) Hugh Shepard (HS) all representing Glencairn about the proposed development for student's residences on Dundee Terrace.

   They collectively presented a 6-story development over a difficult topographical site and with the challenge of a triangular design. They had listened to local residents so they will ensure end on parking as is current on site with new planting and opening up the pavement section currently unused. There will be a sunken garden. Possible retail or office premises for charity on sharp corner edge of building. Bin stores will be inside. 200 possible occupants.

   Q&A – RBM said he understood Glencairn said the dwellings were not suitable for families when there is a real need for family accommodation in the area. Greater demand is for more availability of affordable housing for long-term residents, rather than more and more student flats. DT said the demand was huge and, for the site risk and return for developer, student accommodation was necessary. Question was asked "why students residences?", and where were the universities they would be based. DT said Napier primarily but also Edinburgh Univ. Discussion was commenced on future presentations and possible changes in the long term. KS asked about 50 % of the students having cars, so where would they park? CEC does not allow parking in students accommodation and none of the student residents would be allowed parking permits. RM asked about 50% ceiling on student percentage in area. Daltons site development already meant we were approaching or on limit. HS said the 50% threshold is being assessed. Effectively they look at an 800-metre radius from the site for assessment which is ongoing.
   BS expressed regret about the likely timing of the formal planning application submission, which Glencairn admitted would probably be in the run-up to Christmas; would Glencairn consider deferring submission until January 2024? – Glencairn response - "they might consider'.

   ID this is an early-stage consultation and MCC will discuss further if and when a formal application for planning consent comes forward. ID thanked Glencairn for visibility and attending.

7. **Licensing Report** – BS was pleased that the Licensing Board read out the response from MCC at licensing committee meeting. That proves Licensing Board does listen to CCs and records our replies.

8. **Leaf Clearing Project –** JH was very pleased with leaf clearing this season that had begun already with 8 new volunteers and, so far, 321 bags collected. One member had collected 19 bags! CEC were praised for speedy collection of filled bags and attending to requests for bags etc. Joan wished to praise Helen who she said had been stalwart in her work on the project. Others had taken part in the leaf clearing as well, spurred on by, but not necessarily enrolled in the project, so the area is benefiting outwith the actual project participants. The area is looking far tidier and slippage risks will be reduced.

   It was agreed that a reception, as agreed earlier in discussing Chair's report, will take place in early in December at Polwarth Parish Church to say thank you to participants. MB agreed to help with the arrangements with the church.
   Sunday Dec 3rd was mooted as a possible date. ID proposed special thanks to Joan and Helen.
   Joan and Helen requested to form a small group to organise venue, date, invitations etc.

9. **Treasurer's Report** – FH gave the members a report on the finance situation of MCC noting that CEC gave £100 less this year as a grant to MCC than last. No reason given but she will enquire. Otherwise, the finances are healthy. She noted some of the monies was ringfenced for PPP from the Community Grant received by MCC.

10. **Other Reports and Correspondence**

    ID stated that MCC needed new members to fill vacancies. KG suggested he and his partner, Vanessa, may consider joint membership as childcare issue prevented them both being able to attend. The members will consider the proposal. KG and Vanessa would like to be more active than passive in the community. KG works in the agricultural college. ID invited KG to send him a brief outline of himself and Vanessa and their community interests. Additional suggestion for new members would be welcome, especially to assist with IT and website. ID will take membership suggestions forward.

    KS gave an overview of the new bin hubs, one of which is outside her window. It is impossible to drop anything in quietly, especially the bottle banks. No sound deadening has been applied and as they are smaller than previous bins and of metal the CEC seems to have gone for the cheapest, with sound pollution no consideration.

    JMcK suggested the possibility of adopting and planting out the two small garden roundels at the bowling club traffic islands -at present a haven for weeds. This suggestion was welcomed by MCC. ID thought that MCC had asked before to plant these up and perhaps have volunteers work on them, especially gardeners on the allotments waiting list. Volunteer gardeners for this site were thought to have been rejected previously by CEC, but it was agreed to re-ask CEC, which owns the roundels. JMcK requested to explore further.

    RM discussed having an expert on home insulation speak to MCC at a meeting. This was agreed as a good idea to explore. 21st November public meeting would be appropriate, if speaker is available. RM requested to explore further.

11. **Any Other Business** – None.

    Time having nearly expired the meeting stopped at 8 .55 pm.

12. **Future Public Meeting:** ***Tues 21st November. (No public meeting in December)***