

Craigeith / Blackhall Community Council

Minutes of Meeting - Monday 16 October 2023

Held at Blackhall St Columba's Church

Present - Community Council - Stuart Pinkerton (Chair), Alan Denham (Secretary), Grant Roger (Treasurer), Duncan Osler, Michael Cockburn; Inverleith Ward Councillors Hal Osler, Max Mitchell

In attendance - Councillor Scott Arthur, 40 + members of the local community

Apologies - Martin Riddell, Darlene Jeffrey, Jim McLennan; Councillor Vicky Nicolson; and Deidre Brock MP.

Minutes of 18 September 2023 meeting - approved.

Police Report - a written Police Report had been circulated this month as PC Cursiter was on leave.

Community Council matters -

Councillor Scott Arthur, Chair of the City Council's Transport and Environment Committee (TEC), was welcomed to the meeting. As background he said that his Committee was dealing with traffic congestion arising from the growth of the city and to ensure that transport policy deals with the problem. Investment in both the public realm and public transport was necessary to support growth. Additionally, TEC dealt with other matters including waste, air quality and crematoria.

Maidencraig Crescent Steps - the Chair said that the Maidencraig Crescent Steps adjacent to retirement flats at Queens Court, were not safe as the temporary fix was not ideal. There was an increasing number of injuries due to falls and also broken limbs. The meeting needed to address how the steps could be made safe and how progress could be achieved.

Members of the community, particularly those living at Queens Court, amplified the points made by the chair and expressed their personal concerns about the challenges in using the steps and the need for a ramp as well as improved steps. The subsequent discussion said a ramp could be an alternative to the nearby NCN 1 cycle route; the ramp suggestion had been on lists for over 7 years but there had been no progress and had eventually fallen off the lists.

Councillor Arthur said that active travel schemes were funded by the Scottish Government with £1.3bn available for projects over a 10 year period. One third was for walking, another third for cycling and the final third for combined cycling and walking proposals. The scheme, which is administered by Sustrans, requires Councils to bid for funds with up to 7 stages of bidding. It is expected that the bidding process will get easier. While the Maidencraig Crescent project from a local perspective is important, it will inevitably be competing with other projects.

Councillor Arthur said that a community can run their own feasibility study with help from Sustrans. He undertook to speak to Council staff on the matter and provide additional information (subsequently provided).

Craigleith Drive Tunnel - it is a shared road and pavement, single vehicle width. Despite warning signs there is conflict between pedestrians and cars. It is well used by school children from Mary Erskine's School. The average speed of traffic was 22.9mph. Local residents did not wish the road to be closed or made one way; their preference was for speed bumps to slow traffic down to 15-20 mph. Traffic lights were an alternative to speed bumps but an expensive solution. Councillor Arthur said that he came through the tunnel on the way to the meeting and said it required care, that an average speed of 22.9mph is too high for this stretch of road and that he would raise the problem with the Road Safety Team.

Strachan Road/Hillhouse Road junction - the absence of a green man crossing at Strachan Road section of the junction, the presence of a Doctors' Surgery and a pharmacy opposite reinforced the need for easy pedestrian access. The problem is compounded by poor and illegal parking linked to Friday prayers at Blackhall Mosque, despite the use of warden by the Mosque.

Councillor Arthur agreed to raise the traffic light issue with Mark Lowe in the Council. He said that problems of poor parking should be reported to the Council via the Council's web site including private hire car numbers where they are obstructing properties.

Conditions of roads and pavements - Councillor Arthur said that alternative approaches had been considered by the Transport and Environment Committee - status quo, increased funding. The use of slurry on footpaths was questioned by a member of the community. He said that it extended the life of footpaths by 5 years. The sloping vehicle access points across footpaths was criticised. Councillor Arthur said that in new developments footpaths will be flatter.

Craigleith Basin flooding - Councillor Arthur said that flooding issues were part of his day job as a professor, and the changes in weather patterns will require a 30% increase in capacity in Edinburgh over 30 years. Funding for gully draining had also increased with 3 vehicles now available.

Bus Services - the community audience raised the problems of Lothian bus services in the area, particularly on the Queensferry Road corridor. It was not clear why service 41 had been withdrawn and the replacement of service 47 was not an adequate alternative. These changes come after the withdrawal of service 42 made Stockbridge inaccessible other than by car. Councillor Hal Osler said that there were only 2 bus services on Queensferry Road and because of delays it frequently meant that both services arrived together, effectively 3 buses per hour rather than the timetabled 6 buses per hour.

Councillor Arthur said that Edinburgh was well provided for bus travel with 2 million passengers per year, 30% of the Scottish total. There were weaknesses compounded by Covid and driver shortage. Lothian was now back to 90% of pre-

Covid patronage. He said that he held regular meetings with Lothian Buses managing director and said that Lothian hoped to improve services in 2024.
AOCB

Blackhall Planters - the recent effort by Blackhall Horticultural Society in renewing the planting was well appreciated.

Blackhall Dip Christmas Tree - the Community Council agreed to fund the provision of the tree and Christmas lights.

Next meeting - Monday 20 November 2023

Alan Denham

Secretary

Craighleith/Blackhall Community Council

25 October 2023