

Minutes of the 43rd Annual General Meeting

held on Thursday 22 November 2012 in the Salisbury Arms in Dalkeith Road.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to what he hoped would be another enjoyable social evening in what was a new venue for the Association. The very encouraging turnout was estimated to be a total of 80, consisting mostly of residents plus one policewoman, Carol Menzies, a City of Edinburgh Councillor, Cameron Rose, and the local MSP, Jim Eadie.

1 Minutes

Approval of the 2011 AGM minutes was proposed by Hugh Mackay and seconded by Richard Seligman.

2 Election Of Committee and changed responsibilities

The Chairman indicated that he was stepping down as Chairman at the end of the AGM but was pleased to announce that the existing Vice Chairman, Hazel Fletcher, was willing to take on the role. This was proposed by Bertram Zank and seconded by Simon van Heyningen. This was passed unanimously.

The post of ViceChairman would be filled in due course from the new Committee but the other Office Bearers, namely the Secretary and the Treasurer were willing to stay in post. In addition, two existing Committee members, Alison Mowat & Alex Stobart, had reached the end of their three year term but were willing to be re-elected. This was proposed by Alistair Mowat and seconded by Simon White. This was passed unanimously.

Three candidates for the new Committee, Becky Colegrave, Sheila McLeish & Ian Chisholm, were proposed by the ViceChairman and seconded by the Chairman. This was passed unanimously.

3 Chairmans Report & Matters Arising

The report, given below, had been circulated in advance of the meeting but the Chairman highlighted some items - some work in progress; one major success; and one continuing source of frustration. Under work in progress, the Chairman reported that the new 20 MPH speed limits had been introduced in South Edinburgh and some significant improvement on certain roads had been seen. But this improvement was far from universal and one major culprit was the traffic on East Mayfield which could often be seen not obeying the 30 MPH limit far less the new 20MPH one!

An example was given from the floor of a Wiseman Dairy lorry obviously not obeying the new limit. The Association understands that the Police do not have the resources currently to enforce this new limit with the rigour that may be required but the Committee will keep this matter on its active project list. This does not stop any resident from reporting flagrant abuses to either the Police and, in the case of commercial vehicles, to the company involved.

Another partial (and very long delayed) success was the reinstatement of the southern Pugin gatepier at the east end of Mayfield Terrace. This was being done in the week of the AGM but tidying up of the partially repaired pier was still outstanding.

To a well justified round of applause, the Chairman thanked Hazel Fletcher and all of the Jubilee Party team & helpers for what had been a significant social event in 2012. And the weather cooperated in what was one of the wettest years in memory.

The ongoing sore point is the broken down and dangerous condition of the Thrums Hotel wall and the absence of the fence round the open space at the west end of Blacket Avenue. The Committee has spent much time and effort in trying to get some action from the two owners involved namely those of the open space, the City of Edinburgh Council, and the proprietor of the Thrums Hotel. The Committee will redouble its efforts, aided by the help offered by Councillor Rose and Jim Eadie MSP.

“This is my last report as Chairman; it will also be a brief one. The major happenings of recent years, namely the redevelopment of the Alfred Place site and the changeover within the ‘five streets’ (as elsewhere across the South Side) to a 20mph speed limit, dealt with in some detail last year, were completed over the course of 2011-2012.

The main outstanding item has been the repair of the Pugin gate-piers at the east end of Mayfield Terrace where getting some action from the relevant part of the Council and then a job slot within the mason’s work programme took up a good deal of our Secretary’s time. As I write this, work has begun on the southern gate-pier and hopefully will be closely followed by restoration of the less-damaged northern one.

The new event of 2011-2012, which proved to be the highlight of the year was the 3rd June street party, held in Alfred Place, on the occasion of the Queen’s Jubilee. The weather was kind, the numbers attending were high and a good time was had by all. In short, the afternoon was a great success, and that was in large part thanks to the planning and hard work put in by Hazel Fletcher and her team.

I have enjoyed my years as Chairman and the work this involved with my volunteer colleagues on the Committee - in particular, former Secretary Ian Carter and current Secretary Bob Cupples - who have stood the Association in good stead over a period which involved the most significant development within the boundaries for many years past and, hopefully, for very many years to come.”

4 Treasurer's Report

The report is detailed below but the Treasurer also took the opportunity to do some “fundraising” inviting those attendees who had not signed up to paying by Standing Order to do so. He also noted out the kind donation of £50 from the Strawberry Fields Nursery. Acceptance of the report was proposed by Richard Seligman and seconded by Hugh Mackay. This was passed unanimously.

5 Neighbourhood Watch

Alison Mowat spoke to her report which is detailed below. She welcomed PC Carol Menzies and invited any resident to meet with Carol at an informal property security “surgery” during the social part of the evening. She was sorry that our local Safer Neighbourhood Team PC Lynsey Collins was

unable to attend as there was a need for her presence elsewhere but she pointed out that the area had had a relatively good year in terms of reported crimes.

In connection with traffic flows into the area, Alison pointed out that the Police were carrying out a three months exercise of monitoring traffic turning (illegally) right into Blacket Avenue from Minto Street.

Finally she indicated that she will be retiring soon from her role as overall Neighbourhood Watch coordinator. She wished her, as yet unannounced, successor best wishes in the role which has been significantly aided by the team of individual coordinators whom she thanked for the help that they had give to her over the years.

“We had a good start to the year with no incidents being reported to me until the night of 4th March 2012 when there were two burglaries of occupied houses - one at the east end of Mayfield Terrace, and another in north Blacket Place. A car was probably stolen to order from Mayfield Terrace, the thieves having broken in only to steal the car keys. A large TV was taken from the other house, access being gained through a jemmied window – the stolen car may have been used to take away the TV.

These were the most serious crimes committed all year – in at least one case, the thief exited through the front door. The Police advice is to hide car keys, lock the front door securely, and if possible keep expensive articles out of public sight. There was an attempted telephone scam involving a credit card in late August but the recipient of the call did not fall for it. An e-mail warning was circulated on this and other telephone scams. As far as I am aware, no-one in the area has been caught out.

More recently, there have been some break-ins to motor vehicles. Two happened on the same evening – a car was broken into from which a laptop was stolen in Mayfield Terrace and after smashing a window, a sat-nav taken from a car in Blacket Place. Then a campervan in Blacket Place was broken into, the goods rummaged, but nothing taken – it appeared that there was nothing valuable that could be sold on quickly. Police advice is to empty vehicles if possible, particularly of valuable items.

As far as we know, there have been no houses burgled, while the owners have been away this year. And although we have suffered less crime than usual this year, we must still be vigilant against the opportunist, and not lower our guard. I would like to thank my NW team for providing me with the information and for collecting e-mails.”

6 Blacket Avenue Working Group

Having repeated his (universally agreed) frustration at the lack of progress on the Thrums Wall matter, Hugh Mackay invited any questions on the report of the Working Group, which had been circulated and which is detailed below. He invited more volunteers to join the Working Group which was usually to be found on a Saturday morning somewhere in the shrubbery on Blacket Avenue.

In response to the query asking what had been purchased given that it was not apparent, he responded that a large amount of snowdrops, crocosmia and vinca had been planted in the borders and that we expected to see their benefit in the months and years to come.

“There were two main thrusts to our activities in the past year. The first was a major tidy around and to the trees and bushes, mainly in Blacket Avenue but also in Mayfield Terrace. The aim was to lift the canopy and to let more light into the beds and on to the pavements – where possible, we tried to improve the sight lines at road junctions.

The second activity is a longer term one. We planted a lot of snowdrops, crocosmia and vinca – we hope to see the fruits of our labours in the years to come with increased floral ground cover at various times in the year. And we did the never ending chores of clearing rubbish, spreading manure and generally keeping the trees, bushes and beds in as good a state as we could manage.

However we have not been helped by the state of the wall and the fenced area on the south of Blacket Avenue at the entry from Minto Street. We feel that the wall is not only unsightly, it is also unsafe. We are hindered from getting these repaired as we are not the owners of the land affected.

We have tried to persuade the land owners (City of Edinburgh Council) to intervene directly but as yet they have not done so, as far as we are aware. The timber fence, the cost of which was a joint expense between the Association and the Council some years ago, has also not been reinstated. This is not only a depressing sight but it has also hindered planting in this part of the shrubbery.”

Other Business

The issue with Nursery parking raised at the last AGM seemed to have improved following intervention by both the Association and the Police. The latter were also prompt to respond to reports of a car parked on the shrubbery area exposed by the lack of fencing – an elderly man was issued with a parking ticket for doing so.

The Secretary reported that he had had a response on the sequencing of the Traffic Lights at the Mayfield Gardens/East Mayfield junction raised at the last AGM. This has apparently been done as a safety measure to force cars turning west to wait for the traffic coming north on Mayfield Gardens have fully stopped. He also complimented the Traffic Department of the Council in their rapid response to an incident he had experienced with the right turn arrow on the traffic lights at the Mayfield Road/West Savile Road junction.

As a consequence of the taking down of the large tree at 46B Blacket Place which had been affecting the wall of the property, a request was made asking if there was any way in which the advice and guidance could be sought from the Council on trees in gardens in advance of any similar actions in the future. In particular, would there be any possibility of setting up a database of such trees at risk with a suggested maintenance proposed for each. This would be considered along with the ideas of other residents.

In response to a request that the minutes of the Committee meetings be added to the Association’s website (in addition to the minutes of the AGM and the Newsletters), the Secretary indicated that this would be done. This would also address another request which asked for a breakdown of the planning applications made for the area in the previous year. These are listed below against the meeting in which they were discussed.

January:	26 Blacket Place – widen gateway	No objection	Approved
	60 Blacket Place – reinstate railings	No objection	Approved
	46B Blacket Place – additional rooflight	No objection	Approved
	15 Mayfield Terrace – demolish outhouse etc	No objection	Approved
March:	38 Mayfield Terrace – move electricity substation	No objection	Approved
April:	4 Blacket Place - ?	No objection	Approved
	Thrums Hotel – demolished wall	Reported as possible planning breach	
June:	23a Minto Street – modify rear extension	No objection	Approved
	South Gray Street	No objection as outwith Blacket area	
	8 Alfred Place – treehouse/workpod	Objection	Outstanding
	17 Blacket Place – additional offstreet parking	Objection	Refused
September:	23a Minto Street – offstreet parking etc	Objection	Refused
	Draft Planning Guidelines	Comments submitted	Outstanding
October :	No new applications	No action required	n/a

Of these listed applications, three were considered to be contentious. Firstly there was an application to construct a tree house or workpod in the garden of a new property in Alfred Place – no decision has yet been issued by the Planning Department. Two others, both seeking to add additional off street parking, were refused planning permission, namely on Minto Street and in Blacket Avenue.

The Committee are conscious that in the past, some off street parking arrangements were allowed in the Blacket area in the past which would no longer be deemed acceptable but remain strongly of the opinion that this policy is correct. It is only by sticking firmly to planning policies such as this, will the area remain as attractive as it is currently.

Some concern was also expressed that the Council were considering new Planning Guidelines and associated consideration processes which might result in more applications being accepted without having had the previously more rigorous scrutiny by the Council Planning Committee. The Association would continue to monitor this but would encourage all residents to respond to applications made to properties in the area.

An issue with the emptying of bins was raised and Councillor Rose undertook to get this resolved.

Conclusion

The new Chairman took the floor to express the thanks of the all of the residents for the sterling work done by the retiring Chairman. The evening was concluded with an enjoyable social evening continuing the happy precedent set by the Jubilee Street Party.