

Minutes of the Leith Harbour and Newhaven Community Council ordinary meeting, held at Persevere Room, Leith Community Centre, Kirkgate on Tuesday 24 November 2015 at 7.00pm

Actions and decisions are RED ITALIC UNDERLINED SMALLCAPS. NEM CON means that no-one spoke or voted against a decision.

1 Introductions

D Giles chaired the meeting in the absence of NTBCC's secretary and (until part-way through the meeting) chair.

1.1 Attendance (* = arrived part-way through the meeting)

Heather Ford	LHNCC treasurer	Catherine Devereux	Resident
*Neil Wilson	LHNCC (FOWLB rep)	Fi Dunbar	Resident
*Robert Weir	LHNCC chair	Don Giles	Resident
Bruce Ryan	Minutes secretary	John Glen	Resident
Cllr Chas Booth	Leith ward (Green)	Adrian Graham	Resident
James Harbison	ALDI	James Jopling	Resident
Rob Newton	ALDI	Gillian Meek	Resident/Victoria Primary School parent council
Robert Stoddart	ALDI	Gillean Paterson	Resident
PC Spence	Police Scotland	Jonathan Paterson	Resident
PS Mark Wilson	Police Scotland	John Russell	Resident/FOWL
K Brown	Resident	Ben Salt	Resident
Jackie Bruce	Resident	Aggie Salt	Resident
Kenny Cairns	Resident	Seumas Skinner	Resident
		Malcolm Chisholm MSP	Edinburgh North & Leith (Labour)

1.2 Apologies for absence

Allan Mackie LHNCC secretary | Yvonne Murray LHNCC |

1.3 Meeting arrangements

During the meeting introduction, D Giles reminded LHNCC that it would now regularly meet on the 4th Tuesday of each month in the current venue, but that LHNCC would not meet in December 2015.

2 Minutes of previous meeting (7 October 2015)

2.1 Approval

Approved (proposed H Ford, seconded D Giles, *nem con*)

2.2 Matters arising

2.2.1 Forth Ports Ltd planning application (consent to demolish grain silo at Imperial Dock) – item 4 in October minutes

It was noted that FP has now been granted permission to demolish the silo. However, LHNCC's secretary is attempting to arrange for a FP representative to come to an LHNCC meeting.

D Giles reported that FP's chief executive had spoken at the Leith conference, saying that FP wanted to work closer with the community. However, DG noted that the last time FP had attended an LHNCC meeting was when a biomass plant had planned for this area. DG also noted that FP had (unspecified) plans for Western Harbour – more detail might be available if FP

2.2.2 Fairer Scotland event for CCs – item 5 in October minutes

B Ryan reported that this event had asked attending CC members 3 questions but generated a further 60 questions: Scottish Government is working on these. More information, including a report on the event, is at <http://www.communitycouncils.org.uk/read-the-community-council-fairer-scotland-event-report.html>

He should have added that Y Murray had provided input to the FS process (item 10 below), which he passed on to relevant SG officials, and that he has not been able to find any information on 'local outcome improvement plans'.

2.2.3 Leith town centre supplementary planning guidance – item 6 in October minutes

D Giles reminded the meeting of this item.

2.2.4 Material for website – item 8 in October minutes

See also item 7.4 below.

The meeting was reminded of material needed for the website.

B Ryan reminded LHNCC that he will be away for 6 months in 2016, and so will need a replacement for that time.

2.2.5 Bank of names for Fort area – item 9 in October minutes

ACTION: B RYAN TO RECIRCULATE BANK OF NAMES PROVIDED BY L DUCKWORTH

3 Police report

PC Spence and Sgt Wilson reported as follows

- **Murder in Coatfield Lane:** a suspect has been charged. There is no concern for the public because the suspect and victim knew each other.
- **Legal highs/new psychoactive substances:** They are an increasing problem. Legislation is in progress. Meanwhile Police Scotland (PS) Operation Redwall (a national initiative) is acting on this issue. A seizure order allowing targeting of 5 premises in North Edinburgh led to much material being confiscated.
- PS are working with Edinburgh Council (CEC) on a persistent antisocial individual, who has now been evicted. People evicted due to antisocial behaviour are given 28 days' accommodation by CEC. Youths subject to antisocial behaviour (ASB) orders have reduced their ASB behaviour.
- If residents experience ASB, they should contact PS, housing associations and CEC – they will work together to take suitable action.
- **Operation Rac** targets housebreakings in North Edinburgh. Some suspects have been charged. Some of these have been convicted, others have been bailed subject to staying in their homes. There have been 9 arrests over housebreakers breaking their bail conditions and 223 bail curfew checks in October – these have been effective.
- A typical police day (26 October) included
 - Dealing with a serious assault
 - various domestic incidents
 - searching for a missing person, who then attacked some PS officers
 - PS officers being attacked when they tried to apprehend youths in Cables Wynd House possessing fireworks and setting light to waste bins. Specialist support units helped control this situation: ringleaders were arrested and the fireworks recovered the same day. This made 5 November less of a problem.
- PC Spence is a CEC-funded community police officer (CPO), and hence supports council activities, e.g. on antisocial behaviour issues. However he is first and foremost a policeman.
- While data isn't available, crime involving youths is probably not often alcohol related but alcohol is a big problem in crime committed by adults.
- In a traffic accident on Cockburg St, a cyclist was injured, but no criminality was detected.
- From now on, LHNCC will get a different PS representatives, but mostly these will be local CPOs.

Asked about how crime statistics would be presented consistently, the PS representatives said that they could only report statistics for the areas they used. They reported that averages (April to October): crimes in groups 1 to 4 (violence, indecency, dishonesty and fire-raising) have fallen by 14% over the last 5 years.

Asked about response times for calls to 101, the PS representatives said that calls go to the contact, command, control ('C3') division. It then triages the calls and feeds it out to 'operational' PS officers. A resident reported that a recent 101 call had been answered quickly. An options menu may have helped here.

A member asked about how long it should take for PS to come to take a statement from a witness to an incident.

4 Secretary's report

Secretary absent. DG Giles reported that everything would be circulated by email

5 Treasurer's report

Normal account balance	£ 695.84
Special events balance	£ 880.72
Total	£1576.56

6 Events

DG reported that the secretary had asked him to check with the school representative about details of the school Christmas tree lights switch-on. These included

- Date is 7 December.
- 'Santa' is in place.
- There is an arrangement with ASDA about selection boxes for the children.
- A present is needed for the boy who will switch on the lights. The budget for this needs to be agreed.

- There is no catering this year.
- The school will send out invitations.
- The parents' association will be asked for 15 stewards.
- Collection boxes may be needed but their location is unknown.

It was later agreed that LHNCC can afford around £250 – the usual amount given for Christmas lights, selection boxes for children, a donation to St Johns Ambulance, cost of staging, honoraria, gift for guest of honour (S Burns)

7 Planning

7.1 Tenant Street

This is near the Gaelic School. There is a site visit this Thursday. D Giles will attend.

7.2 West Bowling Green Street

This area is currently unused due to demolition of a small industrial estate. It is in Leith Central CC's area. A currently permitted scheme for 120 houses is economically not viable, so the developers are at the pre-application stage of new plans. Further information is on LCCC's website at <http://leithcentralcc.co.uk/2015/11/17/west-bowling-green-st-development-public-consultation> and <http://leithcentralcc.co.uk/2015/11/19/west-bowling-green-st-development-public-consultation-part-2>. LHNCC members can make individual comments on this application.

7.3 Proposed new ALDI store on Commercial Street

It is noted that Cllr Booth made no contribution to this discussion.

J Harbison, R Newton and R Stoddart, speaking for ALDI, made the following points

- ALDI now has 64 stores in Scotland – it might get up to 100.
- This is a smaller site than normal ALDI stores, having less parking, local footfall (to come from the local area), and sitting in a gap between competitors (LIDL and Co-op). Opening hours would be 8am-10pm.
- Aldi has owned this site for a number of years while they work out exactly what they wish to do with it and iron out design issued with CEC (e.g. window-glazing). There have been many positive comments during consultation so far.
- There have been concerns about the public realm, namely the trees at the front of the proposed store – this would remain a public space. There are overgrown trees here currently, making the area dark and unappealing. ALDI would retain some mature trees and remove others, hence creating an open space linking the store, car-park and residential areas
- The planning application is likely to be submitted in about 4 weeks (i.e. late December 2015)
 - LHNCC's chair noted that LHNCC would not be able to comment on applications submitted at this time because it will not meet until late January. The ALDI representatives offered a delay to the start of the consultation period to allow for this, and to provide to LHNCC any documentation generated as part of the application process. **ACTION: LHNCC CHAIR TO COMMUNICATE ITS MEETING TIMETABLE TO ALDI!**
 - Building is unlikely to start in 2016, and it is not yet possible to predict when the store will be finished.
- ALDI has no policy on parking spaces – numbers are decided store by store according to their contexts. ALDI believes that this store would generate walk-in footfall from the local area and take customers from nearby competitors, hence not engendering much extra vehicular traffic. Were the site to be used for industrial purposes, flats or a hotel, there would be extra traffic. The planning application will include a traffic management proposal.
 - A resident commended the proposed existence of a store that allowed her to walk to it, rather than driving.
 - Another resident noted that this area (especially Commercial Street) already has poor air quality, and suggested that the proposed store would increase traffic and hence pollution. Several residents concurred.
 - Aldi representatives replied that, if safety concerns require, ALDI will recommend a pedestrian crossing. However, they do not own the roads.
 - Another resident noted that the relevant streets are cobbled, so that store traffic would endanger cyclists.
 - Another resident noted that traffic would travel via Dock St, which has on-street parking issues. (It was suggested that civil servants working at Victoria Quay park in these streets rather than using VQ's car-park.)
- Deliveries would occur during business hours, if CEC requires this, and unloading would take place inside the store. It would take around 45 minutes to unload around 30 pallets.

- Store lighting would use LEDs to maximise energy efficiency and minimise light spillage – detail will be in the planning application. Lighting levels would drop by two-thirds when the store is closed.
- A resident requested that the design takes into account that the store would be in a conservation area. The ALDI representatives stated that the design will fit with that of the former bonded warehouses in the area.
- ALDI does not believe that this store will threaten small local shops: it will not have an in-house butcher, baker or café, thus not competing with local equivalents. Also, it may generate extra shopping trips supporting these.
- It was suggested that the proposed store would provide extra access to low-cost alcohol, thus potential contributing to social problems in this area.
- ***ACTION: B RYAN TO EMAIL INFORMATION ALREADY PROVIDED BY ALDI TO LHNCC MEMBERS AND TO ADD TO THE WEBSITE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION RECEIVED.*** (See <https://lhnccl.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/aldi-leith-boards.pdf>.)

7.4 Planning and LHNCC's website

B Ryan agreed to add planning material to the website if it is provided in suitable formats. He is not able to triage full weekly/monthly lists of applications, not least because he does not know the area well enough. He also offered to enable LHNCC's planning convenor to add to the website. The planning convenor offered to send relevant URLs. It was noted that weekly and monthly lists, broken down by CC, are available at <https://citydev-portal.edinburgh.gov.uk/idxpa-web/search.do?action=weeklyList>

8 AOCB

- Cllr Booth, chair of the local Neighbourhood Partnership, requested LHNCC to nominate a successor to G Johnston. ***ACTION: B RYAN TO CIRCULATE A REQUEST TO LHNCC MEMBERS***

9 Date of next meeting

26 January 2016

10 Appendix 1: Y Murray's input to Fairer Scotland process

Thoughts on Improving Local Community Councils: Starting at the Wrong Place?

Our impression is that there is little general awareness of local community councils (LCCs), and that they have little power or influence, these things probably being related. If this is true, then one might expect that they would not necessarily attract the best people to stand as members (why stand for election when you have more chance of making a real difference in some other way?), which would exacerbate the problem as the reputation, or at least profile, of LCCs would suffer. Doing little of interest or consequence does not attract attention, or attracts the wrong kind.

If this is accurate, how does one break this apparently vicious circle? Indeed, can it be broken, or is the whole idea of Community Councils, as they sit within present political structures, flawed? Is it a waste of time and energy tinkering with them if other things need fixing?

While others may argue that LCCs need to be better funded, publicised, etc., we think that the major underlying issue here is the concentration of power in the national parliament and in local authorities (LAs), and that it would be better to break up LAs into much smaller entities (as they exist in France, Germany and Scandinavia, for example, where there is far higher democratic participation) and then devolve more power to these. (See Lesley Riddoch and Paddy Bort's article, '[Size Matters](#)', *Scottish Left Review*, No. 68, 2012, pp 6–8.)

At present it seems there is another vicious circle operating at the local authority level, which also ends up by effectively disillusioning and thereby disenfranchising voters. LAs are compelled to pass on cuts by the Scottish Government (which has been compelled to pass on cuts by Westminster). These massive LAs (in which most constituents will not be able to name one of the councillors who supposedly represent them) then resort to pseudo-democratic exercises, wherein citizens are effectively invited to decide which council services should be axed – a depressing and divisive exercise. What if citizens dispute the need for 'austerity' in the first place, and want a fair system of taxation (properly redistributive taxation on the basis of ability to pay, more of which is set by smaller LAs)? Similarly, central government devolves the power to change business rates to LAs, but only in a downwards direction, effectively dragging them ever further into neoliberalism's race to the bottom – a charade rather than meaningful democracy.

Little wonder people lose faith and interest in politics and politicians. Sadly, this very lack of faith and interest serves to perpetuate present structures, as not only may people be disinclined to vote, but lack of interest leads to lack of knowledge, and the reaching of facile conclusions. Listen to a phone-in programme on LAs and you will hear people say that the last thing they want is more of them, run by overpaid money-grubbing parasites. They may also chant the mantra of the cost-savings and efficiencies that (supposedly) result from amalgamations. Of course evidence seems to suggest that the very things they object to – inefficiency, unaccountability and vast pay differentials – are worse in larger (and more hierarchical?) organisations. The solution is not fewer, ever more remote and unaccountable organisations, headed by a few vastly overpaid individuals, but far more of them, much closer to the communities they should serve, headed by known and approachable people, paid an average salary.

Helpful for structuring these new, smaller and more accountable LAs, would be the lessons that can be learnt from employee-owned companies. David Erdal, in his book [Beyond the Corporation: Humanity Working](#), describes the multiple advantages of giving workers a real stake and say in how the organisations they work for are run. It is not about everyone being consulted on every minor decision. It is about a sophisticated communication strategy and a much flatter pay structure. (Indeed, the ills related to societal income inequality have been demonstrated by Wilkinson and Pickett in their book [The Spirit Level](#) and are also discussed on the [Equality Trust website](#). There is no reason to think that these findings do not also relate to intra-organisational pay differentials.)

In the long run, once LAs are smaller and closer to the communities they serve, when they have more real power (not least over taxation), and when voter apathy is demonstrably on the wane, then it might be worthwhile returning to the issue of community councils, and they too can be structured with the above principles in mind. As things stand, however, is it hard to see them as more than a sham – a pretence at local democracy – and hard to see the whole debate on how to improve them as anything other than a distracting red herring.

Let's start to fix things by campaigning for the break-up of local authorities and the decentralisation of power in general.