

COUNCIL MEETING: 27 JANUARY 2009

Minutes of meeting held at the Oxgangs Neighbourhood Centre.

Present: H Levy (Chair/Treasurer); A Hunter (Vice Chair); G Hunter; L Linn; J Napier (Min Sec); B Brand (Firrhill Drive Tenants and Residents Association)

In Attendance: B Kircos; B Hanlon; Cllr Eric Barry; Norman Tinlin, (Secretary, Fairmilehead Community Council).

Apologies: P Wright (Secretary); Cllr E Aitken;

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting: held on the 25th November 2008

The minute accepted as a true record, moved by L Linn and seconded by G Hunter.

2. Matters Arising:

(a) Oxgangs Post Office: Post Office Limited have decided not to proceed with the closure of this post office as a result of feedback received during the local public consultation. The branch will now remain open and a copy of local decisions report from Post Office Limited is available on Fairmilehead Community Council's website. The successful outcome of this campaign shows that presenting the information to the local community and facilitating their involvement can make a difference. The Community Council would like to acknowledge the support of the Fairmilehead Community Council and Dennis Williams and in particular to give recognition to the work done by the local Postmaster in fighting to retain his services locally. (An extract of the PO's Consultation Decisions Booklet covering this decision will be attached to the minute as appendix 1)

(b) Footpath Link from Oxgangs Green to Oxgangs Bank: - Chair reports a lack of progress on this item and similarly with the path across the site of the demolished Hunters Tryst PS. Matter ongoing.

(c) Pentland Primary School Playing Field – see under Item 6. Meeting Reports.

3. Community Police Report:

No police report available.

A situation was reported to the Council where a house was broken into in Colinton Mains. On discovering the break-in, the occupier called the police at approx 19:40 hours and was advised by the telephone operator not to touch anything until the police arrived. After several further calls the police eventually arrived 4 hours later at 23:45 hours. During this period the occupier had to wait with doors and windows open so as not to disturb any potential evidence.

As a sequel to this incident the police in a letter drop had advised that there had been a spate of house and car break-ins in the area and provided a contact number for information. Residents on noticing a car being broken into had tried to contact the police through this number and got through to an answering machine.

Following a discussion on the matter it was agreed that the Chair should write to the Chief Constable stating the facts and request an explanation along with action to ensure a proper level of police resources are maintained in the community.

Members have also noted that school buses for Braidburn School are still travelling along Oxgangs Road North from the Chip Inn.

4. Ward Councillors' Report: Cllr Barry

Weather conditions – Members indicated concerns regarding the hazardous conditions of the footpaths following the recent snowfall and the risk it presents in particular to the elderly and

disabled. Cllr Barry gave a run down of the Council's policy regarding snow clearing was given and whilst the main effort was to keep road traffic flowing, resources were directed towards clearing pavements and footpaths, particularly in the vicinity of care homes for the elderly and recognised hazard areas such as steep inclines, etc. AH indicated that he had contacted 'Clarence' regarding the lack of grit/salt bins at strategic points for use by the public but no action seems to have been taken. Cllr Barry acknowledged that grit bins should be available at strategic sites; they should be appropriately checked and replenished. He would check up on the complaint and requested members to let him know if they note any that were in need of being refilled or identify sites where a bin would be beneficial.

Fire at Oxgangs Crescent – Cllr Barry reported that due to the severity of the recent fire and resulting damage to the new housing, a report had been requested on the safety of the building.

Proposed Pedestrian Crossing at Oxgangs Avenue – Cllr Barry reported that there had been an about turn on this matter with the relevant department denying there had been any agreement to progress this work. He is still investigating but has been unable to find any record of an agreement.

5. Treasurer's Report: H Levy

The Treasurer reported that there were no changes to the finances from previous meeting.

6. Meeting Reports

a) Pentlands Playing Field

A written synopsis of the meetings attended covering this item had been supplied by the Secretary for the meeting (A copy of this report will be attached to the minute as appendix 2). The members present expressed the following view.

That there seems to be a general reluctance on the part of the School and the relevant CEC officers to open up the playing field for community use. The big issue seemed to be responsibility rather than the safety of children. If playing field remains closed to the community, its upkeep remains a janitorial responsibility. If open to the community outwith school hours then responsibility transfer to Services for Communities.

The argument provided by School representatives was that the children's safety is paramount but paradoxically the hazards they refer to for restricting access are the same hazards that exist in all public parks, which they propose children should use outwith school hours. What seemed to be coming across was that no one wanted the responsibility or the hassle.

b) Firrhill Community Council Business Meeting

An informal meeting was held in December to consider themes for the Council's meeting in 2009. The following provisional plans covering those meetings for the first half of the year are proposed subject to confirmation re availability of speakers and venue.

- January 27th – Ordinary Business Meeting at the Neighbourhood Centre
- February 10th – Park and Pavilion Stakeholders Meeting at the Neighbourhood Centre, 10 am to 2 pm.
- February 24th – Health Clinic Consultation (Robert Aitken) at St Marks School
- March 24th – Flood Prevention Update meeting at Oxgangs School
- April 28th – Ordinary Business Meeting at the Neighbourhood Centre
- May 26th – Recycling/Re-use – Home Composting

7. Planning Report:

Report on the Weekly Planning Bulletins for Ward No.08. The period covered is from 17 November 2008 to 19 January 2009, during which 3 applications and 1 decision related to property within Firrhill Community Council's area have been reported in the Bulletins:

- Planning application 04026 registered for a change of use to off street parking spaces on land adjacent to number 16 Firrhill Drive to provide for 13 parking spaces, 2 of which will be allocated spaces for the disabled.
- Planning application 04185 registered to carry out an attic conversion at Redford Road and has been granted.
- Planning application 04281 registered to erect a front porch at Caiystane Gardens.

8. Correspondence (27 Jan 09)

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

- a) Letter from Cllr Rust re his selection as Scottish Conservative candidate to contest Edinburgh SW constituency at next Westminster General Election
- b) "Reclaiming our Pavements: Action on Hedges": response from G Sim, Senior Customer Service Officer, to the report sent in by the Secretary on trees and hedges overgrowing pavements in Colinton Mains. A Council Environmental Inspector will look at each property referred to and call on resident to request action. If there is no response, a formal letter will be followed by a statutory notice.
- c) "Edinburgh Community Council News" – distributed at meeting
- d) City Development: (a) Report to Planning Committee on Engagement with Community Councils (considered at Planning Committee on 4/12/08); (b) New procedure for Community Councils borrowing sets of plans for up to 48 hours.
- e) Review of Community Council Scheme; draft Scheme produced following preliminary consultation. Views invited on proposed amendments plus draft Scheme, Code of Conduct and Dispute Resolution Process. **Closing date is 28 February 2009**
- f) Scottish Natural Heritage magazine "The Nature of Scotland" [may be borrowed from Secretary] and their Corporate Strategy 2008-13
- g) "Working Capital", the magazine of Edinburgh's Joined Up for Jobs Partnership
- h) "Climate Change and the Natural Forest Estate" – Consultation on forestry provisions in the Scottish Climate Change Bill from the Scottish Minister for Environment, Scottish Government.
- i) City Development Department: proposed waiting restrictions on corners of Firrhill Crescent and Oxfords Road North and the narrow road leading from there up to Firrhill High School.
- j) Letter from City Development Estate Manager re the footpath that ran across the site of the demolished Hunters Tryst Primary School – in response to Secretary's written request at Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership meeting. [see under 'Matters Arising']
- k) "Tenant's Voice": newsletter for Edinburgh tenants.
- l) Meeting reports from Paul Highet, SW Neighbourhood Manager, re requested community access to Pentland Primary School playing field [included in Secretary's summary report under Meeting Reports, item 7a) on Agenda]
- m) Glasdon catalogue – benches, bins, etc. promotional material advertising street furniture.
- n) "Inside Letting" (Autumn 08); Edinburgh
- o) Pentlands NP Notice of Meeting and Agenda: 3 Feb, 7 pm, Clovenstone Community Centre.

9. A.O.C.B.

- a) Firrhill Drive – BB raised concerns about the removal of the handrails located in the Drive at its junction with Oxgangs Crescent. They were removed as a consequence of the regeneration work being carried out in this area. The rails were installed for the benefit of the elderly getting up the slope to go the shops, etc. There is a need to ensure that the handrails will be replaced as part of the final phase of this development.
- b) Oxgangs Broadway – NT reported that funds for the completion of the 2nd phase of the regeneration project for this area are to be made available. The subject of Oxgangs Broadway is contained in the 2003-06 Neighbourhood Regeneration Annual Progress Report at the City of Edinburgh Council's meeting 23 March 2004. A statement on page 3 of that report records "Completed the final phase of improvements at Oxgangs Broadway raising the awareness of the local facilities to a wider audience

10. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Firrhill Community Council will be held on Tuesday 24th February 2009 at 7:00 pm. Subject to confirmation the proposed venue is St Marks School.

Extract from the Post Office® Local Consultation Decision Booklet

Post Office Limited has decided not to proceed with the closure of the following branch:

Post Office® Oxgangs branch

The main concerns expressed by respondents during local public consultation regarding our proposal to close this branch were in relation to the potential impact of the proposed closure on elderly and vulnerable residents, some of whom live in the nearby hostels and hospice, the potential impact on nearby retailers within the local community and the potential impact on the future of the shopping precinct generally.

Respondents also expressed concern regarding what were said to be busy roads en route to nearby alternative branches, the availability of bus services in the area and the availability of parking at the two nearest alternative branches, which respondents said is difficult, as both branches are located on busy main roads. Respondents also said that Post Office® Oxgangs branch is located within a deprived area of the city and that the proposed closure would affect the ease with which local people can access cash free of charge in the area.

Respondents also commented that in addition to the local civilian population, Post Office® Oxgangs branch is regularly used by families of the Armed forces personnel from the nearby barracks and said that the number of these families will increase next year. Information was also provided regarding plans which have been submitted to relocate Post Office® Oxgangs branch into a neighbouring pharmacy, on the basis that this branch was not originally proposed for closure as part of our original Area Plan.

A number of customers chose to respond in the form of campaign letters. Three petitions were also received during the local public consultation, all opposing the proposed closure. Post Office Limited representatives attended a public meeting in relation to the proposal to close this branch.

The sub-postmaster of Post Office® Oxgangs branch pointed out that there is a dedicated car park for 11 vehicles opposite the branch as well as on street parking, including a disabled bay, immediately outside the branch, rather than simply roadside parking, as was set out in our consultation materials.

Post Office Limited has considered all responses received during the local public consultation and a review of this proposal has been undertaken.

There are two alternative branches within a mile of Post Office® Oxgangs branch. While public transport is available to the nearest of these alternative branches, Post Office® Colinton Mains Drive branch, our review noted the large number of elderly and vulnerable people living in the local area and concluded that some vulnerable customer groups may have considerable difficulties in accessing services at alternative branches. In addition our review noted that the number of Armed forces personnel at the nearby barracks is due to increase over the next 12 months.

Taking these and all other relevant factors into consideration, including the needs of our more vulnerable customers, Post Office Limited has decided not to proceed with the proposed closure of Post Office® Oxgangs branch. This branch will therefore remain in the Post Office® network.

Meetings to discuss Community Access to the Playing Field at Pentland Primary School.

The first meeting was held in Pentland Primary on 12.12.08.

Present: Paul Highet (Chair), N'hood Manager, Children & Families (C&F); Pam McKay, Head Teacher; Michelle Hathaway, Environmental Warden, Services for Communities (SfC); Peggy Wright, Firrhill Community Council; Cllr Elaine Aitken; Craig Dunlop, Community Parks Officer, SfC; Tommy Walker, Team Leader, SfC; Graham Hatching, N'hood Manager, SfC. Meeting joined by Rachel Bennett, Class Teacher, Pentland Primary.

Apologies: Cllr Eric Barry.

1. Agreed that this area is now a school playing field and not a public thoroughfare or open park area. Needs of the school and the pupils in the use of the field are paramount.
2. Accepted there is a need in the area for community access to open play areas.
3. Agreed that having field open in the evenings would be completely impractical but, subject to some further survey work by SfC, and points 4 a-d (below), the school would agree to field being open for public use at weekends (after mid-day on Saturday) and throughout school holidays.
4. Conditions and expectations agreed for this access:
 - a) Dogs would not be allowed on the area and there would be signage to this effect,
 - b) SfC task force would check the grounds each Monday before 10.30 am.
Timing/frequency of checks during school holidays would depend on usage,
 - c) SfC Environmental Wardens would also make periodic spot checks on use of field;
would be highly visible over first few weeks of opening,
 - d) School would retain the authority to close the gate and restrict access if the safety and well-being of pupils was at risk as a result of misuse of grounds.
5. SfC will undertake a further survey of the field to confirm that the scale of the field, areas of undergrowth, etc would not prohibit a meaningful weekly check, local police will be contacted so that proposals for public use will be known by Community Beat Officers.
6. SfC must be able to confirm their ability to resource the above and agree a start date.
7. Agreed that, if playing field is opened, situation would be reviewed after three months at the latest.

Follow-up Meeting held in Pentland Primary on 16.01.09.

Present: Paul Highet (Chair). Neighbourhood Manager, C&F; Pam McKay (Head Teacher); Peggy Wright (Firrhill CC); Cllr Elaine Aitken; Craig Dunlop, Community Parks Officer, SfC; Wendy Bathgate, Chair, Pentland PS Parents' Council.

Not Present: Cllr Eric Barry; Tommy Walker, Team Leader SfC; Graham Hitching, Neighbourhood Manager SfC.

1. No findings or proposals from SfC had been circulated or provided for this meeting. Paul will take this up with the incoming Neighbourhood Manager for SfC, Mike Avery.

2. Craig confirmed that he had undertaken a brief site survey. However, in the absence of Environmental Wardens and Tommy Walker, he was not able to confirm whether or not SfC would be able to deliver the service required to open the field as discussed at meeting on 12.12.08.
3. Cllr Aitken reported that the police CBO, who knows the area well, is off on long-term sick leave. She is meeting with other local police reps next week and will ask for any comments on our proposals.
4. Mr Lynch, Pentland's School Service Support Officer (janitor), who has lived in a house overlooking the field for 31 years, had provided a written page detailing his concerns* re the field being re-opened for public use. This was circulated to all present at the meeting and his concerns noted.
5. Wendy Bathgate made clear her deep concerns about opening of field for public use: wanted to see written assurance from SfC that the field would be checked each Monday so that it was clear and safe for the school children to use as their health and safety interests must take priority.
6. The meeting agreed it was not possible to take this matter any further in the absence of info needed from SfC. Paul will discuss this with SfC, and a further meeting date will be considered once outcomes of the work that they are doing has been documented and circulated.

[P Wright was under the impression that Colinton Mains Park is the only alternative large play area (not a good option for children from upper Oxfords because of having to cross the very busy Oxfords Avenue), but, in conversation with Cllr Aitken and W Bathgate after this meeting, it was pointed out that the huge Fairmilehead Park is just a few minutes walk away, with no busy roads to cross.]

*** A summary of J Lynch's concerns re opening of playing field to the public**

- * Many occasions when emergency services have been called out: fires in the field; children bringing tents in to have underage sex; adults and children exposing themselves; drug use; underage consumption of alcohol; breaking of school windows by golf balls.
- * Increase in litter from glass bottles, cans, dumping of household rubbish, children bringing in building materials and shopping trolleys. Also: people, as well as dogs, using field as a toilet.
- * Field has never been officially open to the public, but the previous three-foot fence did not restrict access. Since that fence was replaced by one eight feet high, and public could not get access (a) the field is in the best condition that it has ever been; (b) the school and its grounds are more secure – less opportunity for vandals to damage locks, sign posts at entrances, and trees, as had previously happened.

It is Mr Lynch's view that, if the playing field is opened to the public, incidents as above would again be happening at all hours, and Pentland School and its pupils would again be vulnerable.

The above is the situation so far. P Wright (Secretary, Firrhill CC) will up-date her report after the third meeting takes place, which may not be for some time yet.