

Grange Prestonfield Community Council Chair's Report, January 2013

Membership

Janet Sidaway, who has attended a couple of meetings as a resident, has submitted a c.v. and a request to be co-opted to the Community Council. The Committee are happy to nominate her.

Mansour Ahmadian has not attended a meeting for more than six months, so unfortunately his membership of the Community Council has lapsed. He has been informed

Flooding and Drainage on Dalkeith Road

We have been following up with Bill Elliott of Scottish Water the promise to raise a job for bigger cameras to CCTV the main sewer to check for any defects etc on Dalkeith Road.

We will give a verbal up-date if any information has been received.

Newsletter

Many thanks to all those who helped with the distribution of the Newsletter and a special thanks to Sue for organising this. We appear to have had them all out by early January.

We have had a good response from them, with a number of people writing about the issues raised and expressing interest in the Community Council. I hope we will be able to maintain their interest.

Review of Community Council Scheme

We submitted a response to this on behalf of GPCC. A report was be submitted to Council in December seeking approval for the draft Scheme to go out for a period of statutory consultation.

Areas of the Scheme where revisions have been made include:

- Nominations and elections: The clause 'outwith the Local Government election year' has been removed to ensure CC elections can be held in a three yearly cycle regardless of the timing of the local government elections.
- The clause on the timing of AGMs has been made more flexible to allow, in an election year, for the AGM to be deferred until the first meeting of the CC following the nomination and election period.
- A new clause requiring CCs to demonstrate how they are fulfilling their responsibilities has been added to improve representation and accountability. It is proposed an annual report, newsletters, surveys, websites and use of social media will be evidence.

Other areas of the Scheme requiring further consideration include:

- Role of nominated members and criteria for appointment: CCs are generally supportive of retaining nominated members on CCs with equal voting rights, but concerns have been identified on the role of nominated members and criteria for appointment. CEC intends to strengthen the guidance to improve the nomination and registration process for local interest groups and help to prevent potential conflict of interest issues.
- Enforcement of the Code of Conduct: There is consensus amongst CCs that the starting point for settling disputes should be with the community council. When

disputes escalate beyond this stage the Local Authority can be approached. CCs are broadly in favour of an enforceable Model Code of Conduct for Community Councillors, with an independent and simple enforcement and appeals mechanism. This is a National issue which is being considered by the Scottish Government Short Life Working Group on community councils. It is intended that a guidance note will be developed with CCs to take account of the findings of this group.

The current revision does not include a definition of an eligible local interest group, which is something we originally asked for. This is however in the form a group must complete; we think this should be included in the Scheme.

Recommendation: We are in favour of the reviewed Scheme, subject to the point about the definition of eligible local interest groups.

Licensing Application

There has been an application at 1 Summerhall, which is now the Richard de Marco arts venue, to “Include dance facilities, theatre and films, increase capacity to 1988 and to include additional buildings within licensed area.” This is just to the north of our area, so the Community Council should note the application.

Application to Purchase HRA Land

We have been asked to comment on the application by the resident of 37 Prestonfield Gardens to buy a plot of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land next to her property at the above address. It would be her sole intention to use the ground as additional garden. CEC has established it will not be possible to use the ground for any form of development, regardless of size.

Recommendation: No objection

Civic Trust My Place Award

In 2013 a Scottish Civic Trust My Place Award will recognise a building, landscape or public realm project that has had a positive impact in a local neighbourhood and has delivered tangible benefits to that community. We can nominate such a place if we think one is eligible.

John Palmer
Chair