

Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee 2 August 2011

✘ The Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee of The City of Edinburgh Council met today.

Subjects of note included widening public access to city centre gardens, the council allotment strategy, city-wide cleanliness monitoring and the cycle route between Seafield and the [Royal Botanic Gardens](#).

The first topic under discussion was the Reusable Bag Scheme, in response to a motion by Councillor Alison Johnstone (Meadows/Mornington Scottish Green Group) who said:-“The use of bags is actually increasing, we’re waiting for The Scottish Government to grasp the nettle and be more proactive,” and she added:- “As a capital city we should lead the way. I will continue to campaign outside of the Council.” However the Convener replied that plastic bags are “a national problem” and that he “is satisfied the Council is doing as much as it can at the moment but [the problem] requires national action”.

Councillor Steve Burgess (Southside/Newington Scottish Green Group) commented on his motion for Cycle Improvements, and said:-“Lothian Road should be the focus as it is one of the busiest and most important cycle routes in the city.” He also commented that there was some discrepancy over accident rates and the seriousness of incidents. Burgess reported that the Lothian cycle campaign group [Spokes](#) have claimed that this area has a great concentration of accidents and have complained in particular that some areas do not have cycle lanes.

The Convener responded that this issue “will become part of

the Travel Action Plan, which is due for review”.

Regarding the report Widening Public Access to City Centre Gardens, Councillor Elaine Morris (Forth SNP) said:- “I am really concerned that suddenly we are going to reduce traffic to Charlotte Square. Where are we going to put this traffic?” However Councillor Lesley Hinds (Inverleith Labour) added:- “If we want to try to enhance the West End, then opening up Charlotte Square will give better pedestrian access.” Transport convenor, Councillor Gordon Mackenzie responded:- “My understanding is that this is not a definite proposal and we don’t at this time have a decision or all the information about that”.

Item 10 on the Agenda concerned allotments, the project entitled ‘Cultivating Communities’. Councillor Burgess said:- “Sixty four new plots have been created against demand of nearly 2,500. What more is there we can do?” Burgess brought up the possibility of the council renting agricultural land to get hundreds of people off the waiting list and continued:- “It’s still a massive demand. Maybe we need to look at something radical.” The Convener responded:- “We’ve identified land, mostly council land and there is a lot of demand from communities for community growing schemes. We have a lot of our own land holding and that’s what we are concentrating on.” Burgess added:- “It would obviously have to be on a bus route or accessible by public transport.” Further discussion centred round the council having reduced access to free gardening for the elderly, and coupling that with improved access to potential allotments. This has of course been discussed before at some length, and schemes are in place to allow elderly people to have their gardens done for free by those wanting allotment space.

Regarding a report on the cleanliness of the city the Director for Service to Communities said:- “In the city centre specific efforts are being made to try to curb the problem of waste, such as targeting dog fouling for a specific period of time.”

However, he added:- “What we need is extra resources to tackle specific problems.” There were comments that the main problem with the scheme is inconsistency and inefficiency, Councillor Gordon Mackenzie (Southside/Newington Lib Dem) pointed out that:- “A major part of the strategy is to change behaviour, and expect people to maintain that behaviour”.

Regarding Nine Hour Parking in Zones S1, N2 and N3, Councillor Hinds said:-“I welcome this, as it does make sense for the local area.” But, Councillor Burgess replied:- “If it encourages commuter parking that is against the transport strategy.” One formal objection had been received from [Stockbridge Community Council](#) regarding a potential increase in congestion and pollution. Councillor Mackenzie claimed that there was no evidence that there was an increase in commuting when a similar scheme was put in place in the South Grange area, and he moved to approve the recommendation which was approved.

Many concerns were raised by Councillors over item 20 on the Agenda, a move to permit use of pathways as a Cycle Route between Seafield and the Botanical Gardens. Councillor Morris said:- “My concern is at Arboretum Place, for the safety of young children and cycles. Do we think the principle of sharing pavements with cyclists is safe?” Councillor Stuart Roy McIvor (Inverleith SNP) added:- “It seems like a motorway for cyclists through the middle of Inverleith Park.” He added that he had grave concerns about collisions. On the other hand, regarding part of the pathway at Seafield which is widely underused by pedestrians, Councillor Stephen Hawkins (Portobello/Craigmillar Lib Dem) said “I welcome it being widened to 3.5 m.” In response to these concerns Councillor Mackenzie answered:-“We don’t have enough information to tell us if the end product would be right. We’ve made it very clear that we are not approving this, at the moment. We’re just going through a legal process and working through the design”.

An update was given on the Coates 20mph zone, and Councillor

Mackenzie said:-“What is proposed is a pilot scheme. If the pilot scheme goes well then other streets may be included. The Convener reported that both Lothian Buses and Lothian and Borders Police have raised concerns over the 20mph zone proposals. The Department of City Development have based the project on a similar model in Portsmouth. What is proposed is that there would remain a network to pass through certain streets at 30mph, but those streets that already had an average speed of 24mph when measured would be brought down to 20mph. The Convener said:-“The police have expressed concern over whether the changes would be accepted by drivers, as the police do not have adequate resources to enforce it. It would undermine the credibility of the scheme if people didn't comply. Lothian Buses were concerned that they would have to reschedule the timetable at cost to them. Councillor Mackenzie added that the scheme had broad support from residents and the motion for the 20mph pilot study was approved.

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