

Councillor Maureen Child writes

✘ Labour Councillor Maureen Child represents the Portobello/Craigmillar ward. She has written to update us on what is happening there.

I recently had a meeting with the growing 'Friends of Straiton Park' about improvements that might be made to this area at the foot of Marlborough Street off the Promenade in Portobello. One of the group – who also belongs to ['Porty Dads'](#) – is getting more ideas through a consultation process. Geoff Lynn has created a mechanism to gather ideas for developing Straiton Place Park. You can add your own input by hitting this [link](#) – the more input the better!

The notes of the meeting are available and some of the [Porty Dads](#) group are meeting with parks design people in the Council to work out a few designs on which we can consult more widely and start to raise the cash to fund our ideas.

On Joppa Quarry Park, I have a consultation (by email and hard copy) out to those living nearby Joppa Quarry Park. The proposal is to re-create the mark-out 7-a-side pitch with goals, that was there before, and also to provide a kick about goals are next to the current playground. I am very much hoping this can be put in place during the current summer holidays.

As a result of sending out a newsletter about progress with the new Portobello High School site on Portobello Park I became aware that the local residents around the park were not being included in this update information. As a result, information is being distributed about the power cable removal and archaeological works about to start on Portobello Park. I have a commitment that this will be the first update of a

series of regular communications to keep near neighbours informed.

As the whole world knows, Edinburgh Councillors had the big Tram Debate and you should know what I did on that, and why. Interesting comments had come back to me from Portobello/Craigmillar constituents on what we should do about trams – half were for some variation on scrapping on the whole project and half in favour of continuing to get the job done. I didn't expect that balance of feedback, given the local media spin.

The Labour Group Motion was defeated, but a total of 31 Councillors did vote to continue to deliver trams for Edinburgh, as the vast majority of us (48/58) promised to do at the May 2007 Election. We disagreed with the Liberal Democrats on which step forward – to Haymarket or St Andrew Square – was the more prudent financially, given the very bad place the project is in now.

Only the Scottish National Party (part of the Lib Dem/SNP ruling coalition) got anywhere close to scrapping Edinburgh's tram project. The SNP Councillors decided to duck the responsibility they were elected to fulfil for the City, as they called for a citywide referendum. By their own admission, a referendum would cost Council Taxpayers £700,000 and take 3 months. Postponing a decision (as the Conservatives and Greens also chose to do) risks taking us well past key deadlines, notably the 1 September 2011. On that 'drop dead' date, all the agreements, put in place through mediation with the tram construction consortium, would fall. As a consequence, we would have pay out (literally) hundreds of millions to the contractor, and have no usable transport asset whatever to show for it. I established that for every £100 million that Edinburgh Council would have to pay, there would be a 45% increase in Edinburgh's Council Tax – meaning your Council Tax bill would more than triple in the year the contractors' bill fell due. That is not a real option, in my

view.

So – I voted for continuation of the tram project and have no doubt that was right for Edinburgh, now, and the only sensible way forward which will have trams serving Craigmillar and Portobello in the longer term.