

Craigleith / Blackhall Community Council

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 18 March 2024

Held at Blackhall St Columba's Church

Present - Community Council - Stuart Pinkerton (Chair), Alan Denham (Secretary), Grant Roger, Jim McLennan, Duncan Osler, Darlene Jeffrey, Michael Cockburn; Inverleith Ward Councillors Hal Osler, Max Mitchell; Murrayfield Ward Councillor Alan Beal

In attendance - 10 members of the local community

Apologies - Martin Riddell, Councillor Vicky Nicolson; and Angus Robertson MSP

Minutes of 19 February 2024 meeting - approved

Police Report - following last month's discussion, the Chair reported that the abandoned car in Maidencraig Crescent had been removed. The empty house in Craigleith Drive appeared to be abandoned.

This month PC Cursiter had provided a written report :-

"There were 164 calls to Police for the month. This was a decrease of 20 calls over the same period last year.

There was 1 reported housebreaking at a property in Groathill Avenue which is under investigation from the CIU dept.

A robbery was reported at Craigleith retail park. All suspects were identified a short time later and have been arrested.

Speed checks have been carried out at East Fettes Avenue and Queensferry Road. There were 2 x minor road accidents reported and no drink drivers detected.

I am aware that more calls have come in regarding dirt bikes in the Telford and Craigcrook areas. I have asked the question that Operation Orbit be re-initiated in response to this."

The subsequent discussion highlighted the recent traffic accident at the Strachan Road/Ravelston Dykes Road/Craigcrook Road junction when a vehicle ignored the Stop sign at Strachan Road and collided with a car travelling on Craigcrook Road and demolishing part of the zebra crossing. Experience is that the Stop sign is ignored regularly .

Agreed - the Secretary would e-mail the City Council's Road Safety Team, reinforcing comments made in an e-mail in November 2023 about safety concerns of the community, to which no response was received.

Pedestrian traffic light crossing in Blackhall Dip, Queensferry Road - concerns were expressed that traffic frequently ignores the red light and travels through it.

Community Council matters :-

City Council Consultation - Review of Scheme for Community Councils and their Boundaries

The discussion focused on the mismatch between the current boundaries for Craigleith/Blackhall Community Council and the geographical area of Blackhall. There were no concerns about the Craigleith area of the community council. It was agreed that the Community Council's response to the City Council's consultation should seek changes in both the area to the north of Hillhouse Road/Telford Road where both Blackhall Library and Blackhall Mosque lie currently outside the present boundary and likewise to the area south of Blackhall Dip, currently in Murrayfield Community Council.

Lothian Buses Services in the Queensferry Road corridor

Following discussion at the February meeting, the Secretary had e-mailed Lothian Buses expressing a number of concerns :

“- following the removal of services 41 and 42, there remains dissatisfaction in the overall bus service in the Queensferry Road corridor. Service 47 is an inadequate replacement for the previous service 41. While the modest improvements in frequency are welcomed, an increase in the choice of routes was considered to be more important; the proposed X47 is a welcome peak hour addition with 5 additional buses, but it does little to address some of the community's concerns;

- Ward Councillors had not received advanced notice of the changes, despite the commitment given by Lothian Buses after the last service changes;
- with service 43 the only bus now serving the city centre retail core and Princes Street east end, it has resulted in heavy loads at bus stops, slow boarding and often full buses at Queensferry Street;
- frequent delays means that effectively there is a 20 minute service with services 43 and 47 frequently arriving together, effectively 3 buses per hour in the Queensferry Road corridor; and
- need to address driver behaviour on service 43 eg not stopping to pick up school children at Stewart Melville College despite having empty seats on the bus.”

Additionally a resident in the Craigleith Road area subsequently stated the need for improved bus links between Craigleith Road and Stockbridge following the removal of service 42.

A full response from Lothian Buses was noted at the meeting. It is included for information in the annex to these minutes below.

Communal Bins

The Secretary reported problems at Cockburn Court. Councillor Hal Osler reported continuing pockets of problems linked to communal bins.

Ward Councillors Reports

Councillors Max Mitchell and Hal Osler reported on :-
Farmer's Junction at Strachan Road/Hillhouse Road/Telford Road - the status of the junction has improved in the Council's listings, allowing positive action and helpfully improvements;

Mosque parking - it continues to be monitored. The City Council will convene a meeting to consider the impact on the wider area;
Orchard Drive build out at Queensferry Road junction - to improve driver and pedestrian safety, the street lights on Queensferry Road will be adjusted to maximum and if necessary bollards introduced;
Double yellow lines are to be introduced in Orchard Crescent linked to the introduction of controlled parking which will also include the Blinkbonnys - now delayed until 2025;
Parking is an issue at both Flora Stephenson and Blackhall Primary Schools - unfortunately the school travel plans do not address the issue satisfactorily;
The 2024/25 budget was passed at a full Edinburgh Council meeting with amendments from both Conservatives and Lib Dems - proposed cuts in budget were not accepted and extra moneys are included for road and pavement maintenance, green space and the wider maintenance of the city outside the city centre. Additional money for schools is also included.

It was noted that budgetary pressures remain with cuts in the social budget - and at a time the Council are promoting a tram extension costing £44m for the business case and £2bn for the construction.

AOCB

A question was asked about loft extensions in a flatted development. It was noted that outside conservation areas it could be permitted development.

Next meeting - Monday 15 April 2024

Alan Denham

Secretary

Craigleith/Blackhall Community Council

27 February 2024

Annex - Response from Lothian Buses

Thank you for your feedback.

Analysis of passenger numbers on service 43 led us to introduce our new service X47 at peak times, we will of course continue to monitor the capacity and make any changes as necessary.

We are aware that the recent works to change the road layout at Charlotte Square as part of a resurfacing project have interfered with the reliability of service 47 with a lengthy city centre diversion. These works were due to be completed with local traffic management, an addition of an active travel scheme resulted in both an extension to the works and the unplanned diversion for service 47. These works

have now concluded and we will continue to monitor the reliability of services through the new restricted road layout.

The issue of drivers on service 43 failing to stop for school pupils at Stewart Melville College has been brought to our attention previously, and despite checks in person via CCTV and ticketing data we have not been able to find any instances of this happening except where the bus is full to its legal capacity. An additional journey was added to the timetable in September last year to address this capacity issue and whilst we understand that it may be frustrating to be unable to board the first bus, the capacity remains on the second bus (10 minutes afterwards) to cater for these pupils.

The suggestion of an alteration to service 38 is not without merit and indeed we have previously considered such a route. We have not yet taken this idea further principally due to other external factors affecting the route. The diversion via Comely Bank Road and either Fettes Avenue or East Fettes Avenue would take a few minutes longer in each direction and at present the built in recovery time does not contain enough time for us to consider the diversion. As you may know in 2023, service 38 was subject to three separate lengthy diversions due to utility works and this persuaded us not to trial a route change in the Comely Bank area. Currently and forthcoming are emergency infrastructure works at Cameron Toll, utility work at Ravelston and utility work at Robertson Avenue that we are aware of. These type of works are the reason for recovery time and there is no prospect of us being able to eat in to this time at present. This proposed alteration would only be possible by adding additional bus and driver resource into the route and as service 38 requires financial support from City of Edinburgh Council to break even this is not something we can currently consider.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to Lothian and I hope the aforementioned gives helpful background context and information.