



ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

1. This is the second annual report of the Northfield and Willowbrae Community Council since its re-establishment in November 2016; there was no annual report in May 2017. Members and office bearers for 2018-19 are listed at the end of this report.

New Partners

2. Our work this year has been invigorated by new partners. We enjoy a close working relationship with Craigentenny & Meadowbank Community Council, useful as local issues do not respect boundaries. This has brought new strength to the work of the Neighbourhood Partnership especially on the Locality Improvement Plan Priority areas of Northfield Grove and Piershill Squares. As the year ends, the Neighbourhood Partnerships have been replaced by Neighbourhood Networks, about which little is known.

3. The Locality structure remains and as a result we have had a couple of meetings with other community councils in the North East Locality – in Leith. We cannot help our community alone when we lie between the vigorous communities of Leith and Portobello.

4. Our projects have been built around working with other local organisations, even though, compared to other areas, there are few based in Northfield & Willowbrae. The schools have been important in this, with Parsons Green and Royal High Primaries much involved.

5. Local traders have also been quietly supportive and we hope to bring them together to prepare for the change in local dynamics which will come from new development either side of London Road.

6. Our members continue to include people with a wide variety of background, skills and ages – the average age is probably below that for most community councils. All members are volunteers and contribute alongside work and family commitments. Work patterns make it difficult for some members to attend formal meetings but everyone has been contributing strongly to the overall effort.

Public Engagement

7. We are in transition: increasingly public services are delivered online and we cannot stand back from that. The formality of meetings is less enticing to communities who can easily have a substantial discussion on social media – sometimes revealing a groundswell of opinion that has no other outlet but also risking creating division. People seem able to say things through a screen that they would not do face to face. We recognise that the online community is an asset but that many people are not connected in that way. Traditional notices still attract an audience.

8. We are conscious that there is a misunderstanding of our role, expecting us to support protest whereas our constitution states that we are:

(a) to ascertain, co-ordinate and reflect the views of the community which it represents, to liaise with other community groups within the area, and to fairly express the diversity of opinions and outlooks of the people;

(b) to express the views of the community to the local authority for the area, to public authorities and other organisations;

(c) to take such action in the interests of the community as appears to it to be desirable and practicable;

(d) to promote the well-being of the community and to foster a community spirit;

(e) to be a means whereby the people of the area shall be able to voice their opinions on any matter affecting their lives, their welfare, their environment, its development and amenity.

9. The constitution thus demands we understand how issues play out for the whole of our community – even those who do not know we exist. We currently have a Facebook following of about 1100 people and an email list of around 100. We cannot be sure of our reach into an area with 11,000 inhabitants and a core concern is to hear the quiet voice above those who make fervent cases.

Work Programme

10. When we were elected we adopted three work strands:

- Planning
- Cycling
- Inclusion

Planning

11. The key document for community councils considering planning issues is the Local Development Plan, now to be called CityPlan 2030. Consultation on this has started leading developers to look for changes that might enable development. One has been first murmurings of possible housing on the margins of Duddingston Golf Course. We were pressed to object to this by local people, even though it is a fairly improbable project, but the CityPlan has been substantially delayed and we need to wait for the next steps.

12. The site on Willowbrae Road, next to the former Mercedes Garage has recently changed hands and we wait to see what the developer, MNM, proposes.

13. Meadowbank The long-running debate on what should happen to the Meadowbank Stadium site (outside our area) resulted in the Council giving full planning permission to the building of a new sports centre. Plans for the remainder of the site, which had alarmed local

people, were withdrawn and replaced in June 2018 with a process of community engagement, centred on a Meadowbank Sounding Board under an independent chair, Keir Bloomer. Various workshops were held and both Craigentenny & Meadowbank and Northfield & Willowbrae Community Councils have been active participants in the rethinking of the site. New plans are expected in mid 2019. Meanwhile the old stadium has been demolished and site preparation for the new centre is underway.

14. We are conscious that the new “Meadowbank Village” will bring change to our community, not least to local shops and businesses. New homes should bring new opportunities.

15. Early in 2019, developers opened pre-application consultation to build new student accommodation at 61-63 London Road, outside our area but the Council required us to be consulted because of the proximity of the site to our boundary. Various drop-in sessions were held by the developer and they twice attended Craigentenny & Meadowbank Community Council to present their ideas and hear comments. We were required under special procedure¹ to hold a meeting to discuss the proposal, which was done on 26 March. The planning application is currently “awaiting assessment” by the Council.

16. St John’s Primary School The new school opened in August 2018 as planned and preparations began to build the new Treverlen Park – the last piece in the Portobello High School decade of debate. By November much of the site had been cleared leaving the shell of the main building of the old St John’s Primary School. Our meetings in 15 November and 13 December heard strong pleas for the Community Council to support its retention, including a proposal from Richard Demarco CBE (a former pupil) to place part of his archive in the building. No such proposal had been heard when the Community Council considered the planning application in February 2018 and it was difficult to see what process would then pause the demolition, let alone fund its refurbishment.

17. On 14 December, the City Council refused an application by a new company, the Association of the Friends of St John’s, for a community buyout citing that there was no evidence of meaningful community engagement in the project. The Community Council was unaware of this proposal. The building was demolished 17-18 December.

1. A common written request (petition), under Paragraph 11(g) of the Constitution, signed by at least 20 persons resident within the community council area to convene a special meeting within 21 days of a request to discuss:

“we believe that the proposal to build student accommodation and other structures on London Road requires wider discussion, given its proximity to many in this CC area. We ask Northfield Willowbrae Community Council to convene a special meeting; to invite the developer and all local councillors to attend and to hold the meeting at Northfield Community Centre”.

18. Treverlen Park On 28 February 2019, the Community Council was required under a special procedure² to hold a public meeting to discuss changes to the design of the Park; these changes not having been made public. A meeting was held in the new St John's Primary School, attended by a wide range of people who heard that virtually all the changes, which had been under discussion internally in the Council, were withdrawn and the park would be built as set out in the planning approval. The construction is well-advanced with the main works likely to be completed in June.

Cycling

19. Our cycling group has been unable to make significant progress to identify safe routes across our area, particularly through Holyrood Park, because of changes in the City Council. It remains a priority and we may need to find new partners for this work.

Inclusion

20. Our main project for the year has been preparation for an event on 16 June to mark Eid. This will engage schools and local groups in an art project. A substantial grant was awarded to our project partner, the Northfield Community Centre, under the Local Events scheme and we have invested £1500 of our funds to assist the engagement of all parts of our community.

Relations with the City of Edinburgh Council

21. We continue to enjoy strong and practical support from the 8 City Councillors whose wards cover our area, at meetings, in the margins and in the Craigentenny & Duddingston Neighbourhood Partnership. It is a concern that the Neighbourhood Partnership is being replaced – mainly as each structural change takes many months to build and begin operating. Much of what we do is achieved outside the formal meetings in public and most is not reported.

22. We have had good engagement with Community Police Officers who keep in touch and often attend meetings.

23. We look forward to the Community Council elections in September-October 2019 and hope that a good number of local people will stand for election to ensure our community is properly supported.

2. A common written request (petition), under Paragraph 11(g) of the Constitution, signed by at least 20 persons resident within the community council area to convene a special meeting within 21 days of a request to discuss:

“that the commitment to provide a skatepark in Treverlen Park should be honoured”

Membership

Sarah	Cleary	
Paul	Dunleavey	
Dave	Ferguson	
Gordon	Macdonald	
Nick	Marshall	
Ian	Murray	
John	Nisbet	Chair (until March 2019)
Geoff	Pearson	Secretary
Samantha	Rutherford	Chair (from March 2019)
Lorraine	Simpson	
Nick	Weech	Treasurer
Bill	Whyte	
Charlie	Wood	

Meeting	School Holidays	Thursday
1		12 September
2		10 October
	Mid-term 11-21 October	
3		5 December
	Christmas 20 December – 7 January	
4		6 February
	7 – 17 February	
	Easter 3-21 April	
	4 May	
5		7 May
	18 May	
6 + AGM		11 June



TREASURER'S REPORT 2018-19

INCOME	EXPENDITURE	
£876.88 CEC Grant	Room hirings	£135.00
	Insurance	£112.57
	Keys Cut	£6.00
	Publicity, Printing	£312.40
	EID Communal art event	£1500.00
	Float, sundry expenses	£74.95
	Facebook, web fees from 2016-17	£216.72
		£2357.64
Opening Balance		£3817.39
Deficit		£1459.75
Paid debts		£121.15
Pre-paid debt		£74.74
Float balance		£25.05
Closing balance		£2136.84