

CRAIGMILLAR PARK ASSOCIATION

Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 24th June 2020

at 7.30pm via Zoom

PRESENT: Ronald MacArthur (Chair), Christine Simpson, (Vice Chair), Liz Philp (Treasurer & Minutes Secretary), Peter Bottomley, Isabel Clark, Wilma Elton, Simon Gage.

IN ATTENDANCE: Allan Payne

APOLOGIES: Stephanie Bell, Tony Harris, Hilary Vandore.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the committee meeting held on 9th September 2019 at Crawford Road were approved, proposed by Christine Simpson, seconded by Simon Gage.

The Record of Reports submitted for the meeting not held on 5th March 2020 was approved, proposed by Liz Philp, seconded by Isabel Clark.

2. MATTERS ARISING None not dealt with elsewhere.

3. FINANCE & MEMBERSHIP

Liz reported that we have £5,228.41 in our account. Since 5th March payments totalling £179.60 have been made for the Nature Strips.

Membership numbers remain poor. 79 households have paid subscriptions, including 8 new members, but so far 88 households have failed to renew. There was some discussion of this problem, general conclusion being that there is no incentive for people to pay when there are no burning current issues. There were suggestions about more positive projects we could pursue in addition to the Nature Strips, such as clearing up autumn leaves, litter-picking days or cleaning signage. There was a suggestion that since we have plenty of money we could abolish subs altogether and rely on donations for particular issues. However that would mean we lose our database of members' details. It was noted that the Covid-19 pandemic has encouraged more neighbourliness generally and the GPCC has been good at harnessing this. Simon agreed to draw up a Google Doc about the diversification of the CPA into additional activities.

4. WEBSITE and COMMUNICATIONS

Allan reported that there had been a marked increase in views of the website since the beginning of "lockdown". The GPCC website has had a great deal of information on their website relating to the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic, but they are a community group whereas we are a conservation area organisation. It was agreed that the Chair could make a brief report for the website after each committee meeting.

5. CALA HOMES

Committee members had been sent a report on the former Royal Blind School site informing us that Edinburgh Council issued a “Minded to Grant” decision on 6th. August 2019 on the amended planning application submitted by CALA Homes. The decision was subject to a Section 75 Agreement between Edinburgh Council and CALA Homes on, inter alia, financial contributions to certain Council Funds by CALA Homes e.g. Education. The report stated that The Council had advised that agreement was close and therefore full planning consent likely to be issued in the near future, whereupon Royal Blind Association would convey the property to CALA Homes. No date has been given for formal planning consent and no date for when work might commence on the site. Meanwhile the entrance gates to the site are mostly closed and padlocked because of vandalism and other ant-social activity.

6. MILLER HOMES

The new houses on the former St Margaret’s playing field are now called Pavilion Crescent. Residents of Crawford Road and beyond have been having difficulties with one resident claiming that the adjacent green space is private and they should not be there. The CPA are very clear that the Section 75 Agreement must be adhered to and that the public may not be locked out of this landscaped area, which would be contrary to the conditions of the Reporter’s planning decision on Appeal. The problem which seems to have arisen is that Miller Homes are in the process of trying to transfer ownership to a corporate group owned by the owners of the 10 houses who would then be responsible for the maintenance of the area and costs thereof, in spite of the fact that they are obliged to permit public access to the land and the pavilion. Contact in writing has been made by the CPA Chair with one of the owners for transmission of the above to the other owners. A response is awaited.

7. EAST SUFFOLK PARK

A not dissimilar problem has arisen regarding public access to the grounds of East Suffolk Park. The buildings on this site, formerly Halls of Residence, were converted into a large number of flats some years ago. Signs at the entrances to the site actively discourage entry by the public despite most of the roads and pavements having been adopted by Edinburgh Council thus permitting use by the public. There is also a large grassed-over quadrangle in the centre, surrounded by adopted roads or a public footpath. Recently, one of the owners of a property has indulged several times in threatening behaviour in attempts to prevent members of the public from using the roads and pavements and crossing or lingering on the grassed area. CPA was requested by some of its members to object to this on behalf of the public as residents of our Conservation Area enjoy walking there. It is clear that the flat owners - or some of them - are unaware of or choose to ignore the statutory provisions under legislation (2003) whereby “responsible access” to private land must be permitted to the public. What constitutes “responsible access” is complex. However, the CPA Chair is satisfied that the complainants were acting within their legal rights in the circumstances. A polite letter to the Chairman of the Owners Association did not elicit a satisfactory response. As a result, the CPA Chair advised the Enforcement Officer at Edinburgh Council who has responded positively and is investigating. Edinburgh Council is the relevant Authority for enforcing the legislation. We await his report and what action is proposed. Wilma reported that a friend of hers who lives in one of the East Suffolk Park flats told her that the owners pay £2,400 per annum each for maintenance of the grounds and that recently people had appeared with football goalposts and barbecues, so she can understand why residents are aggrieved. Clearly those activities are not “responsible access” but a small boy riding his scooter on the pavement certainly is and excessive threatening behaviour such as this child and his family experienced could be reported to the police.

8. PLANNING MATTERS.

Ongoing applications in the CPA Area (i) Rear of 1 Mentone Terrace: change of use from garage to house - still awaiting assessment (ii) 10 Craigmillar Park, St Margaret's Nursery: erect safety fence around flat roof - this application has been withdrawn.

Several planning applications outwith the CPA area but of interest are (i) Edinburgh University Sports Village and (ii) Student accommodation at 224 -234 Mayfield Road - both of these awaiting assessment (iii) Cinema at Cameron Toll - awaiting decision and (iv) Mayfield Road opposite Mentone Terrace Junction: Proposed 5G Telecom Mast. This last is a proposal for a 20m high monopole mast and cabinets about 1.5m high at the back of the footway by the roofing contractor's building on Mayfield Road. A planning application is required but telecoms companies have some powers about the location of their apparatus. From past experience an application of this type is usually suffixed PNT, on which there is no public consultation period, and it may be ruled as permitted development. GPCC and CPA are keeping a watching brief on this proposal which is still at an early stage.

As always the Chair has been most efficient about keeping committee members informed about all planning applications in our area and the result of such applications

9. NATURE STRIPS

Wilma Elton had made a full report on activities in the Nature Strips which was published on the website. As reported above, under Finance, CPA has recently made payments totalling £179.60 for the purchase of trees and shrubs. Wilma reported that Edinburgh Council have done some work on making trees safe and they hope to return when lockdown restrictions are eased. She reported on the colourful flowering of spring bulbs, followed by woodruff, campion, foxgloves and honesty, now able to thrive due to the removal of the choking laurel and which are visited by butterflies and bees. Wrens, robin and bluetits have been seen, but none seem to have shown an interest in the nestboxes kindly purchased for them by the CPA! Several passers-by have expressed their appreciation of the improvements made to the Nature Strips. Being confined nearer to home has brought more people into their local streets and there has been much to admire.

10. AGM

Craigmillar Park Church Hall has been provisionally booked for Wednesday 28th October, but obviously it is unknown at present whether such a public meeting will be permitted by then.

11. NEWSLETTER

At present the annual newsletter is distributed to all households partly to advertise the upcoming AGM. It was agreed that even if the AGM cannot take place a Newsletter would still be desirable. Pete agreed to be the editor. Copy should be sent to him by the end of August. Ron agreed to write an article about the rights of responsible access. Wilma agreed to write an article about Bridgend Farm, Pete and Simon would consult on writing an article on further community activity. Members of the committee will suggest other suitable topics and advise the Chair.

12. OFFICE HOLDERS POST-AGM

Ron had already made it clear he wishes to resign as Chair and Acting Secretary at the AGM. He is willing to write a job description for both posts, the former taking up more of one's time (less than an hour a week) than the latter (variable, rarely more than an hour and a half, very much relies on Tony Harris's knowledge and help). Liz said she was willing to continue as Treasurer, Membership & Minutes Secretary ("so you can't get me for Chair or Secretary" quoth she). Steph is expecting a baby at the time of the AGM so she wishes to retire from the committee. Ron said he was prepared to stay on the committee but felt it better that he should not, so as not to cramp the style of a new chair.

13. BRIDGEND FARM

Wilma drew our attention to the excellent work of Bridgend Farm during lockdown, especially organising the delivery of 1,000 free meals a day and also free bike servicing. Unfortunately our constitution forbids us making donations from funds to charities that are not to do with conservation in our area, but members were urged to look on their website and can make private donations.

14. LOCKDOWN EASING

Isabel had sent out an Email just before the meeting about proposals regarding the easing of lockdown measures affecting the local Minto Street to Bridges corridor. On 18 June the Scottish Government confirmed that, from 29 June, shops with outdoor entrances can reopen. To support this positive change, an initial phase of measures is proposed to quickly address some of the most pressing issues that people and businesses are concerned about - such as the narrowness of pavements and street clutter which cause difficulties in achieving safe physical distancing. In this first phase of proposals they aim to create additional space by widening footways and removing guardrails and street clutter. To widen footways all parking places (apart from loading bays and disabled persons' parking places) will need to be suspended. The second phase of proposals will focus on more strategic and complex measures relating to traffic reduction and aiding cycling and public transport provision. Proposals will also align, where possible, with further announcements around the opening of food and drink establishments. The government will work with business representatives and individual businesses on how measures can best support town centres as part of the city's economic recovery. It is essential that the needs of residents and businesses are taken into account as they progress measures benefitting the health, wellbeing and prosperity of the city and region. The proposed measures are part of an overall emergency requirement to re-designate key parts of the road network to **facilitate safe travel** while meeting physical distancing requirements. Such measures are required urgently to help prevent people from becoming ill or coming to harm by infection from COVID-19 whilst implementing physical distancing requirements. These measures will be implemented under emergency delegated decision-making powers using a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 30th September 2020 - venue tba

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9.00pm