

Craigleith/Blackhall Community Council

Minutes of Meeting Monday 17 May 2021 **- held online using Teams**

Present - Stuart Pinkerton (Chair), Alan Denham (Secretary), Martin Riddell (Treasurer), Duncan Osler, Grant Roger, Darlene Jeffrey, Susie Ross, Michael Cockburn; Inverleith Ward Councillors Hal Osler, Gavin Barrie, Max Mitchell, Iain Whyte; PCs Roslin Milne and Colin Cuthbert, Police Scotland; Fiona Gilbert, Blackhall Community Trust; 15 members of the local community

Apologies - Jim McLennan, Paul Moran, Deidre Brock MP

Police Report - PC Milne provided an overview of Police Scotland's activities and crime levels both in the Inverleith Ward and north Edinburgh. Overall crime levels were down in the Ward and there was currently a focus on drug crimes. PC Milne encouraged the community to report drug and other activities either directly to the Police or anonymously through Crime Stoppers. House break-ins, theft of pedal bikes and general disorder were all down compared to last year. Police Scotland was targeting anti social behaviour in light of concerns in Inverleith Park and Corstorphine Hill, although the problem had reduced slightly since the schools had returned. Following the recent spate of attacks on Lothian Buses by youths with bricks, a number of youths had now been charged.

Road safety - accidents were down by 40%. Attention was being given to speed enforcement at Groathill Road, Blackhall Dip, Strachan Road, Craigcrook Road and Orchard Road. A PC figure is to be used as a speed deterrent.

An increase in graffiti in Blackhall was noted. PC Milne encouraged residents to report the problem to the Police.

Blackhall Community Trust - update on proposed nursery extension in Ravelston Park - Fiona Gilbert on behalf of Blackhall Community Trust said it had been along process with two rounds of approval from the Council, two rounds of funding requests and the court of Session process to overturn the common good land status to permit the extension at the pavilion. Now bidding for grants including appointment of a land officer which will be a full time appointment to take the detailed proposal forward. In response to a question about lack of communication by Blackhall Community Trust, Fiona Gilbert said that there had been meetings of Trust three times a year, updates in the Blackhall Bulletin and all residents could join the Trust, although residents commented that they were already fully committed on other matters.

Following the presentation there were questions, concerns and points from members of the local community on a range of matters:-

the process leading up to the Court of Session decision and the failure of Edinburgh Council to keep the community informed;
consultation with Fields in Trust;
ownership of the land;
the implications for taking a large area for the nursery on other park users including football;
parking problems associated with the nursery;
community use of the nursery;

next steps

Edinburgh Council process - there had been little recent information on progress of the nursery until the Court of Session decision in April 2021. Although the City Council had given an undertaking to keep residents informed and include details of the consultation on the Council's consultation hub, this had not happened. Local residents commented that it had been difficult to get any information from the Council with none forthcoming. There was an acknowledgement from Ward Councillors that there had been shortcomings in the process.

The process of transferring the land to the Trust, of which the recent Court of Session decision was an important part, had been approved and authorised in principle by the City Council's Finance and Resources Committee in March 2019. Prior to that decision the Education Authority had looked at other opportunities in Blackhall for a nursery but concluded none was available. Additionally the Council did not wish to become involved in transferring common good land after problems with the new Portobello High School. The Committee agreed therefore to transfer the pavilion and an extended area of land in Ravelston Park to Blackhall Community Trust. Subsequent actions by Council officials, including the consultation in August and September 2019, and the submission to the Court of Session to remove the Common Good status, flow from the Committee's decision in March 2019. Blackhall Community Trust said that since March 2019, the rate of progress had been determined by the Council.

In response to the questions about the consultation, Councillor Iain Whyte has provided a breakdown of the results which are now also available on the Council's consultation hub. Consultation on the Petition Common Good - August to October 2019 – Note this is simply to inform the Courts of the public opinion. Outcome was 316 responses.

Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	179	56.65%
Agree	22	6.96%
Neither agree nor disagree	5	1.58%
Disagree	20	6.33%
Strongly disagree	86	27.22%
Not Answered	4	1.27%

Prior to this consultation the Council had consulted between 10 April 2019 to 8 May 2019 on the proposed Community Asset Transfer following Committee approval. The outcome was no representations were made. Apparently this was the opportunity to object to the proposal and receive answers.

Before finalising their decision, the Court of Session required that the proposed change of ownership should be advertised. This took place in The Scotsman in December 2020 to which there were no responses. Only Blackhall Community Trust and Blackhall Nursery were notified directly of the intention to advertise.

Fields in Trust - Ravelston Park is safeguarded by Fields in Trust in perpetuity for use as a park. City Council is now in contact with the Fields in Trust's solicitors to amend the designation in the light of the Court's decision.

Ownership - the ownership of the land has not currently changed and will not until the community asset transfer is concluded. The transfer will require Blackhall Community Trust to have funding in place. Once the land is transferred the building will be owned by Blackhall Community Trust. Should the Trust run into financial problems at a later date, the site would be offered to another charity fulfilling the same functions. Should this not be possible the site would revert to Scottish Ministers. It would not be offered as a commercial development site.

Other park users - there are concerns that transferring such a large site will restrict other activities in the park, particularly football pitches used by youngsters from Blackhall Primary School. The City Council has said that Blackhall Community Trust will work with sporting groups to allow sports to continue.

Parking problems - local residents expressed concerns about current parking problems linked to the existing nursery and that the expansion of the building both for nursery and community purposes would exacerbate the problems. Blackhall Community Trust seeks to encourage access by means other than the car.

Community use of the nursery - the details have not yet been finalised but Blackhall Community Trust states that it will be for small groups up to a maximum of 20. Any moneys will go back into the Trust, a not-for-profit organisation.

Next steps - once funding is in place Blackhall Community Trust will appoint a land officer who will have responsibility for taking forward the detailed development including a planning application, a separate process from the community asset transfer.

Minutes of 19 April 2021 meeting - approved.

Community Council matters - planning application by McDonalds, Telford Road to extend hours of opening to 6 am 7 days a week, to which the Community Council objected in support of local residents, had been withdrawn. Residents are concerned that a slightly later time may now be proposed which would still affect the amenity of adjacent houses and residents.

West End Health Centre - NHS proposal to reduce patient area excluding Queens Avenue and Craigmyle Hill areas was noted.

Lidl construction noise problem in late evening at Craigmyle Shopping Centre - a local resident was concerned about the high noise levels - Ward Councillors had been notified and were following up with officials

Councillors Reports - Maidencraig steps now repaired, although not of the highest standard. A ramp was deemed to be high cost and will be put into the active travel budget; Field at Blackhall Primary School to be reseeded;
Spaces for People - changes at Craigmyle Crescent leading to major delays with traffic backing up in morning and evening peaks;
Spaces for People - cycle ways can be dangerous for cyclists with grit from adjacent vehicles being thrown on to them. Councillor Osler said that mechanical footpath cleaners were able to clean them;
June meeting of Transport and Environment Committee will decide which Spaces for People schemes should be retained on permanent basis;

Full inbox on Blackhall Community Trust proposals in Ravelston Park; Pavement resurfacing - problems of weeds to be treated. Also a problem in Drylaw where pavements have been similarly treated. Inspectors are going to look at the problems.

AOCB - concerns were expressed about owners of dogs using Ravelston Park and not calling their dogs back. Councillor Whyte said the matter would be passed on to the Park Wardens to speak to owners. Also suggested that it may be a possible subject for a poster by pupils at Blackhall Primary School.

Inverleith play park - Susie Ross expressed disquiet at the absence of a gate to protect very young children. Councillor Barrie, who agreed to follow up, provided a full response on 18 May. The missing gate has been returned and reattached.

Next meeting - to be held online at 7.30 pm on Monday 21 June 2021 using Teams. The 2021 AGM will be held as part of the June meeting.

Alan Denham
Secretary
18 May 2021