



Minutes of Meeting Thursday 9th February.2023 at 18.30

Boardroom, Edinburgh College, Midlothian Campus

Community Council (CC) attendees: Brian Wailes (Chair), Brian Farrell (Depute Chair), David McNeill (Treasurer), Jane Wailes, Rebecca Lewis, Barbara Mackie, Gordon Chisholm

Elected Representatives: Colin Beattie MSP, Cllrs Bryan Pottinger, Peter Smail, Stuart Mackenzie

MLC Representative: Paul Johnson (CLL)

Police Scotland (Dalkeith): Sgt Michele Lindsay

Residents: Phil Rimmer, Lisa Davidson, Billy Hunter

Apologies: Robin Barclay (ENCC), Christina Harley (ENCC) Mo Price (ENCC) Joy Godfrey (Associate) Paul Johnson (CLL)

Welcome & Apologies: Brian Wailes (Chair) welcomed all, Apologies were received as above.

1. **Approval of Minutes:** the draft minutes from the December meeting were proposed by Brian Farrell and seconded by David McNeill.
2. **Proposed Budget Cuts:** Brian Farrell (Depute Chair MFCC) outlined the response by Midlothian Federation of Community Council (MFCC) to the proposed cuts to services by Midlothian Council (MC) to enable balancing of their budget. (There is a shortfall of £14.5million from Scottish Government (SG) and MC proposals outline cuts totalling £7.5million. This shortfall will rise of next 3 years). MFCC's response included a deputation to Midlothian House for the full council meeting, a letter sent to all elected members and to MSPs representing Midlothian and reporting of these by local media. Brian highlighted that the proposed cuts will negatively impact the most vulnerable residents of Midlothian and given the continued shortfall over next 3 years MC may only be able to fulfil its statutory duties. (Details of proposed cuts can be found on MC website). Brian stated that the response by MSPs to the letter from MFCC was poor and disappointing. The letter asked that all MSPs stand up for and advocate on the behalf of residents of Midlothian. He stated that he was very disappointed with the response from Colin Beattie as it was political point scoring/blame shifting and that it is not helpful nor productive in finding a solution to the dire cuts proposed. He pointed out that the Scottish Government, in setting its budget, had set aside £15million to axe peak time rail fares, while vulnerable Midlothian residents were losing vital transport services due to cuts.

Colin Beattie (MSP) clarified that he is not part of the approval process for MC budget. He outlined the difficulties in balancing budgets for both SG and MC and referred to the formula agreed by Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and SG by which the funding is distributed to local authorities in Scotland. He questioned whether the formula remains fit for purpose and suggested that it clearly is not but that it would require an independent review to instigate changes. Colin was asked if he was prepared to lobby for change and he stated that he was and that he is hopeful that there is a willingness to accept changes are required. He stated clearly that there is no more money available from SG but that he is hopeful that MC will be enabled to review how money is spent to assist in budget restraints. Cllr Peter Smail explained that this is the case but that it is a short-term solution.

Further discussion ensued on government choices/consequences and how these impact negatively on Midlothian residents, that there was lack of impact assessments of the proposed cuts, how MC's "net zero target" will be hindered by the proposed cuts, that Midlothian is the fastest growing local authority in Scotland and yet this is not reflected in the funding provided, how the proposed cuts are creating a culture of competition between services affected.

ENCC asked the elected members and MSP to:

- work together, regardless of political allegiance, to find a solution to this dire situation.
- lobby SG to ensure that MC is given sufficient funding to ensure residents of Midlothian continue to receive vital services that are currently at risk

3. **Planning Matters:** There have been no recent planning applications within ENCC ward notified in recent weeks that were of any concern.

There continues to be concerns regarding a site which, although lies in BDCC ward, impacts on a resident within ENCC ward. Despite an enforcement order being served, there has been no clean-up of the "stonemason's equipment and debris. Cllr Pottinger has had contact with the Planning Enforcement officer and the process of enforcement is ongoing. ENCC has also written to BDCC to try to ascertain the status of the pursuit of action on the enforcement order. It was noted that this process is taking a long time. Cllr Pottinger suggested that contact with Planning Enforcement officer may be helpful. ENCC will liaise with BDCC on this.

ENCC wrote to Planning, copied to Environment Health, to ask whether current use of the Squirrel Storage Yard plots off Melville Road (recently granted permission for housing development) is contrary to planning regulations as it appears to be used for dumping waste wood (advertised as firewood for sale) and other building waste, also as a minibus parking depot. No reply received from Planning but Environment Health has deemed this not within their remit despite no visit to the site being made. ENCC replied that it is our opinion they should inspect the site to ascertain if any asbestos is contained within the dumped building materials (response copied to Planning)

4. **Roads, Traffic & Road Safety:** ENCC has drafted a letter which will go to residents who live on Lasswade Road: Bonnyrigg Road: Newbattle Road: Abbey Road: Melville Road: Eskbank Road: asking all to write or email the Community Police Teams expressing their concerns re traffic speeds. This will help to build a case for additional resources to be made. This will be delivered through letter boxes to ensure all residents receive it. It will also be posted on social media.

Speed Policy Consultation: There was a high response to the speed policy consultation with many respondents from Eskbank. The recommendation to MC is that if 20mph trial is to proceed then Eskbank should be included in that trial. SG plan is all urban areas will have 20mph limits by 2025/26.

5. **Active Travel:** Brian Farrell and Gordon Chisholm met with MC Active travel staff (including two Sustran embedded staff members with knowledge of access to funding sources) which was very positive, and both are hopeful that progress will be made on enhancing footpaths and increasing cycle paths and linking new to already existing routes. A follow up meeting will be set up to look at future possibilities and identify possible routes. Update on A7 Urbanisation: Currently funded from Dobbies to Hardengreen, and funding secured for a feasibility study into extending from Hardengreen to Newtongrange with longer term aspiration to continue on to Gorebridge. MC Active Travel Strategy is still being finalised and it will hopefully be published in the summer of 2022.

6. **Finance:** David McNeill (Treasurer) reported as follows: Bank Balance £2696.31. Continuing to set up further signatories and online banking.

7. **Health and Wellbeing:** David McNeill reported that he was still awaiting the elected member's contribution to the funding for the defibrillator to be sited at Newbattle Abbey Crescent area. Both elected members confirmed that funding had been released and David will follow this up. Work is continuing on the materials need to site the defibrillator. A suggestion was made that having a map of all defibrillators in Midlothian would be helpful.

8. **Environment:** Rebecca Lewis outline progress on projects she is involved in.

- Securing 230 trees from a landowner and planting along the river esk and its tributaries which helps the process of the river
- Monthly surveys of the river, looking at river health which is an early warning of something wrong. This is run by the community by volunteers and is a simplified version of what Environment Agencies run. It is the largest in Citizen Sites in Scotland with 16 sites along the Esk with 51 trained volunteers and is something to be very proud of. Benchmarking is underway at 5 sites to identify stresses on the river, results will be shared with agencies throughout Scotland.
- Pollution incident was picked up and relayed between the sites from Penicuik to Musselburgh. All was ok but this identifies that the setup is effective.
- Rebecca has been asked to speak at a conferences in Natural History Museum in London and an international conference in Newcastle where she will be talking about the Esk and what Midlothian have been doing to support it. Raising awareness of all that is taking place.
- Meeting with the coal authorities re monitoring and the restoration that will take place this year.
- Advising groups of residents on health and safety issues around SUDS
- Plans to talk to school children about climate/biodiversity.

Brian Farrell spoke re litter around Edinburgh College. A local resident Lisa Davidson has been liaising with Brian to try to ask the college to encourage their students to use the bins provided. It seems that the majority of the rubbish comes from McDonalds take away. Work will continue with the college. Lisa thanked Brian for his assistance with this issue.

9. Communications:

- **CPR Training:** confirmed date for CPR training. – Tuesday 21st March 2023 with St John's volunteers. Space for minimum 20 people. Pursuing possibility of further 10, if demand dictates and time allows.
Room booked from 6.30 for setting up with training starting at 7pm. College to be vacated by 9pm. Community Councillor volunteers required for helping with teas/coffee and guiding members of public to training room. Requesting posters for publicity from St Johns and will update when further info is received.
- **Hedgehog Highways:** Follow on from previous information shared. Dandara have decided to roll out nationally. This fits with requirements on them under NPF4 to do more for biodiversity in association with developments but Eskbank will be in the vanguard, with the first Dandara Hedgehogs Highways in Scotland at their Eskbank South Development. Christina is working on them to instal at least one before they finish at their Eskbank South development
- **Newsletter:** Assuming we are planning to produce a newsletter this summer, we need suggestions for articles- and volunteers to write them. Around 200-300 words, on issues which will interest residents. Articles will have to be in and finalised by mid-May
Ideas so far are:
Engaging the community in local place plans
Environment: the recurring issues at NAC and what ENCC has been doing
Work of the ranger at Newbattle Abbey and hedgehog highways success
Defibrillators installed and training provided
Anything on Active Travel
Did you know.....(Space permitting): short piece on Anderson – of the Anderson Shelter – and WW2 Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was born/brought up at 21 Bonnyrigg Rd, Eskbank.

10. Next meeting will be held on 9th March @ 6.30pm