

# Minutes of the 38th Annual General Meeting

held on Thursday 15 November 2007 in St Columba's Middle Hall, Upper Gray Street. This followed an opportunity for residents to explore the inside of St Columba's Church, one of a number of "public" buildings in the Edinburgh area, including several churches of different denominations, designed by Robert Cameron in the late 19th century.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM and reported that there were a number of apologies from residents and Committee members. 40 residents and Councillor Ian Perry were present.

## **1 Minutes**

Approval of the 2006 AGM minutes was proposed by Simon White & seconded by Bill MacDonald.

## **2 Election of Committee**

The re-election of Bob Cupples and Ian Lewis was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Alex Stobart. John Cruikshank proposed to stand down but agreed to be co-opted for a transition period. The Chairman proposed Jennifer Johnston-Watt and Jonathan Cowling as new members, and they were seconded by Bob Cupples and Anne Sturrock respectively.

## **3 Chairmans Report & Matters Arising**

John Cruikshank expressed thanks to David & Catherine Gerrard for hosting the late-summer party prior to their moving away from Blasket. He also referred to the provision of additional resident parking spaces during the year, and mentioned that shared use of paid-parking spaces by residents was planned. Councillor Perry advised that the implementation of this probably required a traffic regulation order (TRO) which could take up to a year. There were questions regarding the introduction of visitor/ tradesman parking provision, as had been introduced within the newly introduced parking zones. Also comments regarding parking permits being issued to residents eligible for University off-street permits, and that expanding existing zones might have been preferable to the introduction of additional zones.

On the planning front the two significant matters remain the former Rowans site, and the Minto Hotel. Contact with Planning earlier in the day suggested no activity for the Alfred Place site, but this news was overtaken by a letter from architects inviting pre-application discussions on a proposal for a combination of a Care Home and sheltered housing on the site. As information is obtained it will be made available and the invitation will be accepted.

The Minto Hotel continues to ignore the requirement to reinstate the grassed area to the front of 16/17, and also to breach the undertakings given to the Licensing Board regarding use of the rear garden. New planning guidelines and regulations are in the process of being introduced, which will enable enhanced enforcement action. Cllr Perry confirmed that the Council is constrained by weak powers, but will aim to tackle flagrant offenders once enhanced powers become available during 2008. In contrast the Craggs Hotel had resolved the previous problem of disturbance to neighbouring residents by introducing strict controls on the use of their beer garden, and closing it at 9pm. The Craggs manager had made contact with residents and no problems have been reported.

Bertram Zank commented or raised questions in respect of recent activity, or applications, in Blacket Place at 30, 32, 19, and 54, and replacement trees required at 13 Dryden Place, and recent tree planting at 21 Blacket Place. In discussion it was emphasised that comments, if any, were submitted on the basis of information available when an application was published, and subsequent changes were not necessarily advertised. Cllr Perry pointed out that Planning staff had limited time and resources, and relied to some extent on issues being drawn to their attention by the public.

The Chairman praised the efforts of the shrubbery working group and drew attention to the framed Highly Commended award in the Community Garden category of the City Council's Keep Edinburgh Growing Garden Competition, and the Certificate of Outstanding Achievement in the Keep Scotland Beautiful Neighbourhood Awards. The meeting applauded these achievements.

Much work had been done by Ray Footman & Karin Froebel in preparing the draft website content but neither was available for the AGM to provide an update. Some concerns have been voiced about potential loss of privacy with a website, and that no formal mandate to proceed had been obtained. The Chairman invited Elspeth Zank to voice these concerns to the meeting, and encouraged discussion. There were suggestions for restricting access to some information by use of passwords, but the majority decision approved of the website on the basis that most of the information was not sensitive, or personal, and was already widely available. There was agreement that printed documents dated quickly and are expensive to produce. Once matters progress a further meeting may be appropriate.

#### **4 Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer reported that the finances were very straightforward this year, but that we have subsequently received a very generous donation of £200 from Belleville Lodge Nursing Home, partly to cover the cost of the "tea dance" programme photographs last year, with the balance for shrubbery activities. Bertam Zank sought clarification about expenditure on the shrubbery project and was advised that it was entirely comprised of bills for plants and compost/ manure. Adoption of the accounts was proposed by the treasurer, seconded by Bob Cupples and agreed by the meeting.

#### **5 Neighbourhood Watch**

Alison Mowat reported that Coordinators meetings had been held in January & November and that we had an excellent working relationship with our Police contact, PC John Leadbetter. There had been a number of instances of burglaries or car damage which resulted in alerts from the Police. These had justified notifications to individual residents and such contact could be simplified to those residents with email addresses if they could be made available. A form for this purpose would be made available after the meeting. Alison also explained the benefits of security marking property and had some pens for this purpose to hand out, along with other useful literature.

#### **6 Blacket Avenue Working Group**

Ian Carter reported that much of the activity this year amounted to ongoing maintenance, but there had been a significant amount of replacement or infill planting. We were now in the fortunate position that all of the beds were largely complete, but this did not mean there was no further work to do. The "competition" entries, and the awards for this year had been referred to earlier, and the Scotland in Bloom one had been collected at a seminar in Aviemore earlier in November. Alison

Morton drew attention to the need to remove a tree growing from the base of one of the junction Pillars.

### **7 Other Business**

Janet Jenkins suggested that the fencing east of 1 Blacket Place required some attention.

Following the business refreshments were enjoyed by all attending.