

# Minutes of the Corstorphine Community Council Monthly Meeting – Online

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024, 7.00 pm

**Attendees** (highest number noted as present on call was 23)

**Councillors:** Cllr Alan Beal, Cllr Ed Thornley

**Community Councillors and Associated Groups:** Steve Kerr (Chair), Angela Benzies (Minutes), Tommy McLean, Ian Kirkpatrick (Corstorphine Churches Together), Robert Stokes (Forrester Park Residents Association)

**Public:** 19 people registered on Eventbrite

**Guests:** Martyn Lings, City of Edinburgh Council.

**Pre-meeting note:** Community Council has been notified of a site visit in relation to a business development planning application (land 70 Metres East Of 1 Lochside Court Edinburgh). For anyone interested in attending, details are available from the Lead Planning Officer, **Jackie McInnes** by email [jackie.mcinnnes@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:jackie.mcinnnes@edinburgh.gov.uk). The Planning Officer phone number is: **07514 318669**.

**Welcome** – The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Apologies for absence:** Deborah McCall, Jonathan Melville. It was noted that Cllr Scott Arthur had been expected but was not present and the Chair had no further information or apologies.

**Minutes of last meeting:** Approved

**Declarations of interest:** None

## Corstorphine Connections Update

Martyn Lings (ML), Project Manager, presented the update. Cllr Arthur had been due to contribute to this item but was absent.

- Two Bike repair events took place on 20 and 27 April Police near in St Margaret's Park. Hart's Cyclery provided checks and repairs. Police were in attendance.
- ML's presentation on the delivery programme included reference to completed snagging (ponding, dropped kerbs, cycle parking, bollards, speed cushions, re-seeded grass area at Featherhall Ave) as well out noting a few outstanding items including hanging baskets, electronic school signs and additional speed cushions. Noted that the reseeding will take some time to bed in and baskets installation now scheduled for 22 May.
- ML reminded everyone that the consultation is ongoing to **7<sup>th</sup> July** and open to all.
- 12-month monitoring takes place May-Jun 2024
- Reporting to Council in September/October 2024

(See City of Edinburgh Council website for updates and consultation information.

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cycling-walking-projects-1/corstorphine-connections/6>)

## Discussion

Cllr Beal asked **which Council committee will receive the report**. ML stated that the plan is to send this to a new subcommittee of the Transport and Environment Committee (TEC).

A member of the public asked about how pressure may be put on the Council re **improving safety for travel of children to school**, stating that three streets are full of **potholes** so are not safe for wheeling etc. ML clarified that the project funds are not available for road repairs but could come from a separate maintenance fund (Sean Gilchrist, Head of Roads would be the contact person). A system of prioritisation is in action. Not clear how this can be progressed. <https://improvecorstorphine.wordpress.com/2024/03/14/safe-routes-to-school-road-resurfacing/>.

In response to a query **on how will restrictions be enforced**, for example, in relation to brewery and other lorries and speeding, ML informed CC that they were working with police and using speed calming measures including bollards. If there are key places where problems are occurring, please pass details to ML and Council will consider measures such as extra bollards, though it's necessary to achieve a balance between bollards and pavement space. ML will pass on to the relevant CEC team the suggestion of a warden patrol for their consideration.

Given that it is now over 6 months since the first **6 Month consultation** period finished, a member of the public asked: (1) when will the full results be made public and how long will be available for the public to analyse these (2) how does the TEC Convener intend to address the level of dissatisfaction indicated during the consultation (78% objection rate)? ML confirmed publication of detailed results in Sept/Oct as part of paperwork for the Transport & Environment Committee (TEC), with papers usually available a week prior to the meeting. The person raising the query expressed disappointment in Cllr Arthur's absence from the meeting, and felt that the time delay to see the detailed results was excessive. ML confirmed the normal process of reporting one week before the committee meeting. It was asked if ML would enquire about this as there is little time for people to read and respond to results.

A query was raised on **access permits for School Streets** and difficulties with the associated permit Portal were highlighted, those problems acknowledged by the Council. It is not clear who enforces, details of payment arrangements etc. ML was unsure of the administrative details but confirmed that, in principle, access to street has not changed since the initial set-up. ML recommended putting these questions directly to the relevant team. Noted that this was an 'access restriction' rather than a 'parking restriction'. If there are problems with contravention the Council will refer to the police. The Chair requested that ML contact a CEC colleague for information. Chair will ask police re enforcement information for June's Community Council meeting.

#### Other questions and responses

- One person advanced the view that most people on the call feel that the LTN has failed and asked what would it take to cause CEC to change back [to previous traffic arrangements]? ML – the team will review the evidence including survey and consultation information against the project objectives.
- It was said that the current ETRO dates are 24th May to 23 Nov 2024. As work started March it was asked if ETRO will expire in Sept (closure of Featherhall Avenue was before that). ML explained that construction elements are carried out outside of the ETRO period.
- It used to take 10 mins for one person's typical journey but they now feel it is 'a disaster' especially as Station Road was closed but the bus gate had not been opened. ML confirmed that the project team oversees the situation and that the bus gate can be opened when circumstances require it.
- If the bus gate's purpose is school safety, but it is a public holiday and there is no school, then why is it active then? ML highlighted the bus gate's use in reducing traffic generally. Further comments were made by others present relating to the bus gate being controversial, that school/child safety does not come across as not being its primary purpose - otherwise times would be different – but rather that it seems designed to be a more general road block.
- There was a suggestion of a CEC Cllr being ashamed about [traffic arrangements in] Leith including disabled parking arrangements and it was asked why would Council proceed with the Corstorphine scheme. ML confirmed that disability considerations were taken into account but invited additional comments on this. It was said that mobility-challenged people asked for opportunity to represent their views but that this had been denied. ML explained that the market research on a representative sample is different to the consultation which he confirmed was open to everyone. ML not able to comment on individual Cllrs' reported views.
- Featherhall Avenue was said to always a problem but now, whilst trees are in leaf, it is even more difficult for cars trying to pass each other, leading to road rage and dangerous situations. Why is that road the only road in and out, given its layout [bend] and cars being parked there? Previously, a community councillor from that area had observed that Featherhall Ave is probably now worse than it was before the traffic interventions; it was suggested that her input was requested for the June meeting.

- Concerns were expressed regarding what some felt was bias in reporting, especially given that the market survey was not open to everyone. It was confirmed that whilst ML as project manager creates the reports, these are subsequently reviewed prior to release by other council officers including the departmental head.

## SCHEME AND BOUNDARY REVIEW

Phase 2 of the consultation period has closed. Various aspects were addressed including diversity and how it may be ensured. The Edinburgh Association of Community Councils (EACC) has submitted a response. There has been some misinterpretation, for example on whether this work is related to the Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN). The Chair clarified that this is nothing to do with the LTN or CEC's promotion of 20-minute neighbourhoods. Only 5 community councils are affected by boundary changes, Corstorphine being one of them.

9,600 electors from Drumbrae are now being represented by Corstorphine CC in addition to the existing 19,500 electors (based on 13-year-old figures) of Corstorphine. With new housing developments there are now more people and too many for us to represent. The Chair explained that community councils are the lowest level of local government and there is a representational role we need to address, suggesting that about 9,000 electors would be ideal (maybe fewer). The Chair had suggested that the name Corstorphine be included in the new CCs being set up (though not agreed by Council to date); he said that, regardless of final CC names, the boundaries are purely functional and won't stop people identifying as residents of Corstorphine.

In response to queries, the background to the incorporation of Drumbrae was explained. Its Chair had kept it going but needed to stand down and the boundary review was seen as a way to address the viability issues and ensure representation of local issues. In relation to Drumbrae and other areas, the aim of the boundary proposals to date has been to make the creation of the new CC areas as clear and simple as possible, e.g. using main roads such as Drumbrae, Glasgow Road etc. as dividing lines.

Some broadly agreed the proposed three-way split, feeling that smaller areas may actually help engagement, though main road boundaries may break up communities so alternative boundaries could be considered. Education is an important aspect of community and the current proposed boundary changes leave this unbalanced in terms of numbers of schools within the three areas. It was recognised that it was hard to get complete agreement; also, did not wish to convey the appearance of 'gerrymandering'.

Making CC membership more compelling is a challenge for various reasons. At present there are too many people to represent effectively and not enough community councillors in our current set up so change is needed and the debate is about how to do that. There were some concerns about how the proposed actions may reduce the number of volunteers and the split of the current Corstorphine CC team but there was recognition of the need for radical action in the face of what is not currently working. It was generally agreed that engagement of community councillors is somewhat dependent on CEC response - as Council isn't bound to take cognisance of CC views – and CC members need to have the sense that their time and effort is worthwhile.

The Chair suggested that perhaps the important question is '*why should anyone be a community councillor?*' Comparing Scottish CCs and English Parish Councils, the latter have a budget and are responsible for services. Radical change is needed in CC remit and support and discussions with Scottish Government, COSLA etc. are part of this. CCs are the only group with no national body to represent them.

It was suggested by a community councillor that City Cllrs could gather views of people in their wards and represent that to the Council to help make an informed decision on CC operation and boundaries. Concern was expressed about CEC's survey methods generally as these are not felt to be effective in facilitating participant feedback due to a 'tick box' approach. The new CC scheme could go further as the currently proposed change is not seen by some as radical, and there is a need to emphasise the meaningful and influential role of CCs and their members. Some felt that the consultation with the community was poor and didn't reach the people it needed to reach.

Cllr Thornley commented on his experience of parish councils and the difference between them and Scottish CCs. Since Drumbrae closed, he had detected some interest in CCs so would encourage everyone who has strong feelings to get in touch with local Cllrs so they can feed it back. Cllrs have raised support of CCs in their own fora.

Cllr Beal suggested that it would have been stronger to have had a corporate Corstorphine CC response rather than several individual ones. However, CCs do have an influence e.g., in planning decisions where the process requires such input and Council must consider their objections.

It was asked if Corstorphine CC could revert to in-person meetings. The Chair responded that there had been higher and more consistent attendance online. Hybrid meetings had been considered but experience of these is not good; perhaps it need not be exclusively one mode or the other. Teams is now the preferred online platform and facilitates engagement from those in the Council and Police, who are not permitted to use Zoom on work equipment. It was said that CEC officers had come along to Colinton in person meetings. The Chair felt it was much easier to chair CC online, especially when contentious issues were being discussed. He reminded the group that CC meetings were conducted in public, but were not public meetings. Likely to see a mix of engagement mode.

## COUNCILLORS QUESTIONS

**Cllr Beal** – CC elections may take place in September. There are plans to offer training and support, including on demand, and to have an officer oversee the CC function. Some remained concerned about people not feeling attracted to the community councillor role. People were surprised about how **Safer Streets** are being implemented. Will look again at next month's CC meeting. A local traffic improvement scheme fund is available and could provide money for various small-scale schemes (walking, cycling).

**Cllr Thornley** – public exhibition of Maybury Quarter will not happen on 22 May and a new date has not yet been decided. Flood analysis function now has findings and will discuss next steps. Maybury road junction work is due to start in July.

A question on the completion date for the path at the Old Parish Church for **Cllr Davidson** was raised and will be emailed to him.

In response to a question on the Traquair Alley project progress, Cllr Beal mentioned that a local traffic improvement scheme might be helpful. Something was ongoing with Silvan House but details were not clear. It could be helpful if small amount of land could be obtained.

Clarification was requested on School Street communications for Gylemuir Primary School. Cllr Beal stated that residents received letters to inform them of plans, and that flashing lights were being installed.

## REPORTS

**Business** – Angela Benzies reported that the recent business rates meeting was very good, with an excellent presentation from a Council officer which has been made available to members. The group is grateful to Cllr Beal who set this up. Subsequent networking meetings would be focused on social media for business (May) and an input from Business Gateway (June). Request publicising the Corstorphine Business Community to help draw in new members.

'**Friends of St Margaret's Park**' has been recently set up. Andy Wallace provided a link: <https://wp.me/pfowja-G0>. It will be next year before anything happens with the bowling green. Consultation ongoing, closes 8<sup>th</sup> June.

**Neighbourhood networks** funding consultations are ongoing, as are discussions around the Local Improvement Plan. Tommy McLean encouraged all to participate in these. The upcoming Corstorphine Fair was noted, as were some

developments at the Corstorphine Community Centre, which include an area set aside for a dementia group and planning in progress for disabled access.

**Friends of Gyle Park** reported that the path improvement is now complete including signage, a community orchard and bike racks, the latter as part of an active travel initiative. There are outstanding issues re water board works but it is hoped that something will be signed in the near future to facilitate what is necessary. Work continues on improved lighting with recent engineer contact noted.

TM requested information on any **summer activities** for inclusion in the regular voluntary sector leaflet. Refer to the [West Edinburgh website](#) for current information.

#### **AOB**

The Chair confirmed that a Corstorphine CC AGM is not needed. It is likely that August 2024 is our last meeting prior to the CC elections and implementation of boundary changes, not June as originally thought. Date for the June meeting is to be confirmed, possibly late that month, rather than third Tuesday.

**Meeting ended 8:58 pm.**

DRAFT