

Minutes of the Corstorphine Community Council Monthly Meeting – Online Tuesday 26 March 2024, 7.00 pm

Attendees (highest number noted as present on call 41)

Councillors: No ward Cllrs present. Cllr Scott Arthur in attendance.

Community Councillors and Associated Groups: Steve Kerr (Chair), Angela Benzies (Minutes), Jonathan Melville, Deborah McCall, Tommy McLean, Margaret Mackay (Scottish Women's Institute) (Note: list incomplete, apologies – please advise of attendance so this may be amended.)

Public: 44 members of the public registered on Eventbrite.

Guests: Cllr Scott Arthur and Martyn Lings, City of Edinburgh Council. Hannah Munro of Northcare and Graham Whitters, Architect, UNUM Partnership, appointed by Northcare.

Apologies for Absence: No apologies received

Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed the guest speakers, members of the public and the Community Council. The Chair made an apology for the absence of meetings in January and February, which was due to the resignation of the secretary following serious online trolling and the resulting necessary consultation with the Council's governance team.

Minutes of Previous Meeting and Declarations of Interest

Those present agreed to assumption that, with passage of time, we can accept these. No declarations of interest.

Corstorphine Connections Update

There will be a one-day local road closure on 5th May to install speed cushions near Corstorphine Primary School. The free taxi service will be operation as No 1 bus will be diverted. The current LTN consultation will run to 8th July. 12-month monitoring will be completed in April/May, reporting to Council committee(s) in September or October. A free bike repair event, hosted by local retailer Hart's Cyclery, is also planned. Roseburn to city centre and Quiet Routes 8 and 9 were highlighted.

Martyn Lings, Corstorphine Connections Project Manager (ML) presented the 6-month monitoring results, starting with objectives.

- Context: compared to 2021/22 there has been a 10% increase in traffic in Edinburgh and 6% increase in West Edinburgh.
- Speeds coming down in some areas, but increased on Station Road and Broomhall Crescent.
- Decrease in walking including Lampacre Road though increases noted where footpaths had been widened.
- Decrease in cycling.
- The effect of poor weather and daylight hours to be considered in observations.
- Air quality improvements thought to be due to fleet changes rather than the LTN.

Discussion

There were concerns about not the statistics not comparing like for like, especially in relation to pandemic conditions in 2021. ML advised further Transport Scotland data due. Issues around pocket park blockages and lack of cleaning were raised. ML reported action on hanging basket contract (now back with Council) to resolve previous complaint.

Quiet Routes 8 and 9 badly need resurfacing, especially in Meadowhouse Rd. Concerns about the previous audit of LTN outcomes and outstanding actions. Saughton Rd North tactile paving size will be addressed if the scheme becomes permanent. 'Dragon's teeth' on speed bumps may be covered in April works. ML referred to website summary for details of planned responses.

24 counts on LTN and boundaries indicates that the traffic has gone up. Proportion of children showing a rise but 2 is not considered statistically valid and there is under 2% increase from both schools combined. It was said that there was a 'positive spin' but some findings have been ignored.

ML clarified that the Council was not applying the 6% as a correction factor. Active travel to the primary schools only shows so much as modes of travel can change daily and for a variety of reasons.

Two questions were raised in relation to the project statistics. 1 – The large amount of money spent on market research could perhaps have been better spent on researching views of every resident. Taylor Mackenzie provided a quote and was used for East Craigs, which is significantly less than what has been paid. It was felt that questions were biased towards behaviour change. 2 – What stops CEC from surveying all residents? ML responded that market research with population samples is an additional way to gather views and that surveys are open to everyone.

The focus on individual streets was noted but that traffic has increased overall so it's not appropriate to cite statistically insignificant data as evidence of success of the scheme. Children not safer overall in terms of increases in walking. Longer journeys and idling were not felt to be good and dissipating traffic more efficiently would be better.

A parent of children in Corstorphine PS stated that there was an increase in traffic around the school that was acknowledged by parents. As a disabled parent, she feels pavements are not safe for her or children and there is limited consideration for disabled and older people like grandparents picking up children from school, with lack of close parking an issue. She suggested speaking to charities representing the disabled. Project did consult the Edinburgh Access Panel but ML would appreciate having information on problems to address anything omitted.

Next steps – April/May monitoring and ETRO complete 7 July and report to relevant committee(s), Transport and Environment and/or Licencing and Regulatory. Request to confirm which committee

Northcare - Proposed Care Complex

Presentation by Graham Whitters. Northcare is established in the Central belt and already has a home in Edinburgh. The company vision is for high-quality, luxury care.

Extant planning consent for the site was the starting point, with the current proposed building design adapting and enhancing this including a reduction in the building footprint and addition of landscaping. Plan is for (predominately) 4-5 stories, with retail units underneath, height varying and stepping down on Manse Road to blend with properties there. Proposing a lower ground floor area for kitchen, plant, staff, and main entrance. There will be three lettable commercial premises plus café run by Northcare, 5 assisted living apartments for over 55s, and 6 wings of 10 bedrooms over three floors, a day space, spa and sensory garden. 10 car parking spaces have been assigned

Discussion

- Car parking allocation considered by some as low for the likely access needs of visitors, staff and visiting therapists, and concerns were expressed about traffic restrictions including for emergency vehicles access during bus gate times. GW stated that Northcare will produce a green travel plan and will organise service vehicle access for times outside of the traffic restrictions.
- Whilst retail units were welcome, some concerns were voiced about the effect on local businesses, and the ability to attract suitable new businesses. High business rates in Corstorphine are a potential barrier so smaller units, below the rates threshold, were suggested. It was confirmed that business servicing and loading would be done from St John's Road.
- Mixed care provision rather than luxury only may be helpful to the area.
- Concern about the café as it may not work as a public space and be subsumed into care home facility.
- In response to queries about taking on apprentices and local recruitment, Northcare stated their history of employing locals.
- Reassurance sought that the development will be high-quality and bring positive change the town centre.

Community Council Scheme Review and Boundary Review

The Chair provided an introduction and update regarding the City of Edinburgh Council's work on Community Council boundaries and the associated Scheme, both of which must be changed at the same time. The aim is to create Community Councils of manageable sizes with boundaries that are easy to understand, hence the proposal for using main roads as dividing lines in the current Corstorphine proposal. 9,600 electors in Drumbrae, whose Community Council no longer exists, also needed to be included in revised boundaries.

The work draws on the number of electors in each area, though there was some dismay that 13-year-old statistics were still in use. Much house building in the west will further complicate the quantifying of new Community Council populations. It was suggested that elector estimates, alongside updated electoral roll information, could be used. It had long been acknowledged that the area currently covered by Corstorphine Community Council is too big, as is the case with some other Community Councils across the city, whose areas are also being split.

A Statutory Consultation of the Scheme for Community Councils and their boundaries ends on 3rd May; all were invited to participate in this consultation, available at the Council website.

Some concerns were raised: the proposed new boundary lines for Corstorphine and how they map to residents' sense of place; the viability of the proposed Gyle CC, which looks small; the need for CCs to be involved in issues of interest beyond their immediate areas; availability of volunteers for the new CCs; plans for publicity.

It was suggested that retaining a sense of remaining in Corstorphine could be achieved by examining, and confirming officially, ways the three new CCs could collaborate, as well as reconsidering the currently proposed names.

Advertising the need for Community Councillors was accepted though acknowledged that the main responsibility for publicity and its cost lies with Edinburgh Council, with our Community Council providing what assistance it can. Local groups such as churches, clubs etc. could be contacted to ask for volunteers, remembering also that some such groups could become affiliated to the new Community Councils in their own right.

The Chair suggested that advertising the fact that CCs are statutory consultees is important and may be helpful in recruitment.

Reports:

Councillor's Reports and Questions

No ward Councillors present

Subcommittee Reports

A paper was provided for planning but discussion on reports deferred to next meeting.

Responding to earlier mention of business rates in Corstorphine, Angela Benzies invited business owners to a Corstorphine Business Community event on this topic on 30th April. She also asked why Corstorphine business rates should be higher than other areas in the city.

Any Other Business

- Residents and businesses struggle to see the endgame regarding traffic restrictions and there is some frustration around the balance of current issues and future developments. Chair referred to Cllr Arthur's detailed presentation at the Edinburgh Association of Community Council event on Saturday 23rd March and suggested circulating that.
- An in-person meeting of Community Council was requested.
- Having ward Cllrs present at Community Council meeting is important in terms of representing electorate views to the Council and progressing actions. We have 6 Cllrs covering the two wards in our CC area.

Date and place of next meeting – Tuesday 16 April 2024, 7 pm online.