

YOUR COMMUNITY MATTERS

The Newsletter of Grange Prestonfield Community Council Summer 2016

{This is the text-only version}

YOUR COMMUNITY DOES MATTER. WHY NOT GET INVOLVED?

Community Councils are the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland. They bridge the gap between local authorities and communities, and help to make public bodies aware of the opinions and needs of the communities they represent. Grange Prestonfield Community Council is one of the most active in Edinburgh, with representatives from all parts of the area. It meets nine times a year, on the third Wednesday of each month except July, August and December, to represent views of citizens to City Councillors, Council officials, and Police and Fire Services. We believe this really does make a difference.

Anyone resident in the area, and on the electoral roll, can stand for election either in an individual capacity or as a member of a recognised local interest group. Elections are coming up in September: why don't you stand for election, or perhaps you know someone you would like to stand? In case you are already fed up with too many elections recently, these are not party political elections. You only have to be yourself, and want to make a difference. Once elected, there is a wide range of training available from Edinburgh Council.

More details of what we have achieved, and how to get involved, can be found in this newsletter delivered to all residents in the area.

You can also see our website - www.gp-cc.org.uk - or the Scottish Community Councils website - www.communitycouncils.scot

TIMETABLE FOR COMMUNITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2016

Elected Representatives (Max 16)

Monday 5 Sept: Notice of Election (start of nomination period)

Monday 26 Sept: Close of Registration (forms to Returning Officer*)

Thursday 6 Oct: Notice of Poll (if a poll is required)

Thursday 27 Oct: Polling Day (if a poll is required)

Nominated Representatives (Max 8)

Monday 5 Sept: Notice of Election

Monday 26 Sept: Close of Registration (forms to Community Council Liaison Officer or Returning Officer)

*The Returning Officer for these elections is Councillor Cameron Rose, tel: 0131 529 4078. email: cameron.rose@edinburgh.gov.uk

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Janet Sidaway. Email: chair@gp-cc.org.uk

Most of us hate meetings, and all know the joke that a camel is a horse designed by a committee. I felt the same; but my experience at the Grange Prestonfield Community Council has shown me that this is one case where time spent in GPCC meetings is worthwhile. These meetings do make a difference to our community. There is not space in the newsletter to report on the many examples which demonstrate this. Instead, we focus on three areas where the difference is visible: Planning, Roads and Transport, and Newington Cemetery. Planning decisions have a huge impact on our environment. Tony Harris has worked tirelessly on behalf of the GPCC, and in liaison with local community associations, to vet all applications which affect our area. His vigilance has protected residents from unsightly development and encroachments on precious green spaces; and often drawn attention to anomalies in the way the Council interprets and applies its own regulations. Graham Dann spearheads GPCC's liaison with the Council on Roads and Transport. We all know the damage that potholes do; thanks to his efforts East Mayfield has finally been resurfaced. Newington Cemetery has changed dramatically since GPCC formed its sub-group to restore it in 2013. Now many more people are enjoying this 14 acres of green oasis hidden behind the walls of Dalkeith Road, while overgrown graves have been cleared and are becoming easier to identify, and some grave stones are being re-erected.

GPCC is effective because it operates at four levels. Firstly, at the very local level, it has supported projects such as bulb planting initiatives which have brightened some neglected corners. Secondly, the attachment of the relevant community associations (Craigmillar Park, Blacket, West Blacket, Waverley Park Feuars, and Grange) to the GPCC has improved communication between the various groups within the area we cover, so we are working more collaboratively and hence more effectively. Thirdly, GPCC is a source of two-way communication with the Council and other authorities, supplementing and reinforcing individual concerns on issues such as policing or bin collections. At the fourth level, GPCC liaises with other community councils on wider issues such as regional development, as well as Edinburgh Council issues which affect us all, such as environment policy.

Although I remain sceptical about the value of many of the meetings I attend, in assessing the GPCC's achievements in the last three years, I think that the Community Councillors' time has been well spent.

FRIENDS OF NEWINGTON CEMETERY: Barbara McNaught

Did you know that buried in Newington Cemetery are the famous footballer William Groves who played for Hibs, Celtic, West Bromwich Albion and Aston Villa; William McTaggart who was one of Scotland's finest painters, famous for his Sea and Skyscapes; and the golfer Arnaud Massey, the first non-British winner of the British Open in 1907? There are many other very interesting people buried here, and one of the most rewarding aspects of the work we do is to discover more, and then highlight them at the Cockburn Association's Doors Open Days. This year the Doors Open Day on September 25 will also link into the overall theme of Innovation, Architecture and Design, featuring the architecture of the Catacombs and the Lodge House, and different types of gravestones within the cemetery.

All this has been made possible by the work of a dedicated group of volunteers in conjunction with the City Council. Over the last three years, we have been clearing the Ivy and undergrowth away from graves and the Catacombs. This makes the walks around the cemetery more open and more enjoyable, and can help relatives find graves which had disappeared under shrubbery.

We look forward to welcoming more volunteers to help us enhance this beautiful, green space.

If you are interested in helping, or want more information, please email us at info@newington-cemetery.org.uk or visit our website www.newington-cemetery.org.uk

Successful Grant Application: Friends of Newington Cemetery recently applied for a grant from South Central Neighbourhood Partnership (SCNP), one of 12 such partnerships set up by Edinburgh Council. Last year we received a grant to cover the cost of our new sign, for which we were very grateful. This year, grants were decided on the basis of a system called Participatory Budgeting, in which local residents voted on projects which have been submitted to SCNP. The vote was on 30 April 2016. There was a total budget of £24,000, and SCNP received 21 grant applications, totalling £36,524. Friends of Newington Cemetery submitted an application for £2190 to re-erect the beautiful Fallen Angel in the roundel near the main gate of the cemetery. The roundel is the most distinctive area that people come across on entering the cemetery. We are delighted that we were amongst the 10 to be granted their full request: and that one of the others was a project to restore gravestones in the Grange Cemetery, submitted by the Old Edinburgh Club.

PLANNING MATTERS

Tony Harris. Email: planning@gp-cc.org.uk

In line with Edinburgh as a whole the number of planning applications in our area seems to have increased in the past year, mostly uncontroversial house extensions or creating additional accommodation in an attic. We look at all the applications in the weekly planning lists but in general we limit any comments to those where there could be an impact on our wider community, whether visual, amenity or environmental. During the year we made written representations on about 17 planning applications in our area and one outside but adjacent to it.

Market changes continue to put pressure on some local businesses and during the year has seen the start of work on the student accommodation development at the former Paramount Printers site in Causewayside and planning applications for the Hendry & Macdonald car servicing premises nearby. The small hotel and B&B sector also continues to face pressure and so there have been planning applications to change the Minto Hotel site to housing. We regret the loss of local businesses but these are commercial decisions for the owners facing market pressures. Where this results in the creation of a brownfield infill housing site the outcome can be beneficial and we support this in principle although we may object in detail. It is better to create housing sites through brownfield development than put ever more pressure on the Green Belt and designated Open Spaces.

Much effort this year has gone into dealing with proposals for housing by the owner Miller Homes on the former St. Margaret's School playing field in East Suffolk Road. GPCC attended a formal Hearing in November when CEC refused this application, which led to an Appeal. The Reporter's Decision in April is "minded to grant planning consent" subject to a legal agreement covering the public use of part of the site as open space and other issues, so this is still an ongoing situation.

If you have concerns about a planning application near you, email planning@gp-cc.org.uk

ROADS AND TRANSPORT

Graham Dann. Email: transport@gp-cc.org.uk

Cycle Routes. Over the last two years Community Council representatives have been in frequent discussion with the City Council about the implementation of cycle routes in and near our area, unfortunately delayed by funding limitations.

(i) The 'Quality Bike Corridor', already implemented from George IV Bridge to Kings Buildings, has caused problems to businesses where it passes through Ratcliffe Terrace. Improvements to parking/loading arrangements were scheduled for mid May and are now complete.

(ii) The Marchmont to KB route along Kilgraston Road is now ready for public consultation but, we are told, is held up by lack of resources in the City Council.

(iii) Plans for a Holyrood to Ratcliffe Terrace route, through the Blasket Conservation area, have also been delayed but will soon be available for consultation.

Resurfacing of East Mayfield. Funding we obtained, from the Roads Capital Programme 2 years ago, has now been applied to road resurfacing. However, further applications to have the pavement resurfaced have been unsuccessful.

20 mph Speed Limits. The Community Council was heavily involved in planning and monitoring the Pilot 20mph Scheme which was mainly in our area. Following the City Council decision to roll out 20mph limits city-wide, GPCC was in discussions about which streets should be included and which (eg bus routes) excluded. Needless to say not all our arguments were successful but we made a difference.

Enforcement of the 20mph limits, or lack of enforcement, has been a contentious matter from the beginning of the Pilot Scheme. The Police authorities argued that the limits were not enforceable, either legally or practically. The City Council, in agreeing city-wide roll out, specifically allocated money to fund the training and deployment of police officers to enforce 20mph limits. Following extensive discussions with Police Scotland and City Council, the Community Council believe that obstacles to enforcement have now been resolved.

LOW LEVEL STREET LIGHTING - LOVE IT OR LOATHE IT?

Love it - Less energy consumed, less light pollution - you can see some stars in the sky.

Loathe it - Because the intention is to light mainly the road and not the pavements and front gardens residents may find it difficult to see the lock on the front door, difficult to negotiate the often poorly surfaced pavements, and be unwilling to venture out in the dark.

This is a PILOT SCHEME. At present light levels can only be raised by means of a cherry picker to an individual light. Should the system be rolled out over the city there will be the ability to control levels centrally.

The jury is out on this one.

NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY GRANGE PRESTONFIELD COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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