

Merchiston Community Council news

☒ Merchiston Community Council met last night at the Eric Liddell Centre at Holy Corner. The meeting was chaired by Mairianna Clyde, and Ed Bewsher was welcomed as the new secretary.


There were about 20 people there in all, including two representatives from Lothian and Borders Police who reported on the crime statistics in the area. Apparently there were 39 crimes in the area since the last meeting which is 8 less than the same period last year, including the theft of two sets of registration plates. However the police particularly want to highlight the possibility of bicycle thefts increasing at this point in the year when students have just moved into new flats. The police particularly want to know if anyone sees any vans going round the area, as this is the way the bikes are stolen. The police also wanted to alert residents to their surgeries that are run at Tollcross Primary School and the Community Centre.

Some disquiet was voiced that there is no longer a localised police newsletter, but the new community officer, Sergeant Stephen Duncan, confirmed that is actively being looked into. The meeting was reminded that if local residents joined the Neighbourhood Watch scheme which is very active in the area then they would be alerted immediately to any local issues.

There was a little discussion of the BBC investigation into possible fraud in The City of Edinburgh Council's department responsible for awarding contracts relating to statutory notices. The council suspended 15 members of staff on full pay some time back. This affects some residents in the area who

have had to repair their properties under the scheme. The police officers confirmed that in the same way as a 'bogus workman' case, this might be a police matter, at least initially.

Finally the police were asked about noise in the area from new students, and they confirmed that this usually tails off after a week or two. Areas such as The Meadows are a focus for some drunken behaviour, but the police are aware of this. Morningside Community Council have a police surgery at the same time as the community council meeting and it was mooted that this would be a good thing to do in Merchiston too.

The meeting was then treated to a lovely presentation from  Pat Bowie who runs the canal-based social enterprise group, [Re-Union](#). The group is run from a temporary office at Edinburgh Quay and does all sorts of things with its boat, including renting it out for parties, and running floating youth clubs, board meetings or first aid training. This is a group which earns its own money as well as receiving some charitable donations which go straight back into the charity. The new boat which they have carries 36 people, and was renovated entirely by volunteers.

The finances of the community council were announced by the treasurer, who confirmed that the City of Edinburgh Council grant this year had been paid in August and amounted to £865.98.

The next item on the agenda was the proposed introduction of 20 mph zones with speed bumps in the area. It has however been confirmed by the council that any such measures are currently on hold, notwithstanding that it was approved by the August meeting of the Transport committee. Apparently there has been some new guidance issued by the Department of Transport regarding traffic calming measures, and road painting is now favoured over speed bumps.

Other matters discussed included the South Central Neighbourhood Partnership and their proposal to simplify their priorities, as well as the change to the format of Neighbourhood Partnership meetings where ad hoc questions from members of the public who attend are no longer allowed. Public meetings appear to have disappeared and themed meetings are being held instead.

Planning matters discussed included the proposal to build a five-storey 220 bed student block on Slateford Road and the future of the Astley Ainslie Hospital. It appears that the NHS have proposed the sale of this facility in 2013 which they hope would generate about £30m of capital income. There was some disquiet expressed over this as the loss of a recuperation and convalescence centre would be a serious loss.

[The minutes of the last meeting](#) held in June were approved.

Finally the meeting discussed the matter of parking, and specifically the City council proposal to introduce 9 hour parking in Merchiston. This is now confirmed as an apparent error by the council although the measure was approved by the Transport committee at their August meeting. It has been confirmed that there are no plans to change the controlled parking zone which could only be altered after public consultation.

Community Councils are all over the city and are in your area. The 41 bodies comprise individuals who are interested in their particular neighbourhood and either want to preserve it or change it for the better. You can get more information about joining in on the [City Council information page](#) but we also have a list of all community councils [here](#).