

Minutes of the 41st Annual General Meeting

held on Thursday 25 November 2010 in the Earthy café in Ratcliffe Terrace

Sadness was expressed at the recent sad loss of Madeleine Mackay, a former Secretary and Chairman of the Association. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM and commented on the excellent turnout of 42 residents.

1 Minutes

Approval of the 2009 AGM minutes, as circulated with the meeting papers, was proposed by Lord Cowie and seconded by Alistair Mowat.

2 Election Of Committee

Three committee members reaching the end of a three years term – Bob Cupples, Jennifer Johnston-Watt and Ian Lewis - were willing to continue and were unanimously re-elected to the committee following nomination and seconding by John Cruikshank and David Stevenson respectively. Stephen Walters volunteered to be nominated and was included in the election process and voted onto the committee. (After the meeting and the speaker's talk Hazel Fletcher expressed an interest in membership and agreed to be co-opted onto the committee.)

3 Chairmans Report & Matters Arising

In looking back over the year Ray Footman emphasised that dealing with the Alfred Place Housing Development had dominated the committee's thoughts and activities. The recent, and still current, variation planning application has resulted in an ongoing need for assessment & representations to the Council rather than merely the monitoring of the construction work which has now commenced. The situation in respect of the 'approved' development is complicated as a result of inaccurate or out-of-date information being posted on the Council website or presented to Councillors, and this is very disappointing. Approval was however given for the construction of 10 houses and 5 flats, which the current variation application seeks to convert to 14 houses.

The Chairman reminded the meeting that the development now in hand in Alfred Place, and which has taken so much of our time throughout 2010, is in fact the third substantive proposal over recent years for redevelopment of the former Rowans Nursing Home site. Over the year the committee had gone to great lengths to keep residents informed about the proposals and to consult everyone so that representations made by the Association reflected their views as closely as possible. Newsletters were also provided to Spence Street residents with the aim of encouraging as many individual representations as possible since that is the basis on which the Planning process operates.

The progress of the process had been recorded in the Annual Report and the detailed representations can be found in the Newsletters. Shortly before work was due to commence on site a variation application was submitted, and is still under consideration by the Council. In addition to replacing the 5 flats by 4 houses the application seeks approval for raising the base-level for building by 200mm across the site, to avoid removal of contaminated sub-soil, plus a further height increase at eaves level for 2 of the houses. As height of the proposed houses in relation to neighbouring properties was a sensitive matter throughout the earlier consultative process the Association has

objected to raising the base height, and has also argued for provision of additional parking. The earliest date on which the proposals can be referred to the Council's Development Management Sub Committee for decision is reported to be 8th December.

Following the preparatory arrangements and a 'dilapidations survey' the builders actually moved on site at the beginning of November. There have been a few initial problems with noisy machinery and actions contrary to the procedures, or working hours, declared prior to work starting, but it is hoped that these difficulties will be overcome. Residents who have concerns can make contact directly with the S1 Developments office and/or raise these with the Chairman or Secretary, or with Austin Flynn who as an Alfred Place resident is directly affected himself.

The time involved in dealing with the Alfred Place development has delayed further action to follow up the 2009 Traffic Survey but this will be considered soon. However the Council is currently consulting on a proposal for a 20 mph Zone pilot project across South Central Edinburgh which includes Blacket. This could achieve one of our aims, a reduction in traffic levels, but there is a restricted budget which does not provide for traffic calming measures. The Council is also consulting on revised proposals for an expansion of the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) to the south & west of Blacket. It was unfortunate that it had not been possible to hold the usual Open Gardens Event but if offers of gardens to visit are received this ever-popular social gathering will be restored for 2011.

Other matters raised were the continuation of garden rubbish collections through the winter on a monthly basis, and the suggestion that the Association explore ways to facilitate and encourage reinstatement of iron railings by obtaining a 'general' planning approval. If this were possible it could reduce costs because improvements to Listed Buildings are free of VAT.

A request was also made for exploration of a pedestrian crossing facility at the junction of Salisbury Road with Dalkeith Road.

4 Treasurer's Report

Ian Lewis explained the financial position as being little changed from the previous year, other than greater expenditure on newsletters and servicing the website. A donation had once again been received from the Strawberry Hill Nursery. Approval of the accounts was proposed by Bob Cupples & seconded by Richard Seligman.

5 Neighbourhood Watch

Alison Mowat indicated that relations with the new Police contacts have settled in but reporting on localised crime information may not be restored. Blacket has experienced serious burglaries this year and serious consideration ought therefore to be given by residents to installing or upgrading alarm systems. Alternatively precautions should be taken to avoid houses appearing to be unoccupied. Advice can be obtained from the Police Crime Prevention Officer David Robertson on 658 5245, or details of alarms companies online at www.nacoss.org Attention was also drawn to a fraudulent scheme directing people to call a premium-rate phone number in relation to an 'undelivered' parcel.

6 Blacket Avenue Working Group

For various reasons there had been little activity this year but fortunately the planting is now mature and self-sustaining.

Following closure of the formal business those present were entertained by a very well-researched but humorous talk by Owen Dudley Edwards about the life and times of Sir Donald Pollock, a former Rector of Edinburgh University who gifted the land and funding for the Pollock Halls of Residence.

Following the business refreshments were enjoyed by all attending.