

# **FIRRHILL COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

## **COUNCIL MEETING: 23 SEPTEMBER 2008**

Minutes of meeting held at the Oxgangs Neighbourhood Centre.

Present: H Levy (Chair/Treasurer); A Hunter (Vice Chair); P Wright (Secretary); G Hunter; G Lighthouse; L Linn; B Brand (Firrhill Drive Tenants and Residents Association); J Kerr; J Napier (Mins Sec);

In Attendance: N Peachey; I Robson; A McNair; WL Sinclair; P Wooten; M Carson; C Bennett; LM Gallacher; HK Robertson.  
Cllr Eric Barry; Cllr Jason Rust; L Maguire (Fairmilehead Association); Steven Riddell, (Police Sergeant, LB Police); Norman Tinlin, (Secretary, Fairmilehead Community Council).

Apologies: Cllr E Aitken; M Jarvis

### **1. Minutes of Previous Meeting: held on the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2008**

The Chair corrected Item 2(f) The Peak – to read “financial year” at the end of second sentence. The minutes would be corrected prior to being forwarded on the CEC. The corrected minute accepted as a true record, moved by B Brand and seconded by A Hunter.

### **2. Matters Arising:**

- (a) Item 5: Pentland Primary School: - the Chair queried if there was a report from the Environmental Wardens regarding dog fouling in the playing field. There being no report available the Chair requested the Secretary to follow this up for the next meeting.
- (b) Item 5 Colinton Mains Drive: - The Chair queried if the gate controlling access to the land alongside the Braid Burn had been fitted with a padlock. This was confirmed.

### **3. Presentation: Proposed Health and Social Care Centre**

The Chair introduced Robert Aitken from NHS Lothian who is a member of the project team for this proposed development on the vacant site next to the Firrhill Medical Centre, Colinton Mains Drive.

Mr Aitken presented the NHS / CEC proposals to build a health and social care centre indicating that it was part of a general strategy to integrate health and social care services and bring those services closer to the community.

The proposed Firrhill Health and Social Care Centre will provide:

- a) accommodation for the two GP practices that currently occupy the three sites at Craiglockhart, Firrhill and Oxgangs;
- b) allied Primary Care services that are currently located in Springwell House and McLeod Street Clinic;
- c) South Central Health and Social Care practice team, who are currently located at Oxgangs Path and Victoria Street Social Work Centres; and
- d) a voluntary organisation, MEHIP, who are currently located at Springwell House

He maintained the new centre will bring more services into the Oxgangs/Firrhill area, which the local community currently have to travel to access, such as podiatry and physiotherapy. It will seek to maximise the opportunities for integrated services bringing together Health Visitors,

District Nurses and Social Workers from both the CEC and NHS jointly located in the building, sharing office accommodation and working alongside each other.

The new facility will also provide capacity to support delivery of appropriate strategies such as 'The Primary Care Modernisation Strategy', 'The Children and Young Peoples Strategy' and any emerging strategies on access to diagnostic services.

Concern was raised that it was not intended to provide for a 'minor surgery clinic' which had been the primary facility sought when the proposal was first raised many years ago. Moving the three existing GP locations into one central location will, in all probability, inconvenience a lot more people than it will benefit. The provision of this added service by the general practitioners would have balanced this out enabling the prospect of immediate treatment for minor injuries.

The meeting was wholly in support of the proposed provision of care and support services within the community and considered that such an arrangement may benefit joined up working by NHS and CEC care workers. The meeting was less supportive of the loss of amenity to those members of the community who wish to visit their doctor.

#### **4. Community Police Report:**

Community Police Officer Steven Riddell was in attendance and provided a statistical report on crime in the area comparing it with other areas within his division. In the last month there had been 254 reported incidents of which only 22 were youth related. Within that period there were 46 reported crimes, which was a low figure in comparison with other areas.

Concern was raised about difficulty contacting the Police, reporting instances of poor service from the call centre and access to police station. In response, PC Riddell accepted that the call centre had difficulty recruiting the suitable staff and also there were normally 3 station assistants manning the station but at present due to a retirement and one on leave, there was only one. Until the vacancy is filled, this will result in the station being closed more often than normal.

Concern was also raised about vehicles causing obstructions by parking on the pavements or parking opposite each other. In response, PC Riddell indicated that action could be taken with regard to vehicles parking on the pavement, but they had no practical powers to stop vehicles parking on opposite sides of the street.

#### **5. Councillors' Report:**

Cllr Barry spoke on the recent **flooding** in parts of Colinton Mains caused by the drainage system being unable to cope with the very heavy fall of rain that had taken place. It had been recognised that there is an inbuilt design problem with the drainage system in this area, but it had been given a low priority because there has been only one complaint about flooding in the area affected. A public meeting was held on 8 September resulting in council and water board officials accepting that the need to find a solution to the problem must be given a higher priority. He will keep an eye on this to ensure the matter is speedily progressed.

He had dealt with two **complaints** from local residents, one in regard to vehicle parking at Oxbgangs Grove and the other on the unsatisfactory completion of internal repairs to Council residential property.

He also reported that it was likely that **bus services** would be cut. Lothian Transport maintains that due to increase fuel costs they have no alternative to either increase fares or reduce services. The Council administration is not prepared to increase their current level of subsidies to support the retention of the current level of services.

Cllr Rust reported that this item was on the agenda for the next Neighbourhood Partnership meeting being held in Fairmilehead Church, where a representative from Lothian Buses would be in attendance to present the company's position and answer questions.

He also spoke about the poor standard of **grass cutting** on communal land owned by the Council which had been raised previously by Cllr Aitken. The matter had been discussed with the department responsible for this task and he was advised it was due to the weather.

He also reported that discussions had taken place regarding the rejuvenation of the playground at **Colinton Mains Park**, to bring it up to modern standards.

## **6. Treasurer's Report: H Levy**

The Treasurer reported that there were no changes to the finances from previous meeting, however she was seeking the services of someone with accountancy experience to provide an annual audit of the Community Council's finances, as required by the CEC Scheme for Community Councils.

## **7. Proposal: "Reclaiming our Pavements – Action on Hedges"**

Paper submitted by J Napier concerning the increasing problem of pavements being constricted in many places due to overgrowing hedges and the difficulties caused for the disabled and those with prams, etc., in addition to the general lack of amenity. Following discussion it was agreed that the Secretary would submit the paper for discussion at the Neighbourhood Partnership meeting with a view to determining how this matter may be taken forward. (Paper attached)

## **8. Planning Report: J Napier**

Report on the Weekly Planning Bulletins for Ward No.08. The period covered is from 18 August to 16 September 2008, during which only 2 applications and 3 decisions related to property within Firrhill Community Council's area are reported in the Bulletins:

- Planning application 02914 has been registered to amend and extend existing driveway (in retrospect) at Colinton Mains Road.
- Planning application 03109 has been registered to erect a log cabin for use, part-time as a beauty therapy salon within the garden area of residential property at Oxbgangs Farm Drive.
- Planning application 02619 to erect a front porch in residential property at Caiystane Gardens was refused.
- Planning application 02516 to erect a single storey extension to rear of property at Colinton Mains Road has been granted.
- Planning application 02859 to carry-out alterations to form 1 front and 2 rear dormers in the roof of property at Colinton Mains Road has been granted.

## **9. Meeting Reports**

### **a) Edinburgh Partnership**

Meeting held 28 August 2008. Agenda items included a report on the final submission to Scottish Government on the strategic partnership investment proposals and the management and monitoring arrangements for the **Fairer Scotland Fund**. City of Edinburgh allocated £7 million for funding local initiatives.

### **b) South Edinburgh Public Partnership Forum**

Community Health Consultation Partnership Review – working group and minutes

### **c) Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership**

Meeting held 26<sup>th</sup> August in the Pentland Community Centre. Secretary's report attached.

## **10. Correspondence**

The following correspondence has been received since the date of the last meeting:

- a) Postwatch Scotland: re post office closure programme by PO Ltd
- b) The Cockburn Association: re renewal of affiliate membership at £30 for Community Councils + Edinburgh “Doors Open Day” (27 Sept) booklet. Decision to place this item on the agenda for the next meeting. It was also noted that the historic well building at the rear of Oxfangs Hill would be one of the building open
- c) Edinburgh Association of Community Councils: newsletter.
- d) WASPs Open Studios Weekend: Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> October (waspsstudios.org.uk).
- e) Postwatch Scotland (independent watchdog for postal services): final newsletter. On 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2008 Postwatch merge with Energywatch and the National Consumer Council to form a new consumer council, to be known as “Consumer Focus”.
- f) Letter from Diane Potter, Pentlands Partnership Development Officer, re the current funding situation for the planned joint health facility at Firrhill (question by P Wright at last Neighbourhood Partnership meeting). The Secretary’s question was about NHS Lothian’s tardiness in consulting with Firrhill Community Council and not about funding.

## **11.A.O.C.B.**

- a) Survey of Police Premises – Cllr Barry had been invited to participate in a evaluation exercise on the public’s perception of police premises and was seeking the views of the meeting with regard to Oxfangs Police Station. A number of opinions expressed ranging from the positive view that it was well situated within the community to the negative view that the building was closed more often than it was open.
- b) Neighbourhood Partnerships – why do they not use existing Forums?
- c) Lifestyle Fair – being held at Firrhill High School tomorrow night (24<sup>th</sup>)

## **12. Date and Venue of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Firrhill Community Council will be held in the Oxfangs Neighbourhood Centre from 7:00 pm on Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

**Reclaiming our Pavements : Action on Hedges**

I would like to propose that the Community Council promote a general campaign to raise awareness of the obstruction that hedges cause when they are allowed to grow out over pavements.

It may have been noticed that a significant number of hedges grow over public footpaths. In some cases this is due to neglect but in many instances the hedge is well maintained but has, over the years, just grown thicker and thicker. For whatever reason, the result can be a substantial narrowing of the pavement and it is about time action was taken to tell the persons responsible to cut their hedges back.

Pavements should be maintained as an unrestricted public right of way across their full width and within the air space directly above them. By allowing their hedges to grow over the pavement, property owner/occupiers are adding to the unnecessary obstacles that many pedestrians have to contend with, in particular the disabled and those pushing prams.

It is near impossible to resolve the problem of badly constructed dropped crossings for driveways and of motor vehicles parking on the pavement but this form of obstruction can be easily resolved if people are made aware of the problems their hedges are causing. In many cases those who are guilty of allowing their hedges to extend over the pavement, will cut them back when the matter is brought to their attention.

In the event that such a campaign does not resolve the problem, consideration should be given to extending Environmental Warden Scheme to include the policing of overgrown hedges.

Where an Environmental Warden identifies an overgrown hedge, then they can post a reminder through the offender's door for them to take action. Where the occupier is elderly or disabled and unable to maintain their hedges then Wardens can give advice, or arrange for 'garden aid' support.

In the event that the informal approach fails, it has to be assumed that the Council have some control or standard relating to pavements that would enable more formal action to be taken.

At present it is easier for the disabled, the elderly and people with prams, etc., to walk on the road than on the pavement, indeed we pay more attention to the condition of our roads than our pavements. It is about time that action was taken to improve our footpath and pavements. This is a start by reminding people that they have a duty to maintain their garden hedges in a manner that enables everyone to enjoy having proper use of public footpaths at all times.

14 September 08

**PENTLANDS NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP MEETING****26 August 2008, in Pentland Community Centre**

Councillor Jason Rust chaired this meeting, attended by NP Councillors, Council officials, Community Council reps, police, voluntary sector, and residents.

**1. Local Community Plan**

Update by Partnership & Information Manager: met with Funding Panel money from Fairer Scotland; more consultations over the summer: targets to be set + area proposals. Officers will pull together all info for next business meeting ~ Final Draft Plan.

**2. A City for All Ages**

Edinburgh's Joint Plan for Older People, 2007-10. Progress Report from Policy & Strategy Cttee, dated 10 June '08. [This Report covers 45 pages; please contact Peggy Wright, at Firrhill Community Council, if you wish to read it.] Also: 1 October - launch at Meadowbank of next "Get Up and Go" programme.

**3. Firrhill High School Health Initiatives:**

Presentation by John Wood, Senior Depute, on how the school is carrying out the Scottish Government's "The Healthy Schools + Scheme", and has so far achieved Stage 1. Good health is promoted in the curriculum (PE, PSE, Home Economics, Science) as well as in extra-curricular activities - engaging pupils (and staff) so that they become involved, increase self-esteem, and get more out of life. School Counsellors from Oxfams Care work within the school on mental health promotion. The school is continually looking at how links with the community can be developed. A Lifestyle Fair will be held at the school on 24 September. Questions: a) H Levy said that there are parenting skills classes for parents of young children - asked if similar classes could be held for parents of teenagers. b) Can parents get involved in helping with sports?

**4. a) Pentlands Regional Park:** presentation by Alan McGregor, Parks and Greenspace Officer, on how this park has achieved the Green Flag Award, the benchmark of good quality public parks and green spaces. This is the largest Green Flag site in the UK (40-50 sq miles), one of only three in Scotland, and the first such site in multi-ownership (Min. of Defence; Edinburgh, West and Mid Lothian Councils; Scottish Water; private owners/farmers + Scottish Natural Heritage is also involved), which makes funding and management more difficult to organise. Aims: to retain the park's character, protect landscape and habitat, and promote responsible public enjoyment. Plans: to relocate the park's HQ from Boghall to Flotterstone, including a visitor centre (but looking for more funding). Other proposals: upgrading of Threepmuir car park; footpath from Balerno (could get community funding); 4 x 4 vehicle/bus tours of the Park for aged/those of limited ability. Film and info on Pentland Regional Park can be seen on [www.pentlandhills.org](http://www.pentlandhills.org)

**b) Colinton Mains Park:** Craig Dunlop gave an update on this work-in-progress. Majority of work now completed; 2nd stage of drainage being done. Further Braid Bum flood prevention work (bankings) to start in Spring '09. Pitches: should be ready for next season. Plaxpark: no funds for replacement; parents and children could design a new one but we'd be looking for a community grant to fund it. Lighting: funding application has been refused. Pavilion: there's now a funding shortfall.

**5. Community Grants:**

a) It was agreed by PNP members that for Financial year 2009-10 app. two-thirds be spent in the first half of the year and one-third in the latter half (guidelines - must be flexibility for emergencies).

b) Balance available at 12 August 'OB: £58,365. Of this, £3,360 was allocated at this meeting (under Social Inclusion theme) to The Green Team, an environmental youth organisation, for a Forest School event in Sanctuary Wood, over 12 weeks, for eight Firrhill HS pupils.

c) Councillor Elaine Aitken thanked Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership for the grant given to Oxfords Drama Group in June. She said that this funding had been put to very good use - that their Fringe Drama was excellent.

#### **6. Children & Families Dept:**

Susan Wilson, SW Neighbourhood Manager, said that they are now at the last stage of an organisational review of Learning & Development. Forms should all be in on 29 August; teams will be formed in Neighbourhood Partnership area; 4-6 community workers (full/part-time) planned for Oxfords for end of September. Between October and December, she will be able to talk about the new structure, staff and priority pieces of work.

#### **7. Post Office Closures:**

Post Office Ltd's Network Change Programme has been produced. Luckily, no local Post Office is included in this round of closures, but the Report can be viewed by contacting Peggy Wright - also, the City Council's Motion of 21 August re PO closures in Edinburgh.

#### **8. Local Interest:**

(a) P Wright, on behalf of Firrhill Community Council - re proposed Health & Social Care Centre at Colinton Mains Drive, we have heard nothing more from NHS Lothian, on their promised consultation with us, since the presentation made by them at the Partnership Meeting in April. [Councillor Rust said that he would make enquiries.]

(b) Lothian Buses: propose that No 18 service be slashed - none at weekends; weekdays only at peak times. Both night buses to be stopped, except for N16 at weekends. (Councillor Barry said that this would adversely affect night shift workers.) [Loss of these services from October is to be remitted back to the Council's Transport Committee.] H Levy, Firrhill Community Council: re No 18 bus, perhaps other bus companies could be approached through the Neighbourhood Partnership to run this service? Also, Councillor Rust suggested that we get someone from Lothian Buses to our next Neighbourhood Partnership meeting.

(c) Councillor Elaine Aitken: Pentland Community Safety Panel, made up of elected representatives, Neighbourhood Watch reps and police, with a co-ordinator/speaker, and covering 11,280 houses in the area, will meet on 12 November. A crime prevention survey is to be carried out.

#### **9. Future Meetings (all Tuesdays):**

7 October 2008  
9 December "  
3 February 2009  
31 March "  
2 June "

Venues have not been announced.