

Craigleith/Blackhall Community Council

Minutes of Meeting Monday 18 January 2021 - held online via Teams

Present - Stuart Pinkerton (Chair), Alan Denham (Secretary), Martin Riddell (Treasurer), Duncan Osler, Grant Roger, Darlene Jeffrey, Susie Ross, Jim McLennan, Michael Cockburn; Inverleith Ward Councillors Hal Osler, Gavin Barrie, Max Mitchell; Caroline Nutsford (Avison Young UK), Chief Superintendent Sean Scott; Yvonne Yohnston – Estates Transformation and Change Lead (Police Scotland), Justin Tito – Estates Change Manager East (Police Scotland); PC Ewan Hickie; and one member of the public.

Apologies - Deidre Brock MP, Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP.

Minutes of 14 December 2020 meeting - approved.

Police Scotland Fettes Site - Possible Redevelopment - Caroline Nutsford said that Avison Young are advising Police Scotland on the possibility of redeveloping the Fettes site, previous HQ of Lothian and Borders Police. The site is 14 acres, which has potential for about 670 dwellings, is adjacent to the Inverleith Conservation Area boundary. They are currently exploring the potential for alternative developments on the site rather than presenting detailed proposals and in order to preserve the option for development, they had made representations on behalf of Police Scotland to the Issues report in the Cityplan 2030. Currently awaiting the forthcoming draft Cityplan 2030. Caroline Nutsford presented plans showing the principles of development on the site, including massing, key views, landscape buffer and 2 zones for development - a higher density zone and a lower density on the north side of the site.

Yvonne Yohnston said that Police Scotland had agreed an Estates strategy in 2019 after inheriting a diverse estate from previous police forces. They wished to co-locate with partners and develop fit for purpose premises both for staff and to increase efficiency, but there was no imminent need to dispose of the Fettes site. Fettes was in fairly good condition but was expensive to run. It now accommodates national functions rather than local Edinburgh and Lothian functions. Chief Inspector Sean Scott said that the impact of moving away from Fettes would not lead to a diminution of the police service in Edinburgh. Going forward Police Scotland required a major centralised facility, located on the periphery of the city and enabling greater flexibility.

Questions and subsequent discussion - Susie Ross expressed concerns about the scale of the development and its implications. This would be just one of a number of housing developments in the Orchard Brae/Crewe Road/Comely Bank corridor and when combined with the significant scale of current new development at the nearby Western General Hospital, it could seriously exacerbate current flooding problems in the area. Likewise there are current pressures on both primary and secondary schools, and this development and other proposed and current developments would add to these pressures. Police Scotland acknowledged that mitigation measures on the flooding and drainage issue and other issues would be required.

Police Report - PC Ewan Hickie reported on crimes in the area:-

He was pleased to report that anti social behaviour problems in the Maiden Craig Crescent and Ravelston Woods area had reduced. Police Scotland was still active in both areas as well as Craigleith Shopping Centre.

Compared to last year serious crime was down.

House break-ins were also down a great deal, although break-ins to sheds and garages had increased, particularly the theft of bicycles. The recovery of stolen bikes was improving although bike marking events had been put on hold because of the current Covid-19 restrictions.

Anti-social behaviour was increasing at home addresses but had reduced elsewhere. Hate crimes were down by a few percentage points.

Road policing continued with speed checks on Craigmook Road and in Inverleith and unmarked vehicles are now being used to support the speeding problem.

The subsequent discussion raised stone throwing problems in Craigmook Hill Avenue resulting in broken windows and PC Hickie said that the problem also extended to Fettes College - they are still seeking to identify the offenders. It was also noted that the cycle rack on Craigmook Road, removed temporarily, had resulted in anti social behaviour. There was also a problem of telephone scams resulting in individuals losing sums of money. PC Hickie agreed to provide literature on scams and avoiding action.

Community Council matters - nothing to report

Councillors Reports - matters raised and noted by the Councillors were :-

Road gritting and icy footpaths had been a major issue for councillors following the recent snows, subsequent thaws and then frosts. Craigmook Hill area had not been a priority for recent gritting unlike previous years. Also noted that March Road, a bus route, had not been treated regularly. The priorities for road gritting did not extend to the adjacent pavements which are considered for treatment separately. The icy conditions on Orchard Road had resulted in vehicles skidding and 2 serious accidents.

Grit bins - there were 2 categories on the Council's web site and in some cases it leads to a mismatch and a failure to refill the grit - if grit bins are not refilled to inform Ward Councillors.

There were sewage problems on the western section of Craigmook Road leading to major flooding issues. These problems will not however be addressed by Scottish Water under the 12 month works to replace sewage pipes lower down on the eastern section of Craigmook Road. - there are no plans to deal with it.

AOCB - Councillor Osler said that papers for 2 forthcoming Council committees to be issued later in the week could be relevant to the Craigmook and Blackhall area.*

Next meeting - agreed that the date should be revised and will now be held online at 7.30 pm on Monday 15 February 2021 using Teams.

Alan Denham
Secretary
23 January 2021

* Committee papers issued after the Community Council meeting - Culture Committee paper proposes that Blackhall Library could reopen on 29 March. Papers for the Transport and Environment Committee under Spaces for People propose a cycle lane on Orchard Brae linking with the Crewe Road South and Comely Bank Roundabouts cycle lanes.