



Minutes of Meeting, Wednesday 9th February 2022 at 18:30

Boardroom, Edinburgh College Midlothian Campus (Zoom for remote access provided)

Community Council (CC) attendees: Brian Wailes (Chair), Jane Wailes, Robin Barclay (Secretary), Mo Price, Brian Farrell, Christina Harley,

Elected Representatives: Cllr Stuart Mackenzie, Cllr Peter Smail.

Apologies: David McNeill (Treasurer), Alan Symon (Depute Chair), Joy Godfrey, Andrew Matheson, Rebecca Lewis, Cllr John Hackett,

Welcome & Apologies: Brian Wailes (Chair) welcomed all. Apologies were received as above. We noted that Joy Godfrey had attempted to connect by Zoom but experienced technical problems

1 Approval of Minutes: the minutes from the meeting on 12th January were proposed by Brian Farrell and seconded by Christina Harley. It was noted that Luska Jardine was unable to attend to take a provisional minute and Robin Barclay (Secretary) will rely on the Zoom recording to produce a draft minute of this meetings for approval.

2 Matters Arising: None not covered in matters on the agenda. Brian Wailes observed that many issues are discussed prior to meetings by email exchanges, and if those who have taken responsibility for presenting different agenda items could summarise and circulate those prior to meetings less time need be taken in presenting those. Robin Barclay noted that the public meetings are the only official forum where items are discussed, positions taken and voted on where appropriate, and minuted, so while informal information and exchange of views could streamline consideration, matters still need to be formally presented at official meetings.

3 Police Report: We received a quarterly police report from our new community police officers PC Tracy McShane and PC Juan Martinez (published on our website – see [Minutes & Agendas](#) there). Brian Wailes presented this, commenting that our ward mostly has a relatively low rate of crime and a high rate of solvency (approximately 74 crimes have been recorded in the last quarter, of which at the time of reporting 50 have been solved, which is a solvency rate of approximately 67.6 %). PCs McShane and Martinez were unable to attend our meeting but will attend a meeting as soon as they can, to introduce themselves and meet us.

3 Finance: David McNeill had presented by email that since our last meeting the only expenditure was a refund of £82.79 to Robin Barclay for payment of the annual renewable component of our website costs due to expire in early March. He anticipated that he will order a new (second) noticeboard as sourced by Alan Symon as agreed, to be located by Newbattle Abbey Crescent.

4 Planning Matters: Robin Barclay reported that we expect Midlothian's Planning Department to engage with Midlothian's Community Councils to provide guidance and oversight on the production of Place Plans for their areas soon, when they receive guidance on this from Scot Gov. Those Place Plans, when approved by Planning, will be incorporated into Midlothian's new Local Plan. Meantime

the Scottish Government's consultation on their new Planning Framework (NPF4) remains open until March 31 and any individual or group can submit comment. That consultation can be found [here](#) (link).

Robin Barclay also noted that Buccleuch Property, through their agents Progress Planning Consultancy Ltd, have now (January 14 2022) submitted a planning application (ref: [21/00982/PPP](#)) for development of the site at Sheriffhall South owned by Buccleuch Property. This follows the consultation that took place (online) last summer, in which ENCC received a briefing exchange. This is a complex submission which they describe as "hybrid", containing a detailed application for the first phase of the development and an outline application for a later phase. The title of the application is: *"Application for Detailed Planning Permission for the erection of Business (Class 4) development and Drive-Through Coffee Shop (sui generis), with associated car parking, access, infrastructure, and landscaping; and an application for Planning Permission in Principle for Business (Class 4) and Storage & Distribution (Class 6) development - Land at Sheriffhall South Melville Gate Road Dalkeith"*. Both components contain elements which are not permitted under the conditions set in Midlothian's Local Plan (MLDP 2017) for development at Sheriffhall South within the Green Belt, and other policies designed for environmental and green space protection may also be infringed by these plans. Already there is considerable "displeasure" within the community about the planned removal of the western portion of the woods bordering the north side of Melville Gate Road to site units there, overlooking the roundabout on Gilmerton Road at the junction with Melville Gate Road and by the entrance gate to Melville Castle Estate. Those woods presently screen the site from that location and local opinion seems strongly in favour of retaining that screen and the wooded aspect of that location at the entrance to the Esk River Valley and the approach to Eskbank. ENCC have received an invitation from Planning to consult, as have our neighbouring community councils at Dalkeith, Danderhall and Bonnyrigg & Lasswade. Preliminary exchanges of view indicate that all are minded to object, and we should set up a joint meeting (by Zoom) to discuss our approach. We should also encourage individual residents to submit comments directly to planning (at this time 10 comments have been submitted, 9 objections and one factual). To facilitate that Robin Barclay will write a summary to publish on our website where residents can familiarise themselves with what we interpret these plans entail (there are so far 96 documents lodged on the Planning Portal for this application so that needs some interpretation).

Emma Hay (Planning Officer, Planning, Sustainable Growth and Investment Service, Place Directorate, Midlothian Council) has drafted a new version of the Eskbank & Ironmills Conservation Areas Character Appraisal and Management Plan and a briefing meeting (by Zoom) with her was set up jointly between representatives of ENCC and Dalkeith and District Community Council since the Conservation Area overlaps both wards. She commented that as time permits she is reviewing and updating existing published Conservation Area documents. The document was reviewed and both Community Councils found it informative and neither had any critical comment. When asked about the Newbattle Conservation area, where no pre-existing document can be found on the Council's website, she believed that probably none had been filed during any recent previous review process. Since she intends initially to review and update existing documents as and when time permits between other priorities, it may be some time (and effort) before new documents are produced for areas which are not already on file.

While we had representatives of both ENCC and DDC together (above) we took the opportunity to state that ENCC residents rely on many services which are located within the DDCC ward, and that we need to be consulted on these when any are under review. While recognising that we have good relations there is nothing formal, and we should explore some closer liaison with DDCC such as having a representative attend each other's meetings as was done previously. Meantime we asked that where DDCC are aware of any consultations that they are notified of that should also come to the

ENCC community (e.g. schools provision, town centre planning), they bring it to the attention of both ENCC and the consultant.

5 Roads, Traffic & Road Safety. Brian Farrell of ENCC attended as a guest the consultants presentation of their data-gathering assessment for Eskbank Toll presented to Midlothian Councillors. While it had been suggested that ENCC members hold an informal meeting to discuss this after Brian had attended this meeting, Brian stated that while the consultants came up with various suggestions no feasible solutions were presented and it would be necessary for the consultants to “go back to the drawing board”, so there was little to discuss.

Brian has obtained various figures for recent speed surveys on the roads leading to Eskbank Toll. It was noted that traffic appears to be using the Toll to avoid the A7 congestion via Harden Green, Melville Dykes and Gilmerton Road roundabouts, and while speed checks provide some temporary resolution of speeding such enforcement does not cure it, and only physical measures (e.g. road markings, lane narrowing) might mitigate on a more permanent basis.

Brian also noted that Midlothian Council has supplied the larger “neighbourhood” road grit bin requested for Lasswade Road to serve there and the side roads nearby

6 Active Travel: Neither Alan Symon nor Andrew Matheson was present to present an update, but no-one was aware of anything happening in this context. Andrew will draft a response to the [consultation on active travel by Midlothian Council](#) (link) to submit by the deadline of 25th of February. Brian Farrell commented on aspirational cycle paths for travel between points (and commuting) stating that most existing cycle paths seemed to be “scenic” rather than for getting from A to B.

7 Environment: Joy Godfrey was unable to attend tonight’s meeting but had communicated that she had attended the recent ERIG meeting (January 24th) and had briefly summarised that prior to the publication of the draft minute on [MSP Colin Beattie’s website](#) (link). Joy will also revive a Facebook page that she initiated to provide information and a forum for interaction on River Esk matters with residents and she will supply a link once that page is updated.

Rebecca Lewis attended the recent presentation by the coal authority on work to relieve contamination in the South Esk, and has been in communication with them about how Riverfly on the Esk project might continue to engage through the process. She also met with Forth Rivers Trust to discuss overlaps with the current citizen science project (Riverfly on the Esk) and how they might work in partnership to avoid any repetition. She is currently compiling a threatened wild bee report which she will happily share once it’s completed at the end of March. This will cover the whole of Scotland and aims to be a useful document for local authorities.

8 Communications: It was suggested that we revive using our mailing list now that we can meet face to face as while most residents are aware that we post updates on our website, they may require some regular prompting to look there. Robin Barclay should attend to that.

9 AOB: On discussion of providing defibrillators for public use in the Eskbank and Newbattle area, David McNeil has pursued this and has been advised that around £1000 per defibrillator would need to be raised for each subsidised unit supplied by St Johnm’s Ambulance. There are no Council premises that ENCC has identified in this ward where they might be affixed (and supplied with a small amount of electricity), but an initial approach to Eskbank Trading has indicated that the owners might be willing to have one mounted there, on the external wall for 24h public access. It was agreed that that should be pursued as a start, and we could learn from it. This would be at some distance from Newbattle, and another would be required somewhere there. Defibrillators are likely to already be

located in the ward, e.g. at Tesco's and maybe the Colleges (Edinburgh & Newbattle Abbey) but those may be for use on their premises. We need to ascertain the situation.

Christina stated that our meetings currently occupied the full two hours allocated and left no space for inviting speakers on various topics of interest. It is hoped that pre-summarising and circulating our various agenda matters by email could shorten their presentation at meetings and free up more time for invited speakers.

Cllr Peter Smaill reviewed some of Midlothian Council's budgetary plans for 2022/23. He stated that in his opinion it was likely that a rate rise would occur but that it would be kept to less than 3%. However, the longer term financial prospects were not good as since most of the expenditure is obligatory only the non-obligatory services can be considered for any cuts, which may fall heavily on them. He also said that there were increases in wages and materials costs which will contribute to the burden. There was some discussion of increasing sharing of some services with neighbouring Councils such as East Lothian or Borders since Midlothian is a relatively small council to run those on its own.

10 Date of Next Meeting: the next meeting will be Wednesday 9th March at 6:30 pm in the Boardroom of Edinburgh College. We will attempt to provide remote access via Zoom for any invitee uncomfortable or inconvenienced by meeting face-to-face but we cannot undertake to manage that for the public, who we will be happy to meet in person.

NOTE: Coronavirus guidance permits us to meet at Edinburgh College under what rules the College operates at that time. You will probably require a facemask for moving around the building but not in the meeting, and we (ENCC) would be reassured if you would test yourself by LFT before attending our meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm.