

Craigleith/Blackhall Community Council

Annual Report 2023-24

Covering Reports by Chairman, Secretary and Digital Engagement

This report covers the period from April 2023 to March 2024. During the period the key office holders were Stuart Pinkerton, chairman, Alan Denham, secretary, and Grant Roger, treasurer. This report is a joint chairman and secretary report.

The Community Council held face to face monthly meetings in Blackhall St Columba's Church and welcomes the interest and participation by the local community in matters of local concern. Additionally the continued support, presence and advice of the Inverleith Ward Councillors and Police Scotland at the meetings is both appreciated and welcomed.

Planning matters - the community council support local residents where significant developments are proposed generating local concerns and which in the opinion of the community council, could affect nearby residential amenity adversely.

Proposed Nursery Ravelston Park - The proposal to redevelop the existing structure as a new nursery has generated mixed views in the community. A presentation by Blackhall Community Trust in January provided information on the outline of what could be included in a planning application if the City Council was minded to approve the planning permission in principle.

Finance House, Orchard Brae - the Community Council noted the application to change the approved permission from residential to student accommodation.

The report into the examination of the City Plan 2030 accepted the City Council's proposals in the Blackhall and Craigleith area - effectively preserving the open character and open space of sites such as the horse field on Craigcrook Road, Hillhouse Road Woods and Ravelston Park.

Roads and Transport - as in previous years, road issues continued to be a matter of local concern to residents. Speeding, poor road condition including potholes, and blocked gully drains were items raised regularly.

Potholes - The 2022/23 annual report stated - "The poor road condition of various sections of Queensferry Road/Hillhouse Road was noted frequently and it was disappointing to learn that there is no City Council programme of upgrade to address the problems, despite it having the third highest number of defects in the city." It is equally disappointing to report there has been no change, with the exception of resurfacing the Telford Road, Hillhouse Road, Strachan Road junction for an international cycling race. During the year there has also been a significant deterioration in road conditions on other roads in the area eg Strachan Road (resurfaced 4 years ago) and parts of Craigcrook Road.

Bus services - the withdrawal of service 42 by Lothian Buses in September 2022, was followed by the withdrawal of service 41 in spring 2023. The substitution with service 47 removed an essential link to the city centre retail core which is now only served by Lothian Country Buses service 43. The Community Council has written to Lothian Buses expressing concerns about the changes and the reduced accessibility for local residents,

including lack of access to Stockbridge but the response from Lothian Buses has been disappointing so far.

Service 13 is provided with financial support from Edinburgh Council and the current contract is run by Edinburgh Coach Lines. Ahead of re-tendering the contracts, a report to Transport and Environment Committee in November proposed rerouting service 13 up Lothian Road away from the main area of the city centre. The Community Council sent a delegation to the Committee to voice concerns about the proposed rerouting and the further reduction in access to the city centre. After discussion the Committee agreed to maintain the present route.

Experimental Traffic Road Order - the City Council's intention to make the changes on Queensferry Road introduced as part of Spaces for People permanent through an ETRO was discussed at a meeting on March 2023. It was subsequently reported by Council officials that there was a legal error and the details in the ETRO were not all accurate and consultation on the ETRO was delayed. There has still not been consultation in 2023/24 and although concerns about the changes at the Craigeleith Road junction and Orchard Road junction and the possibility of bus lanes being operational 24/7, 365 days a year, to the disadvantage of the local community were submitted to the City Council to meet the deadline, it is still unclear whether the comments are valid.

Craigeleith Drive Tunnel - local residents have expressed concerns about the unsafe nature of the tunnel with shared pedestrian and vehicle space due to the disregard for pedestrians by some motorists. There are also issues of speeding traffic and the use of the road by buses serving The Mary Erskine School. We understand Council officials are looking into the concerns.

Maidencraig Crescent Steps - their location adjacent to specialist housing for the elderly means the steps are used regularly and frequently by elderly residents. With the absence of a ramp adjacent to the steps, there is little alternative but to use the steps to walk to Craigeleith Shopping Centre. A number of residents have however suffered serious falls on the steps.

This was one of the key topics raised at a Community Council meeting in October attended by Councillor Scott Arthur, chair of the Transport and Environment Committee, to find a solution to the problem.

Safety Issues at Strachan Road/Hillhouse Road/Telford Road junction (Farmer's Junction) and Strachan Road/Craigcrook Road/Ravelston Dykes Road - both junctions have generated safety concerns, albeit different issues. At the Farmer's Junction the issue was that it was not treated as one of the 40 major junctions in the city by the City Council, effectively reducing the scope for investment in its upgrading to provide green pedestrian phases on all arms of the junction. The junction has now been added to the list.

At the Craigcrook Road/Ravelston Dykes Road the issue is one of vehicles speeding, ignoring the Stop sign on Strachan Road and on two occasions resulting in accidents at or near the pedestrian crossing, which is well used by children attending Blackhall Primary School. In both cases action by the City Council's Road Safety Team has been sought.

Blackhall Mosque - Parking Issues - although in Blackhall, the Mosque is outside the current boundaries of Craigeleith/Blackhall Community Council, so the scope for action by

the Community Council to support local residents concerned about inconsiderate parking is limited.

Police Reports - the community council welcomes the continued involvement of Police Scotland in monthly meetings. Where attendance was not possible, a written report was provided. Their regular reports have highlighted the overall reduction in crime levels in north west Edinburgh in various categories during the period.

Christmas support - as in previous years, Craigeleith/Blackhall Community Council paid for the Christmas tree and lights in Blackhall Dip in December 2023.

Blackhall Dip Planters - following concerns about the neglect of the planters installed by the City Council as part of the upgrading of Blackhall Dip in 2010, and their current refusal to maintain them, the Community Council were fortunate in the support provided by the Blackhall Horticultural Society to carry out the task. With funding for new plants from the Community Council, the volunteers from the Horticultural Society have made a significant improvement to the planters.

Meetings - meetings are attended by a small but regular number from the community attending the meetings, often raising not only local but significant issues of concern. All members of the community are welcome to attend the monthly meetings at Blackhall St Columba's Church - third Monday of the month (except July).

Engagement - the Community Council does not have an Engagement Officer in post. It nevertheless seeks to fill the gap by using notice boards for dates of meetings, a web site on which the minutes and other information is available, e-mails to residents of forthcoming meetings and the agenda, and when appropriate the use of other social media.

Stuart Pinkerton - Chair
Alan Denham - Secretary
11 May 2024