

# Firrhill Community Council

*'Nec Aspera Terrent'*

(Undaunted by Adversity)

Minute of the Meeting held on Monday 28 April 2014

At Lochan View Community Business Centre, 12 Firrhill Neuk

## Attendance and Apologies:

**Members:** J Burt; G Duncan; H Levy; L Linn; J Napier; S Duffy; P Wright.

**Visitors:** Cllr Aitken; Cllr Rust; Cllr R Lewis; PC K Welsh, Oxfangs Police Stn, N Tinlin, Fairmilehead CC; P Valentine, OCRA

**Apologies:** P Podd; F Gosney.

H Levy in the Chair.

## Minutes of Previous Meeting:

The draft minutes for meeting held on 24 February 2014 were reviewed. There being no corrections the minutes were moved for approval by FG, seconded by LL and agreed.

**Action:** *Minutes Secretary to post the approved minute on website.*

## Matters Arising:

### **Oxfangs Police Station**

At our meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2013 the closure of the public desk at Oxfangs Police Station and arrangements for a police surgery to be held in Oxfangs library was discussed along with our concerns about arrangements for police attendance and reports at our meetings. It was agreed the Secretary write to Insp Duthie suggesting a police surgery be held at the Oxfangs Neighbourhood Centre before Firrhill Community Council meetings, which would better facilitate those who lived at the bottom of the hill and provide for the community council needs.

It was reported at our meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014, the Secretary had written to Inspector Duthie and we were waiting on a response. The police officer attending this meeting, PC Sandbach, undertook to raise the matter with the Inspector and report back.

The Secretary reported at our meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2014, she was still waiting on a response. The police officer attending, PC R Wood undertook to raise with the Inspector and report back.

**Action:** *Matter ongoing. JN to raise at next meeting of the PNP Safety Sub Group.*

### **Referendum: Scotland's Future - Your Guide to an Independent Scotland**

The Chair gave a short résumé of the event, which had a better than expected attendance with well over 80 people participating. A last minute disaster, when Gavin Brown had to cancel, was averted when a replacement was found and the panel finally consisted of Gordon Macdonald, MSP (SNP) and Michelle Thomson, Business for Scotland in support of independence, with Sarah Boyack, MSP (Lab) and Dr Ian Duncan, (Con). Our thanks to Ian Duncan for standing in.

The venue was also changed to the large hall at Pentland Community Centre and despite the lack of amplification; there was no problem in hearing the debate.

Feedback from those who attended has been very positive with a few commenting that more time was given to one side than the other. As the accusation seems to apply to both sides it can only be assumed that they cancel each other out and it was reasonably balanced as far as the time allowed to individuals.

General agreement by the members attending that the event was a reasonable success, the panel argued their cases well and people had a good opportunity to ask questions, whether they got the answers they were looking for is outwith our control.

**Action: Report noted**

## **PA System**

Despite the lack of a PA system not being a problem at the referendum debate it was agreed the Community Council should pursue this acquisition. Cllr Aitken indicated she had raised the issue with the Community Centre's management committee and whilst they were not in position to install a PA system in the Centre at this time, they were prepared to discuss a joint venture or, if the Community Council purchased a system, to provide storage facility.

**Action: Chair to arrange for costings, etc., and report back**

## **Oxgangs Path Redevelopment: ALDI Presentation:**

A note of the event is attached as [appendix 1](#). Community Council members acknowledged the company's agents gave an informative presentation at the meeting and had also carried out the other consultation events as stated. These were the two public exhibitions organised in St John's Colinton Mains Church and Oxgangs Library, on the 11<sup>th</sup> April, both of which appear to have been well attended indicating a fair level of interest, and also a meeting with the local traders in Oxgangs Broadway.

Cllr Aitken advised that the missives for the sale were close to being signed (see Cllr's report).

J Napier has submitted a query to the City Council regarding the position of the Library car park. The plans indicate the car park will be encompassed within the larger Aldi car park using the existing (modified) entrance from Oxgangs Road North. Seeking clarification on land ownership for future reference as the car park had not been included in the sale as far as he was aware.

Secretary reported on recent emails concerning the Community Council's stance on this matter. The Chair reiterated the Council's role was to remain fair and impartial, advising the community of the proposed development based on the information presented to it and seeking feedback from the community, which would provide further direction. To date the only formal feedback the Community Council has received has been from one trader in opposition to the development, which by itself is not representative.

**Action: Cllr Rust to advise the CEC Economy Committee of the Community Council's position in regard to this matter, as it had been reported wrongly that we campaigned against this proposed development. Matter ongoing.**

## **Police Report**

The Chair welcomed PC Kenny Welsh to our meeting and invited him to give a police report for the Oxgangs area.

PC Welsh advised the Council that during the period between 27<sup>th</sup> March and 27<sup>th</sup> April, they received 203 calls from the Firrhill/Oxgangs area. There were 17 calls regarding nuisance/loud music and 3 neighbour disputes. There were also several domestic incidents. Below is a summary of the more noteworthy crimes over the last 4 weeks.

## Crime

### **Thefts / Attempted Thefts of Motorcycles in the Area**

- 28<sup>th</sup> March – theft of motorcycle on Firrhill Drive
- 30<sup>th</sup> March – attempted theft of motorcycle in Oxgangs Road North
- 6<sup>th</sup> April – 2 stolen motorcycles recovered in Colinton Mains Public Park
- 9<sup>th</sup> April – 2 pedal cycles stolen from a garden shed in Colinton Mains Road
- 10<sup>th</sup> April – 2 motorcycles found in Colinton Mains Public Park
- 17<sup>th</sup> April – attempt to steal motorcycle in Oxgangs Street
- 22<sup>nd</sup> April – attempts made to steal 4 motorcycles at various addresses on Colinton Mains Road
- 24<sup>th</sup> April – attempted theft of motorcycle on Oxgangs Farm Drive.

### **Vandalism**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> April – car damaged on Firrhill Loan
- 6<sup>th</sup> April – car damaged on Oxgangs Crescent
- 6<sup>th</sup> April – house window smashed on Colinton Mains Place
- 7<sup>th</sup> April – tyres punctures / deflated on Oxgangs Grove
- 14<sup>th</sup> April – tyres slashed on Oxgangs Crescent
- 19<sup>th</sup> April – business premise window smashed on Colinton Mains Drive
- 26<sup>th</sup> April – wing mirrors damaged on 2 cars on Colinton Mains Road and Crescent.

### **Housebreaking**

- 9<sup>th</sup> April – housebreaking with intent to steal, entry forced but nothing apparently stolen.

## Road Traffic Matters

Several complaints received regarding vehicles causing obstruction in the area. Generally these are inconsiderate and bad parking rather than actual obstructions.

## Community Policing Team

Should you wish to contact the Community Policing Team, you can do so by email at [EdinburghPentlandHillsCPT@Scotland.pnn.police.uk](mailto:EdinburghPentlandHillsCPT@Scotland.pnn.police.uk) or by telephoning the new national non-emergency number **101**. You can also follow them on twitter @PentlandsPolice .

If there is anything in particular that you wish to bring to their attention, please get in touch. Partnership working requires participation.

*Warning about doorstep callers: don't sign up with, or give money to, anyone who cold-calls, i.e., anyone you haven't arranged to call. Say NO and report them to Police Scotland Tel: 101 or the City Council's Trading Standards Tel: 0131-529 3030.*

*To pass on information about crime anonymously, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or fill out their secure, encrypted online [Giving Information Form](#).*

## Ward Councillors' and MSP Reports:

### Councillor Elaine Aitken

#### **Land Sale at Oxgangs Brae**

The missives should be signed by the end of this week.

#### **Pentland Primary School**

- The Janitorial Review is still under discussion.
- Following complaints and a near miss in Oxgangs Green when pupils were going into school, Police have attended to monitor parking

#### **Oxgangs Primary School**

- A School Crossing Attendant has been appointed and she started in post on 22nd April. Parking attendants attended on 23rd April and spoke to parents parking inconsiderately, especially on the zigzags.
- PC Gillanders organised a litter pick by a Firrhill pupil which covered Colinton Mains Gardens, Colinton Mains Drive and the right hand side of the land beside Oxgangs PS opposite Tesco. The pick continued along the public footpath in Oxgangs Primary School and into Firrhill High School where 4 full black bin liners were deposited into the skip there.

#### **Traffic Regulation Order**

The TRO to install double yellow lines at the corners of Oxgangs Place, Street and Rise with Oxgangs Avenue has been submitted to the Traffic Orders Team. This will now be going through the full legal process which will take a minimum of 9 months.

#### **Pentland Community Centre**

Trade Waste collections have again been missed on a number of occasions. This has now been rectified.

#### **Bogus Callers**

Edinburgh Trading Standards has been promoting awareness of doorstep crime, and advising against contracting for property maintenance work at the door.

A Joint enforcement initiative (Operation Aristotle) by Edinburgh's Trading Standards team and Police Scotland has saved Edinburgh residents almost £55,000 since September and there have been a number of successful prosecutions.

It is important that neighbours are aware and continue to keep an eye out for others who may be vulnerable to such scams.

*In relation to this matter the Community Council agreed to include a standard warning in its minutes of meetings as a constant reminder to those reading these documents.*

#### **Firrhill Walkabout**

This took place on 10<sup>th</sup> April. Some of the issues we reported were:

- Overhanging foliage and high hedges in Firrhill Drive
- Litter on grassed areas and near St Marks PS
- Poor condition of the pavement at the entrance to St Marks PS

## **Tree Planting**

I have requested that a NEP project for Tree and Bulb Planting in the Pentlands Area is raised.

## **Parking Problem at Oxfangs Crescent**

At the Oxfangs Central Residents' Association meeting, complaints were made about cars parking near the corner of Firrhill Drive and Oxfangs Crescent now that the new properties have been completed. This area is now being monitored for possible double yellow lines.

The poor state of the road has also been reported and will be assessed

## **Hope Triangle A.G.M.**

This was held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014. The office bearers were re-elected for the coming year.

## **PNP Reports:**

### **Health and Wellbeing Sub-Group – 27th February (HL)**

#### **Pentland Health Fair**

The fair took place on Saturday 1st March at Oxfangs library and had an estimated attendance of 150 people. The event involved a mixture of displays and interactive stalls in the main library and the community room, providing information on blood pressure, prostate and bowel cancer, counselling, older peoples care, and women's aid. Stalls were also staffed by Edinburgh Leisure and Citizen's Advice Bureau Patient Advice. A PNP stand in the library foyer promoted Health and Community Plan questionnaires. Displays in the main library also provided information on the work being carried out by the Hope Triangle Health Group including the community garden project.

A similar event is planned to be held at the Oxfangs Primary School Fair on the 10<sup>th</sup> May.

#### **Development of Local Community Plan for 2014-2017**

Local Community Plans are being renewed for the next three years, and this will involve a range of consultation activities over the summer. The subgroup was asked for its initial thoughts regarding the current plan, whether conditions or priorities have changed, what the most important area is on which to focus, and whether anything was missed from the 2011-2014 plan. The new plan will also be attached to a performance framework, and the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time) methodology.

Members of the sub-group highlighted mental health as a key focus, especially regarding the dementia friendly corridor proposed in the Pentlands ward area. Mental health support for victims of domestic abuse, carers support and the promotion of community defibrillators were also raised. It was also suggested that the new plan has a young/old split so that priorities for each group are explicit.

It was felt that the use should be made of the Health questionnaire results in developing priorities in the new community plan.

The sub-group was advised that a public meeting for the new plan was being scheduled for the summer. Members expressed a desire that the meeting be in the centre of the city and include the whole Pentlands neighbourhood area, rather than having separate meetings held locally for different parts of the area.

## SW Community Safety Sub Group – 3<sup>rd</sup> March (JN)

Copy of report provided as [Appendix 2](#). Report contained a motion for the Council to invite a representative from the South West Community Safety to attend the next suitable Council meeting for that purpose.

**Action:** *Secretary to arrange for either May or June meeting.*

## SW Area Board – 22<sup>nd</sup> April (JN)

**Action List:** NEP's related to Partnership wide project to plant bulbs, trees and shrubs. Andrew Wallace asking for Board members to feed him suggestions on this item.

Proposed project 639 (Cockmylane) – Andrew Wallace reported that in regard to the discussions have opened with Parks and Greenspace with the view to joint responsibility to solve this matter.

**Welfare Advice - Briefing:** a discussion paper was presented to the Group and a copy is attached as [appendix 3](#)

**Local Community Plan Consultation:** discussion took place on the Partnership's overview document and timetable for the development of the 2017 – 17 Local Community Plan (LCP). The consultation period runs from February to June 2014. The Neighbourhood Partnership Team holding themed meetings on the LCP from April to June to review existing plan and agree the new priorities.

*(Note: Information on this consultation is available on the Community Council website)*

**Landlord Performance:** report on performance standards from January to March

Well housed – average time to let an empty home – current target is 22 days

South West – 22 (Jan); 27 (Feb); 21 (Mar). Whilst recording the best figures for the City, did not meet target for February. This was due to a high number of properties returned in poor condition and in need of a clear-out resulting in late key returns from Edinburgh Building Services.

Well housed – cash value of current rent arrears (monthly)

Citywide:	£4,497,724 (Jan);	£4,610,213 (Feb);	£3,471,051 (Mar)
South West:	£1,375,776	£1,424,754	£1,078,413

**Arrears:** at year end reduced to £1,078,413, during the year they reached over £1.5 million so this is an overall reduction of about half a million pounds. Only carried out 13 evictions and lodged 85 cases in court. The number of tenants in arrears at year end was 1,714, at its highest point the number was 2,526, therefore 800 tenants have been assisted get out of arrears.

*Information provided by D Herbertson, SW Housing Regeneration Manager*

## **Members' Reports:**

### Planning Report:

The Planning Report is attached as appendix 3.

### Treasurer's Report

Treasurer reported that she received an email from Julie Dickson, Project Officer, Services for Communities, Local Community Planning, on 24<sup>th</sup> February, requesting a copy of the audited annual accounts from the community council for the financial year ending 31 March 2013. An electronic copy was sent on the 26<sup>th</sup> and this was followed up by a signed hard copy on the 28<sup>th</sup> of that month, the receipt of which was acknowledged.

Treasurer also reported she received an email from Zurich Municipal regarding the renewal of our insurance. Due to their increased premium, we moved our insurance to Keegan and Pennykid

Insurance Brokers last year and subject to there being no substantial increase of their premium it is proposed that we continue to insure with this company. Agreed.

**Action: Treasurer to progress and arrange for insurance to be paid directly from the community council grant.**

### Correspondence

A list of correspondence received during this reporting period is attached as [appendix 4](#)). For more detail on any of the correspondence listed contact the Secretary, Peggy Wright; Tel: 531 9796; email: [peggy.wright@live.co.uk](mailto:peggy.wright@live.co.uk).

### **Item 30: Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council (ELREC)**

Email from this organization asking the Community Council to join them. A copy of the email was circulated to all members for consideration and is attached as [appendix 5](#).

**Action: Secretary to write back to this organisation asking what our commitment would be.**

### **AOCB:**

### **Report on Oxgangs Walkabout 27<sup>th</sup> Feb**

#### Oxgangs Avenue

- Cnr of Oxgangs Ave/Crescent (opp the Chapel) Paving slabs have lifted and are very uneven - trip hazard
- Kerbstone (opp No.20) raised - trip hazard
- Small square drain cover missing outside no.17 (in grassed area)
- lot of glass lying around bin area o/s No.11
- Lots of cigarette ends lying in and around bus stop (opp No.8). Noted that bin does not contain plate for stubbing out cigarette

#### Oxgangs Grove

- Planted areas at rear of Oxgangs house overgrown and foliage growing through fencing

#### Oxgangs street

- Cracked/broken slab at top of steps going up to No.2 and 4. Trip hazard
- Paving slabs very uneven o/s No.10, particularly at top of steps.

#### Oxgangs Park

- Brown bin full of rubbish and too heavy to move. May contain concrete. Has sunk into tarmac on path

#### Oxgangs Rise

- Salt bin at top of rise. Lid broken -bin full of water and rubbish. Reported previously.

### **Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting:**

Date, venue and time of our next meeting is Monday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2014 in the Lochan View Community Business Centre at 7.00pm.

## ALDI Presentation

**Firrhill Community Council** received an invitation from Aldi to view their proposals for the development of the derelict social work/church site at Oxgangs Path and discuss with them any issues causing concern. The presentation was held in the Lochan View Community Business Centre on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014. The following is a note of that presentation.

### Present:

**Firrhill CC:** H Levy; P Podd; P Wright; J Napier; F Gosney; J Burt; S Duffy.

**Councillors:** Elaine Aitken; Jason Rust; Richard Lewis.

**Aldi Team:** G Nicolson, Property Director, Aldi Stores Ltd.  
G Kelly, SKM Colin Buchanan, Transport & Highways Consult.  
R Newton, GVA James Barr, Planning Consultants  
J Harbison, J Harbison & Co, Strategic Planning & Project Comm.

**Introduction:** H Levy as Chair of Firrhill Community Council (FCC), welcomed the Aldi Team and stated the community council's position, which was to ensure its objectives were upheld and to fairly reflect this matter to the Firrhill community. Introductions were made round the table.

**Aldi Background:** Family-owned German Foodstore Discount Retailer which is now the biggest private food shop in the world. Being privately owned means they have no share-holders to keep happy. Their first British food shop opened in 1953 and they currently have one Edinburgh store in Gorgie, which is unique in terms of being overly busy. Big on German efficiency both in the design of their stores and in sourcing quality produce to sell under their own brand label that will compete with store and named brands. Each store holds as standard, 1300 core food lines with the larger supermarkets carrying more. Currently 30% of Aldi foods in Scottish stores are locally sourced, with aim of increasing to 40%.

**Why Oxgangs:** Aldi have been interested in this location for a number of years and consider it an ideal site to suit their size of shop. It is a busy location with a large catchment area and good bus services going to all parts of the city. It is classed as 'white land' with no defined purpose and they do not consider it financially suitable for housing as it would only provide a maximum of 40 flats. They view that the capital receipt from the sale will allow the City Council to open up other sites for housing and employment, whereas this site could lie derelict for a long time. A store here fulfils the City Council's plan to add to existing local shopping centres. Aldi maintain because of the nature and size of their stores, in their experience they do not damage local businesses but support them by increasing the footfall in the area.

**Oxgangs Site:** For the half acre site to be suitable it will need to be levelled and this will add to the cost. The building itself will be of low profile design with a flat roof, which will be lower than the previous buildings thus it will not dominate the skyline. The building will run along Oxgangs Path and face the library with the car parking area in between. The amenity land included in the sale will be replaced by a row of trees/shrubs laid across the centre of the car park area. The car park will be shared with the library utilising the existing access point on Oxgangs Road North. The entrance may have to be widened. Proposal is for 87 parking spaces with 12 being reserved for library patrons and an allocation for disabled and parent & child spaces. For the cyclist there will be a park for 8-10 bicycles. A City council recycling point will be situated at the side of the building and accessed from Oxgangs Brae and not from the car park. The Community Council expressed the view that Aldi customers may also want to use the recycling point.

Concern was expressed about the loss of the new pathway laid to provide an easier route for wheelchair users, etc., to the Oxgangs Broadway services and the community centre. The Aldi proposal provided for a stepped pathway located the north-east corner of the car park down to the shopping centre at Oxgangs Broadway but they indicated they were prepared to look at the original



path to see if the slope can be altered to suite wheelchair users. FCC suggested an access/egress point made from the car park at a point where it is level with the footpath on Oxgangs Brae would provide for both disabled customers and those who want to use the recycling point and simpler to achieve.

FCC aware the City Council are about to resurface the footpaths in Oxgangs Path and queried about possible damage to the new surface during demolition/construction work. Advised that all work would be accessed via Oxgangs Rd North, not Oxgangs Path thus any CEC work in Oxgangs Path should not be affected. The build programme expected to be 29-30 weeks.

Scale of operations: no fleet of delivery vans needed; only one or two a day after initial stocking of shop.

**Planning Context:** Aldi consider their proposal is on a smaller scale to Morrisons or Tesco, and can be integrated into the local Broadway shopping centre, enhancing this location. There is no discount food service in the area. Looking to submit a planning application about the end of April.

**Benefits locally:** FCC expressed concern that whilst competition might be good for the customer, the benefit might be lost if other stores were put out of business with resultant local job losses. Aldi's experience has been they draw their customers from the large stores rather than the local small businesses and consider their store will draw footfall to library and trade to Broadway shops. It may even help fill empty units at this location, e.g., it has no in-store café. It will complement local shops (no cigarettes, papers, lottery, bakery, stamps or pharmacy). In regard to employment, 30 jobs would be created, including two apprenticeships; good promotion prospects; pay is above market rate; Aldi has policy of recruiting locally, but applicants must be suitable – should have drive and initiative; there will be local recruitment events and posters around the site advertising these.

**Consultation:** This is not a major development, so not will require widespread consultation, but the developers will be holding a drop-in exhibition and local consultation on the plans in Oxgangs library. They also intend to hold a closed meeting with local shopkeepers.

## Community Safety Sub Group: 3 March 2014

Meeting was held in the Oxfangs Neighbourhood Centre and attended by Cllr Aitken (Chair); Gail Dickson, Community Safety Team Leader, SWLO; Robert Scott, ONC Manager and representatives from the Fairmilehead, Firrhill, Juniper Green, Ratho and District Community Councils.

### Community Priorities

Community priorities set on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2013 for the two wards are:

- Road shows to promote the Community Safety Sub Group and maximise future priorities.
- Littering by High School Children
- House Break ins and Acquisitive Crime

The two agreed actions from the December meeting referred to issues in Ward 2, Ratho and District area. Outcome reports and actions within Ward 8 from Community Priorities set on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2013.

### **Road shows to promote CSSG's and maximise future priorities ward 2 & 8**

An email was sent on 28 October to all community councils and other community organisations seeking an invite to attend one of their meetings. Initial response received from Currie, Firrhill, Fairmilehead, Juniper Green, Ratho & District Community Councils, Oxfangs Central Residents Association and Colinton Amenity Association.

Further contact was received from Ratho & District, Fairmilehead Community Councils and Colinton Amenity Association and three road shows done in those locations. No further dates received from the other groups.

#### **Motion:**

*In order to increase Firrhill Community Council's awareness of the work of the Community Sub Group, the Secretary shall send an invitation to the South West Community Safety Manager, Veronica Wright, requesting a speaker to attend the next suitable Council meeting for that purpose.*

### **Littering from school children at Firrhill High School.**

The action plan for this priority is for Environmental Wardens to have focussed patrols during school lunch breaks and speak to all pupils they witness dropping litter. If they are over 16, they will be issued a Fixed Penalty Notice. If they are under 16 they will have their names and addresses taken. These names and addresses will be shown to the school for confirmation, and then logged on an enforcement database.

A home visit (with Police Scotland) will then take place and the parent/guardian advised that the pupil has been caught littering and if they are caught again further action will be taken.

If the pupil is caught a second time another home visit will take place and the parent given the option of accepting a Fixed Penalty Notice on their child's behalf, or have them attend an organised litter pick in the area. There will be organised set times and dates for these to take place, probably one Saturday a month depending how many pupils/parents are involved and when the school can assist.

Public notices will be placed on the main routes around the school advertising this policy and a meeting with the school eco-group chair will take place to discuss organising litter picks and getting the message out to parents via their newsletter.

Public notices will be placed from Monday 3rd March in surrounding area.

Visits will be made to all retail establishments that the pupils use at lunch time to see if they can reduce the amount of packaging they give to the pupils, i.e. one napkin instead of four. A previous agreement had been made with Tesco for them to stop giving carrier bags to pupils, a check will be carried out to ensure this is still common practise.

*A letter will also be sent to all business's advising of their responsibility in regard to offering excess packaging to the pupils*

Task Force will be contacted to see figures can be obtained about the amount of litter the teams pick up around the school after lunch breaks (this will be fed back to school staff and pupils) and we look at the placement of bins in the area. *(Obtaining bins seems to be a problem, proposed that other bins in the area which are not heavily used could be re-sited on the school route.)*

The Sub Group are hoping the community feedback will reflect a visual improvement in area and school children have a better understanding on the effects of littering and the consequences. *(It has taken a while to set this action up and as a result there will be feedback until the next meeting.)*

### **Increase in thefts and acquisitive crime in the ward.**

Necessity for pro-active patrolling and education of householders. During this priority, Police Scotland introduced Op RAC, a nationwide operation to prevent the crime of housebreaking and detect those associated with its commission.

In support of that operation and this priority, hi viz & plain clothes mobile and foot patrols were carried out by designated officers in areas previously targeted for this type of crime in order to deter would be or opportunist thieves.

Crime prevention advice was cascaded through word of mouth, community meetings, social media and by officers identifying 'vulnerable' properties whilst on patrol.

For the period of this priority, there was an approximate 25% reduction of crimes of this nature compared with the previous period (Sept – Dec 13). Although the previous period was also covered by a similar priority, with the implementation of Op RAC and the availability of dedicated personnel patrolling at more relevant times has had an effect of reducing this type of in the community

The community impact of this priority is considered significant in that acquisitive crime to dwellings has been reduced which in turn reduces stress, anxiety and associated conditions aligned with this type of crime.

As there was no police attendance at this meeting it was not possible to get specific information on this issue.

### **Partnership Resources**

#### **Recycling**

There was a discussion on recycling and the failure of the CEC Waste Services to clean up around communal bins, etc. What came out of the discussion was a better understanding of how the process works.

The Council's Waste Services are responsible for the uplift of domestic waste or rubbish from the street providing it is in a proper waste container and on the street on the correct date or a special uplift has been booked. It is not the responsibility of the Council's Waste Services to uplift items not in the container *(even where they are placed next to it)* and where arrangements have not been made for a special uplift.

Where there is a need to remove items from a communal recycling centre because they have not been uplifted by Waste Services, the Environmental Warden Service should be contacted and they

will arrange for the Street Cleaning Task Force to clean the area around the recycling bins. It should be noted that in such circumstances the Environmental Wardens may seek to identify the person(s) responsible for dumping the rubbish and can impose a fixed penalty fine of £50.

The moral of the story is that if you cannot put your recycling rubbish in the recycling bin – take it to another recycling centre or take it home again, do not leave it lying about (*particularly if any of the waste has your name and address on it*)

### **Cold Calling**

Trading Standards has launched an exercise on “Doorstep Crime” to make vulnerable people aware of the risks associated with cold callers

### **Youth Tracking System**

Not been any complaints about youths in the Scotmid area for months. Robert Scott reported that there has been an increase in the number of young people attending the ONC’s Youth Cafe.

### **Community and Future Events**

No events reported. Robert Scott spoke about the ONC’s community soup and thought it was a valuable opportunity for the various groups to network.

Date of Next Meeting – 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014.

## Welfare Reform including Rent Service Re-design – Council Tenants

Framework for Discussion – South West Area Board – 22 April 2014.

An update on how we are assisting Council tenants who are affected by welfare reform. This paper highlights the position at the end of the first year of the most significant welfare reform changes so far and outlines further work underway as we prepare to mitigate the impacts of future Universal Credit/Direct Payments.

Topic Area	Comments
<p><b>1. Dedicated Welfare Reform Team (WRT)</b></p> <p>The WRT has been extended for a further 12 months. The main areas that they have been involved in so far include assisting tenants affected by under occupation/benefits cap and securing DHP payments.</p> <p>They have been carrying out a welfare reform assessment, including advice on housing options, income maximisation, resolving benefit issues, gathering important tenant profiling information and referring tenants to other agencies, including joint working with DWP regarding employment opportunities.</p> <p><b>How they have helped tenants affected by HB Under Occupation (UO)</b></p> <p>3,292 tenants remain affected by (UO) – 90% (2971) affected by a 14% reduction and 10% (321) by a 25% reduction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of tenants in arrears has reduced by 1166 from a high of 2,602 in August to 1,436 at the end of March.</li> <li>• 56% of tenants now have an up to date rent account</li> <li>• The total arrears due on accounts £881,890 (reduction of £367,000)</li> </ul> <p>This has been possible largely due to additional DHP funding being available but more importantly the success of the pro-active approach of the WRT to ensuring we maximise support, advice and assistance directly to those affected.</p> <p>What we did that worked well;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted tenants affected by (UO) not getting DHP and assisted them to apply</li> <li>• Targeted tenants who received an award of DHP but had a gap/further entitlement from an earlier date and assisted them apply for backdating</li> <li>• Provided alternative advice or assisted tenants review any refusals of DHP as standard procedure.</li> <li>• Improving engagement levels through flexibility and timing of contact. More work carried out in the evenings/weekends</li> <li>• The new team has also allowed local rent teams concentrate on managing tenants in arrears that are not affected by welfare reform.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>Reducing rent arrears and making sure tenants can afford to pay rent.</p> <p>Since WRT activities commenced there has been a 108% increase in DHP awards.</p>

## 2. Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

Significant increase in council tenants receiving additional support through DHP.

- At the end of August 863 tenants had received assistance through DHP, compared to 3134 by end of March 2014 (+2271 awards)
- 737 refusals mainly due to sufficient income, alternative advice being provided by welfare reform team.
- Any DHP claims ending at end of March are being reviewed and welfare reform teams are assisting to review the tenants circumstances and complete forms by telephone.

WRT will still assist tenants who have not already claimed for 2013/14 but strong exceptional cases will need to be made.

Any request for backdated DHP for 2013/14 will not be considered if the application is received after 01/04/14 due to the financial pressure that would be caused on the 2014/15 fund.

Discussions taking place on how under occupancy can be mitigated in Scotland.

Should any requests be submitted that may have been missed from the "WILL pay lists that the team worked from (significant age and DLA) these will be paid.

**Financial Position for 2014/15** - Total DHP = £3,833,120

## 3. Pre 1996 HB Under Occupation Exemptions

Details provided to Revenue/Benefits of all long standing tenants (around 400) with housing benefit who had tenancy start dates before 1996. The majority had not been receiving benefit continuously since before 1996. Around 150 were found eligible for an exemption for the 1<sup>st</sup> year of HB under occupation. Anyone who had already received DHP was not paid twice any DHP was recovered before any further exemption entitlement was paid out.

Scottish Gov. awaiting clarification of whether the cap on DHP funds will be lifted.

The government have closed this loop hole from 3 March 2014 – so any tenants who were exempt for the 1<sup>st</sup> year will now be affected again.

## 4. Benefits Cap

All people affected by the benefits cap in private rented sector, homeless/temporary accommodation and Council mainstream tenancies have been contacted and are being provided with assistance to claim DHP, look at housing options and are being encouraged to engage with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) regarding employment opportunities.

## 5. Next steps

We are planning the following improvements in the year ahead to focus on the changes we need to make to manage monthly direct payments/Universal Credit changes;

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### **5.1 Improving tenant engagement levels**

Action includes: A final review of all tenants affected and includes those who are in arrears and have not engaged. We plan to establish alternative approaches, including checking if these tenants are known to other key support providers through access to Council Social Care systems (SWIFT) and also setting up arrangements for further assistance with one of our prevention of homelessness commissioned services. Edinburgh Housing Advice Partnership.

44% tenants affected by under occupation still in rent arrears and despite a significant number of different types of contact are not engaging or getting support.

### **5.2 Increasing levels of communications on rent and benefits advice.**

Action includes: Making our rent letters and rent statements easier to understand. Continuing with our personal approach of contacting tenants through home visits and telephone. Improving access to information for tenants to view rent information on the Councils website and through mobile devices and continuing to produce rent campaign and benefits information locally.

Further discussions expected with elected members/senior management on recovery action.

### **5.3 Making it easier for tenants to pay their rent**

Action includes: improving the number of dates direct debit payments can be made and introducing rent payment cards to enable tenants to pay at local Paypoint outlets. Improvements also being made to our payment telephone line and speak to a customer adviser for general rent enquiries.

Debit cards payments – free phone telephone line (24/7)

### **5.4 Designing changes to the way we deliver and manage our rents service.**

Action includes: making it easier for tenants to contact us, gathering important information to prepare for the introduction of Universal Credit. This information will assist us review our approach, monitor volumes of rent activity and understand which tenants may be unable to manage monthly direct payments and require alternative arrangements put in place.

Also exploring ways we can improve financial advice pre tenancy and focusing on a smoother transition from homelessness to permanent accommodation to build stronger relationships with our tenants.

### **5.5 Advice and assistance for tenants**

Both the income maximisation service and welfare reform team are making improvement to support tenants through further benefit changes.

- 3 new income maximisation staff appointed to assist tenants resolve their benefit issues and increase capacity to maximise income to enable tenants to afford their rent payment. More importantly improve our capacity to reach more council tenants needing help and plan more local intervention activities/events.
- Welfare reform team activities to continue for a further 12 months to help us manage current changes and prepare for Universal Credit.
- Both services have been accepted as referral agents to foodbanks
- Improving advice/income maximisation/employability links- Scottish

Advice and help to complete forms for all benefits and grants.

Welfare fund and others benefits/grants DWP

- Provision of basic budgeting and energy advice skills
- Improving personal contact – visits/local working
- Increasing referrals for advice and support to partner agencies and more formalised referral routes.
- Looking at initiatives to make moves happen locally
- Working with other Council departments to look at alternatives to pay day lending, prevention of debt and work through raising awareness of Credit Unions.
- Setting up plans to support our tenants to prepare and manage the changes when moving to Universal Credit.

Providing a range of financial advice to enable tenants to rely less on DHP.

**Involved in forums and developments of Universal Credit.**

The national introduction is being controlled and gradually rolled out through Pathfinder pilots. At this time it is not expected to include Edinburgh until at least 2016.

Only Scottish area is Inverness.

Continuing to work closely with ETF on learning and developments here.



## Planning Report

### SESplan/LDP

On 10<sup>th</sup> March, the SESplan Joint Committee approved the sixth Development Plan Scheme (DPS) for the Strategic Development Plan. The scheme sets out the programme for preparing, reviewing and consulting on Strategic Development Plan 2. Copies of the DPS have been submitted to Scottish Ministers and will be placed in local libraries and planning receptions throughout the SESplan area. Also at that meeting, the Housing Land Supplementary Guidance was approved for submission to Scottish Ministers. At the meeting the members of the Committee considered a report setting out an analysis of the public consultation and agreed proposed editorial changes to the draft Supplementary Guidance and accompanying Technical Note. The report was also accompanied by an updated Environmental Report and a Habitats Regulations Assessment. The report is available on the SESplan Joint Committee Papers page.

This decision is subject to being ratified by the six councils that make up SESplan. If all six councils ratify this decision then the Supplementary Guidance will be submitted for consideration by Scottish Ministers. If no comments or directions are made by Scottish Ministers, then at the end of the 28 day period the Housing Land Supplementary Guidance will be adopted by all six member authorities.

### **SESplan Consultation: Influencing the Plan**

Notice has been received of the start of the consultation process for the development of the next Strategic Development Plan (SDP). SESplan are now starting to consider the content and shape of SDP2. Ahead of the preparation of the second Main Issues Report (MIR2), they are seeking initial views on the vision, aims and priorities for South East Scotland for the next 20 years, to 2038. If you wish to have your say, go to the SESplan Consultation Portal:

([http://sesplan-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/mir\\_ee/influence\\_the\\_plan](http://sesplan-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/mir_ee/influence_the_plan) ).

### South West Communities Forum

Archie Clark, pre-empting the above, wrote to SESplan querying the timetable for the next round of Local Development Plan reviews.

In response he was advised that the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA), which is used to define housing supply targets applicable to local authorities, is currently in the process of being updated and will be going out for consultation shortly. Once it has been approved it will form part of the next Main Issues Report (MIR2).

The Development Plan Scheme (DPS) 6 was approved by the SESplan Joint Committee on 10 March 2014. The timetable for SDP2, as outlined in DPS 6, is as follows:

- Winter 2014: Publication of the MIR and public consultation;
- Spring 2016: Publication of the proposed Plan and Period for Representations;
- Spring 2017: Submission of Proposed Plan (or Modified Plan) and associated documents to Scottish Ministers;
- Spring/Summer 2018: Approval of SDP2.

In his covering email, Archie Clark comments on the set up of the Housing Market Partnership.

### Princes Street

At their meeting on 27 February, the Planning Committee agreed to relax planning policy for Princes Street to allow cafes and restaurants to open up alongside the shops to make it more of a destination. A more flexible approach to Shandwick Place, Castle Street and Queensferry Street has also been agreed. Shopping will always be one of the main reasons why people want to be in the city centre but by allowing more cafes and restaurants in certain areas it will encourage more people

to spend time enjoying the spectacular views and unique atmosphere. Along with new shops opening, the tram set to run, and large parts of George Street being given to pedestrians, it is an exciting time for our city centre and the recent launch of the 'This is Edinburgh' promotional campaign will help increase footfall in the area.

### EC Planning celebrating their 10,000th on-line application

*In their post they state "Last week we received our 10,000 on-line application. Whilst this gave us cause for great celebration (we opened a packet of chocolate biscuits - as only planners would) it is a significant milestone. The submission of applications electronically is something we have been encouraging for a number of years as this benefits both us and our customers in how we handle their application.*

*Last year, the Scottish Government set out the savings people make by submitting on-line. In general applicants save £200 on average with planning authorities saving £50 on average per application. This not only means savings to us and our customers but it is also good for the environment by reducing the amount of printing, copying and packaging.*

*Submitting applications on-line is one part of ensuring our customers have greater access to planning information. This includes allowing you to view and comment on applications on-line and read key documents such as the Local Development Plan and planning guidance. This is all supported by increased access to the internet through computers and free wi fi in Council buildings, libraries and neighbourhood offices. In time, we will see the regular Development Management Sub-Committees and Planning Committees webcast when you can watch all the action from the comfort of your armchair or on the bus."*

### Edinburgh Street Design Guidance

For your information, a consultation on the draft Edinburgh Street Design Guidance is now underway and the CEC Planning Department would like your views on the streets in the City. They state the City has a range of street types from historic streets to new streets and getting their design right is important to us all. The guidance will help to make streets places for people by giving greater emphasis to walking, cycling and public transport.

They are using a survey to give you a chance to tell us what you think about a range of streets in Edinburgh and to help us understand your views on the guidance document. They are also developing a series of detailed information in the form of fact sheets as part of the guidance and we will put these online as they are prepared.

Go to <http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/streetdesign> for more information and the survey. You can also email comments to [streetdesign@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:streetdesign@edinburgh.gov.uk) at any time. Closes 30<sup>th</sup> June.

### Weekly Planning Bulletins

From the 24<sup>th</sup> February to 28<sup>th</sup> April, the following notices for planning applications in the Firrhill area have been received:

3 March 2014: **Decision:** Application 14/00461/FUL to construct an external ramp for disabled access at 39 Colinton Mains Crescent, Edinburgh, EH13 9DH has been granted.

10 March 2014: **Application:** 14/00889/FUL for the erection of a two storey rear extension together with decking and ballustrading in conjunction with re-division of existing two storey terraced house into two separate dwellings at 36 Colinton Mains Road.

14 April 2014: **Application** 14/01398/FUL for the installation of external ducts to side elevation, new entrance door arrangement, removal of condition 6 to permit opening hours until 11pm at 76 Colinton Mains Drive, Edinburgh, EH13 9BJ. Comments due by 09.05.2014. *The application appears to be a change of use from hairdresser/barber to hot food retail outlet, which it was previously.*

## Correspondence List: 25 Feb – 24 Apr 2014

By e-mail: all messages forwarded to members with this facility; some transferred to website where appropriate. N.B. Items in bold are of particular interest.

- 1 **Community Empowerment & Renewal (Scotland) Bill Conference, 6 May, at Royal College of Surgeons, King Khalid Bldg, Surgeons Hall. Re Sec's e-mailed complaint that CCs can't afford the cheapest price of £150+VAT, reply from Erin Townhill with offer of 'special price', £75+VAT for 1 member per CC.**
- 2 f by J Napier: FCC Annual Accounts 1 April '12 to 31 March '13.
- 3 Proposed new parking bay outside 36/38 Oxfords Rd North.
- 4 Graeme McGartland, Senior Surveyor, SFC: copy of letter to J Napier re circumstances surrounding sale of site (including small parts of HRA land) at Oxfords Path/Rd North.
- 5 **Scott Neill: 'Meet the Funders' event, 1 May, 1-4 pm, Assembly Rms, George Street.**
- 6 Sarah McDonald: amended Draft PNP EIT group Priorities/Actions (on our website).
- 7 SW Community Forum: various e-mails from Archie Clark & Cliff Beevers with info on meetings re housing development proposals for SW area.
- 8 Cllr Andrew Burns: Council Leader's Report, incl short videos of trams running in E'burgh and warnings re tram safety.
- 9 **Sarah McDonald: report giving overview of development of 2014-17 Local Community Plan for Pentlands, and associated priorities. Event for PNP: Sat 14 June, 10 am-12 noon in City Chambers. Topics to include: employment & skills; local economy; healthy living; safer communities; environment; transport; housing. Tel: 527 3816.**
- 10 **Stuart McLean: willing to come to FCC meeting (possibly June) to give members a briefing on the Council's Petitions Committee Process.**
- 11 Scottish Gov's Consultation 'Towards a Litter-free Scotland': strategy to tackle and prevent litter & fly-tipping. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/02/8418> (responses)
- 12 Eileen Hewitt: Queen's Baton Relay for Commonwealth Games 2014 will pass through parts of Edinburgh on 14 June.
- 13 Archie Clark: SESplan's e-bulletin for March + Survey till 30 May [f to J Napier]
- 14 Eileen Hewitt re CC members' induction event in Jan '14: key points and issues from the workshops [printed out for all at FCC]. Also, Training & Support Survey for CC members to fill in <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CCsurvey2014>
- 15 Katie Richardson, Reporter, EEN, re local issues and events and request for our Minutes [Sec referred her to FCC's website].
- 16 Eileen Hewitt: for Pride of Edinburgh Awards nominations go to: <http://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/prideofedinburgh/>
- 18 Message from FCC's Website Builder re litter from Tesco to areas around Oxfords PS and Firrhill HS. Sec forwarded to Cllr Elaine Aitken, who replied that she will take this forward + PNP Comm. Safety Group have tackling litter around schools as a priority for next 3 months.
- 19 Cllr Jason Rust re CSV Action Earth 2014: grants up to £250 for plants, tools, materials, etc, from April. This project is supported by Scottish Natural Heritage. Sign up at <http://actionearth.csv.org.uk> or contact R Henderson with questions or ideas: Tel: 222 9083, or e-mail [actionearth@csv.org.uk](mailto:actionearth@csv.org.uk)

- 20 Archie Clark: re appeal by Barratt David Wilson Homes (for house-building at Cockburn Cresc, Balerno) turned down by Scottish Gov Reporter, with all reasons given for his decision.
- 21 Message from Website Builder: volunteer at Equality Council asking about charge to put info on FCC website. Forwarded to J Napier who replied that no charge where info is relevant to Firrhill CC and appropriate to purpose of our organisation.
- 22 J Napier: copy of e-mail sent to Keegan & Pennykid, Insurance Brokers, re change of FCC Treasurer and asking that quote for renewal of FCC insurance be sent to L Linn.
- 23 **Council re-cycling red/blue box collections calendar will be published online to cut costs of distributing 140,000 calendars by post each year. Tel 529 3030 if you need a paper copy, or check at <http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/redandblueboxdays> for collection days in your area.**
- 24 Nominations for 2014 Lord Provost's Inspiring Volunteering Awards open until 4 June <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/6LBL3VW>
- 25 Kim Aitchison: notes & actions from Firrhill Walkabout, 9 Jan '14.
- 26 Cllr Frank Ross, Convener, Economy C'ttee: update on Edinburgh's Economic Strategy and Investment in Jobs: [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/economicstrategy](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/economicstrategy)
- 27 Cllr Richard Lewis: Edinburgh Printmakers up for an award of nearly £5m to re-develop Castle Mills buildings in Fountainbridge.
- 28 Eileen Hewitt: Licensing Forum Minutes for 1 April '14.
- 29 Cllr Jason Rust re Local Development Plan briefing going before Planning Committee on 15 May: most new housing in SW will be around Currie & Balerno. The proposal for a huge number of homes in Garden District is not on the plan (public transport and boundary issues).
- 30 ELREC (Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council): individuals and reps from a wide range of organisations promoting equality/fighting prejudice [see full e-mail photocopy]
- 31 Eileen Hewitt re 'The Big Lunch': lottery-funded event – ideally 1<sup>st</sup> Sun in June, aiming to bring neighbours together to share conversation/ideas/resources. Info at [www.thebiglunch.com](http://www.thebiglunch.com)
- 32 E Hewitt: **Info Bulletin 47, including 1) Classes/Courses/Training; 2) Events/Fairs/ Community Days/Seminars; 3) Health Service/Gov docs/info; 4) Strategies/Consultations/ Campaigns/Websites; 5) Organisations/Networks/Charities, news & info; 6) Funding Opportunities/Grants; 7) Useful Websites & Contacts.**
- 33 Kim Aitchison: action points from Firrhill Walkabout, 10 April (F'hill Drive & Cres only).
- 34 Sgt Mackenzie: notification that PC Kenny Welsh will attend FCC meeting, 28 April.
- 35 S McDonald **obo Cllr Maureen Child: Edinburgh P'ship Event 'Better Outcomes through Leaner Delivery' – will help to inform joint resource planning & service development for the new Community Plan: Monday 12 May 0900-1300 hrs (venue tba).**
- 36 J Harbison re Aldi's proposed store at Oxbgangs Path/Road North: reply to FCC Sec's questions on community's responses to the exhibitions held on 11 April; whether there will be an evening exhibition as requested by Cllr Jason Rust following constituents' queries; the planning timescale [full e-mail reply photocopied separately for members].
- 37 Street Design: info and consultation at <http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/streetdesign> (to 30/06)

Update/

**25 - 28 April Correspondence Update:**

1. Council Leader's Report, including a) following fatal collapse of free-standing wall at Liberton HS, inspection of all Council properties; b) eulogy to Margo McDonald; c) Mortonhall Report intimation; d) Tram Project latest.
2. Public Policy Network (PPN) Citizen Participation Group, including the Community Councils Report.
3. Eileen Hewitt: Funding Newsflash for March & April combined.

For more detail on any of the above contact: Peggy Wright, Tel 531 9796, [peggy.wright@live.co.uk](mailto:peggy.wright@live.co.uk)

## Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council (ELREC)

The Equality Council is made up of individual members and representatives from a wide range of organisations. At ELREC we strive to promote equality and to fight all forms of prejudice. We believe that no one can claim to live in a fair and just society whilst prejudice and inequalities exist. ELREC will work jointly with our beneficiaries and partners to challenge injustice and dismantle barriers which deny individuals and communities equal access to life opportunities in Edinburgh & Lothians.

The primary functions of ELREC are:

- To provide advice and assistance on all [types of discrimination](#)
- To do capacity building work with all communities
- To improve access to mainstream services
- To bring equality into the mainstream within the public sector and other bodies

The services that we provide to all the members of the society include:

- Support and advice services on different issues like housing and benefit or reporting hate crimes
- Counselling services to victims of hate or discrimination.
- Providing assistance in working with public bodies

ELREC welcomes all individuals and organisations who share our aims, visions and values to join us as members.

By joining ELREC, your community will benefit from:

- Increasing the visibility
- Having opportunity of taking part in free equality training organized by ELREC
- Receiving a copy of ELREC quarterly Community Newsletter
- Having your say and right to vote at ELREC Annual General Meetings

Joining ELREC as a member takes no charge, and only a few minutes.

Please visit ELREC website at [www.elrec.org.uk](http://www.elrec.org.uk) and find out more about our values, objectives, our services, and projects in our hand. To become a member, simply complete and submit the application form on the membership page.

Together, we will become stronger against inequality and discrimination in society.

Yours Sincerely,

Mona Adhikari, Manager