

DAVIDSON'S MAINS & SILVERKNOWES ASSOCIATION

Catch-up Review 9 June 2020.

1. Correspondence

There has been a significant volume of correspondence from residents in relation to the Planning Applications for 43 Main Street and the Change of use to train/exercise dogs in the field at Lauriston Farm Road.

The Association received a very appreciative letter from the Minister of the Episcopalian Church for the donation to the replacement Boiler and Central Heating Appeal.

2. Police Report

PC DJ McLeod has again been thanked for taking the time to provide a monthly report despite no longer being officially designated as the local community policeman due to budget cuts.

There have been a few instances of minor crimes in the area during May but by far the most significant issue has been the re-occurrence of vandalism and anti social behaviour by youths in the grounds of Lauriston Castle. The report makes reference to multiple calls having been received about youths mis-behaving within the grounds and in particular at the Japanese Garden, (which on more than one occasion was left in a mess with empty bottles and cans and extensive litter).

In response to the trouble, the gates, which had a broken lock and were being left open at night, are now being padlocked from 7 pm, and the police are giving priority to extra inspections and patrols. The mobile CCTV van will be utilised from time to time on a rota with other vulnerable sites, and Council security officers are to undertake patrols, focusing on the Japanese Garden.

3. Treasurers Report

Gordon has advised that the balance in the account was £4284.93 as at 31 May 2020. Liabilities outstanding include payments for the Help Your Neighbour flyer (£129), the planters for the village (£209), and the filler and plants for the planters (now estimated to be about £120).

During the month there were a further 7 standing order membership renewals, making ten in total, with one new application. All have been acknowledged and further issues around membership renewals are covered under item 10.

The audited accounts for 2019/20 have been circulated to the committee for comment and approval. These show the transfer of £11575.41 of accumulated funds to the Christmas Lights Group which signals the end to any direct link to the group now that they are a fully constituted organisation in their own right. The transfer wholly accounts for the operating deficit of £11158.50 for the year. The Association operated during the year with a satisfactory own funds surplus of £416.91 with a closing balance of £4222.90.

4. Planning Issues

4a. 30 Corbiehill Road

It is disappointing to note that the application to extend the property with a sub division into five apartments was approved by the Planning Development sub- committee at the meeting of 20 May. The drainage problems on the site were ruled (correctly) to be a matter for building control but the concerns about additional vehicle movements adjacent to the pedestrian crossing and entrance to the primary school were not considered to be of importance by the committee, as were the resident's complaints about the relative loss of privacy. There is no right of appeal against a decision of a Council Committee and this matter is now closed.

4b Field at Lauriston Farm Road

Following on from the recognition that the lease for the training and exercising of dogs is not valid, being in contravention of the legal stipulations around the construction of fencing and out buildings on agricultural land, an application for a change of use for the field to permit the activity with dogs and for planning approval for fencing and buildings has now been submitted to the Council. As stated last month, this will now allow residents to have their say on the proposals , as should have been the case from the start, even if there have to be legitimate concerns that due process has been tarnished by the earlier events. Unsurprisingly the anticipated report by the Council's Planning Enforcement Team into the possible breach of legislation has been deferred until after the outcome of the Planning application is known and so will become inconsequential, having been superseded by the subsequent events .In the Council's own words "it is not seen to be good practice for the Council to serve an enforcement notice on itself".

4c.43 Main Street, Cleland's Garage Site

The Association received a significant number of comments from local residents to express concerns about the development of the garage site and the rear of Tesco's car park, with the majority relating to the mass and density of the development, particularly the four storey blocks, and the completely inadequate provisions for the pedestrian/cycle path along the northern boundary of the development. Other concerns were expressed about additional vehicle movements to and from Main Street and the line of vision for drivers exiting from the site on to Main Street. The Association was also asked to make representations on behalf of local history groups and archaeological organisations about the historical significance of the site and for priority to be given to excavations being carried out before any approved development may be undertaken. It is pleasing to note that 108 comments have been made on the proposals with 94 being opposed.

4d. Proposed Telecoms Station and Mast at Silverknowes Road East

It is noted that the closing date for comment on the application has now closed. It is certain to proceed, being classified as essential national infrastructure and this matter is now closed.

5. City Plan 2030 /City Mobility Plan

Following the public consultations on these plans, the Council will now undertake a review of the submissions and produce a formal response to each, with any changes, later this year. These matters are now closed for the present and will be addressed again once the Council has reported.

6. Spaces for People Strategy/Proposals

The Council have designated the strategy to provide more space for pedestrians and cyclists as the Spaces for People Project and have asked citizens for suggested locations where pavement and path way locations could be improved to eliminate pinch points. The DMSA will be advertising the link to the database on the notice board and website and circulate the information to members. The closing date for comment is noted to be 29 June and the Association will need to consider its own submission.

7. Installation of Defibrillator in the Village

This has developed in to a long drawn out saga, and just when it looked as if we would have to ditch any attempt to take the proposal forward, in the past few days Charlotte has received a contact from the original benefactor who has assured us that despite the delays the funds remain available for use if a suitable site can be identified. With this assurance, the plan now is to write formally to St Margaret's Church to ask them to reconsider the request for a defibrillator to be installed on the external wall of the Church Hall on Main Street, recognising that there is no other realistic position towards the east end of Main Street.

8. Flower Planters in the Village.

Four Flower Planters are now in place at Ballantine & Goldie, Celebration, The Green and Ye Olde Inn, with different types of plants in each. Thanks are due to the Scouts /Beavers for helping to construct the planters and to arrange for them to be put in place and filled with compost, and to the two donor "Flower Ladies" for providing plants. The wild flowers in two of the planters are less mature and will need time to develop but full colour should be available in July. The DMSA has covered the costs (which were at discounted rates) but the plan is to have a public appeal in our next Newsletter to try to recover at least a proportion. If this goes well, those involved are willing to do a few more next year.

9. Anti Social Behaviour/Vandalism in Grounds of Lauriston Castle

This has been substantially covered in the Police Report, and the committee are very pleased about the support from the police in bringing pressure to bear to have the gates closed in the evening and for the Council for adding the grounds to the security guard rota. The proposed use of CCTV and the proposals to resurrect the group who were looking at possible other management/security options for the site are also welcome. One problem with closing the gates at the very early time of 7 pm is that it disadvantages the croquet club who play in the evenings, and other residents who use the grounds for recreation on summer evenings and it is hoped that a more realistic time of 8 pm can be agreed.

10. Membership Renewals

The notification to members to invite renewals for 2019/20 had been put on hold to see how things developed for a possible delayed Newsletter, with a new members appeal, and AGM, in mid- summer, but it is now clear that a public AGM is not going to be possible for at least the next several months. As has been described before there is a big advantage in synchronising the timing of renewals with new member appeal, but on the time scale now for an AGM it looks like we should now proceed to send renewal letters out to existing members. It is planned to do that now.

11. AOCB

11a Donation to Holy Cross Church Replacement Heating Appeal

Charlotte was very pleased to receive a very kind acknowledgement and thanks from the Minister for the donation of £250 to the appeal.

11b Emergency Closure of north end of Silverknowes Road

It is noted that the road closure has now been extended by a formal TTRO for up to 18 months (that being the maximum TTRO period). The closure is to be reviewed by the Transport and Environment Committee at some point over the next few months to determine if it has been successful and justified and to also to consider the return of the 29 bus service if appropriate. The Association has an outstanding remit to comment on this to express our concern about the loss of the bus service and the commercial impact on the café.

11c. Cancellation of 41 Bus Service on Sundays

A response has been received from Lothian Buses which acknowledges the substance of our complaint about the problems for workers who need to travel to work, but Lothian Buses defend the decision by saying they had no option due to the very low levels of patronage. The reply indicates the withdrawal is temporary so we will keep the matter under review to see if passenger numbers start to pick up during week days. It is noted that Cramond and Barnton Community Council have complained about the withdrawal of the Sunday service without any prior consultation.

11d Litter in Fields at Silverknowes Road

It is noted that the Council made a further clearance of the general litter in response to a complaint although the structural remains of the large wooden shed which was dumped over and against the boundary fence two or three weeks ago has not yet been removed.

It is understood from a response to a resident that specialist lifting equipment is required, hence the delay.

11e Litter at Play Area at Davidson's Mains Park

It is noted that the Council are to respond quickly to complaints about a proliferation of empty cans, bottles, and other litter at the play park. Alleged inappropriate behaviour by youths has been reported to the police who will monitor the location.

12. Date of Next Catch-Up Review

The date of the next Catch-Up Review is set for 14 July 2020. The plan is to keep monthly reviews going over the summer without the usual break.