

Edinburgh councillor blogs – Councillor Maureen Child

Councillor Maureen Child is the Labour representative for Portobello/Craigmillar. Here she delves into her inbox and comes up with loads of local news and goings on for you.

Closing date for entries to the Friends of Figgate Park Photo Competition is tomorrow, Saturday 31 August. See here <http://www.figgatepark.org.uk/photo/>

Joppa Tennis Courts is your local affordable community tennis club, catering for players of all abilities and ages. They are looking to set up a women's tennis team. Link <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195353840514847/>

Last week, the two applications for planning permission for a total 704 housing units, 350 sq.m. retail and managed open space at Little France Park were unanimously refused by Full Council, upholding the unanimous recommendation of the Council's Development Management Sub Committee, after careful scrutiny at a Hearing. You may well wonder how come Full Council gets the final say? The origins of this dates back to when Donald Trump wanted to build his Aberdeenshire golf course. Local Councillors on their Planning Committee had the temerity to refuse his application, on the firm grounds that it was contrary to their approved Local Development Plan (LDP). The Scottish Government changed planning law so that if an application is significantly contrary the LDP, Full Councils must get the last say. I leave you to decide whether or not planning decision-making is thereby improved.

Most of the time, we four Portobello/Craigmillar Councillors work as a team on local issues. But not always. Our Ward colleague Cllr Callum Laidlaw put a Motion to Council last week asking for the Council's cash reserves to grant to The Venchie children's project in Craigmillar for their breakfast club. There was no consultation with anyone on the appropriate use of Council reserves nor the precedent this proposal would set. This Motion gave false hope to a vulnerable local organisation that needs proper community support to meet the challenges, not politicking.

The May 2019 Care Commission report on The Venchie does not make happy reading and their recommendations will be fully addressed, I have no doubt.
<http://www.careinspectorate.com/berengCareservices/html/reports/getPdfBlob.php?id=303217>.

The Council is seeking to provide a universal breakfast club in all primary schools within the school own premises and this area is no exception. Schools pick up child protection issues and deal with them appropriately with direct links to all the right agencies. A child not attending school can be an early sign of something going wrong within the family that calls for timely professional intervention. There are spaces kept free for The Venchie breakfast club children at the universal breakfast club at Middrie Mill and St Francis RC Primary Schools. The Council agreed to ensure that the transition for children and families is as smooth as it possibly can be.

I was sorry I could not be at the event about Portobello Town Hall at Bellfield last Saturday. Cllr Mary Campbell helped organise the event and I gather it went well. We hoped to have the full report on the building's condition by the end of last week, but there is still more survey work to do to scope out and price all repairs that would need done to the building to bring it up to scratch. A report will be going to Finance and Resources Committee of the Council once that report is complete. Research is also being undertaken on the Common

Good status of our Town Hall. All our community efforts will inform how we go forward.

I have also been concerned about the future of historically important organisation and listed building – Craigmillar Community Arts (CCA) and the listed Scottish Episcopal Church Building at 58 Newcraighall Road near Fort Kinnaird. I had concerns over the last few years and particularly in the last few weeks as the CCA charity declared they were out of funds. The CCA lease ended this week and the building closed. I have been in discussions with a Church about the future and am now 99% sure the building will not be sold or demolished, as rumoured. It is very early days and there is a lot of work to do, but I am hopeful we can find a way forward for the growing Craigmillar and Newcraighall communities – and the building. Next year is the centenary of the amalgamation of Craigmillar land into a growing Edinburgh and we hope to be able to mark that 100 years of history appropriately. Watch this space!

The consultation has begun on a new Newcraighall Primary School to accommodate the growing population! <https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/cf/newcraighallschool/>

Tomorrow (Saturday 31 August) is the 10th Annual Big Beach Busk 2019 from 12 noon. Enjoy! <https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/whats-on/things-to-do/all-you-need-to-know-about-portobello-s-big-beach-busk-10-1-4989958>.

Sunday is the Portobello Village Show. Click here: <http://www.the-pod.org/forthcomingevents.html>. Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home also have their annual Open Day 'Paws by the Prom' on Sunday 1 September, 11am – 4pm. More here: www.edch.org.uk/pawsbytheprom. The Edinburgh Shoreline Project will be there giving out their free seaside activity packs for families.

The Community Council (CC) Elections timetable is set and we all have a task to encourage people to stand and local interest groups to register. I am Returning Officer for Craigmillar CC and Cllr Mary Campbell for Portobello CC. We were both at a briefing this week from the elections team about what that will involve. Nominations open on 9 September. Do let us know if you are interested in serving your community in this way or want to ask questions about what's involved. Link here: http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20133/community_planning/730/community_councils

The Brodie Photographs Exhibition starts Sunday 2 September in Portobello Library. There is also a display of Portobello artefacts, ephemera and memorabilia in the glass wall cabinet.

The Opening Preview to the 2019 ArtWalk Party is Thursday 5 September at The Skylark, 243 Portobello High Street, Portobello 6.30pm-8.30pm. The programme is here : <https://www.artwalkparty.co.uk/>

A shout out for our award-winning local Craigmillar enterprise trust Create Opportunities, which is going from strength to strength under Sharron Stanton's inspiring leadership. Explore the website here: <https://cre8te.co.uk/>