**Minutes of Tollcross Community Council Meeting 27 September 2023**

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| 1. Welcome
 | **Present**Members**:** Richard Allen, Roger Colkett, Liz Summerfield, Iain Black, Andy Devenport, Rebecca FairbairnCouncillors: Jo Mowat, Margaret Graham, Police: Cameron Weir and Andrea McKenzie Community Constables from West End Police Station.Student representation: Sonny Scott and Laura Taylor (Edinburgh Student’s Housing Co-op) and Sandy Woodhouse.**Apologies:** Tim Puntiss, Paul Beswick, Fiona Allen, Stuart Tooley. |
| 1. Minutes of last meeting
 | Correction in item 8, rather than “Coffee Beans” it was “Coffee Mill”. The minutes of the last meeting were approved, proposed by Liz Summerfield, seconded by Iain Black. |
| 1. Members
 | No membership issues to discuss |
| 1. Updates
 | **Police:*** **Tollcross Police Report.** The CC confirmed receipt. It was noted that Tollcross is a unique ward, covered by many police stations, with West end officers only able to report on one corner. Officers from Oxgangs police station had planned to attend this meeting but had been delayed by on-going issues in the area.
* **Key issues**. Recently these relate to antisocial behavior from youths, from Princes Street up to Tollcross. Moving into winter with darker nights, further issues of this nature are likely to arise, as are instances of acquisitive crime. The police are keen to hear of any local issues and anti-social behavior hotspots. Shoplifting is less of a problem in Lothian Road than on Princes Street. Work is gearing up for the Christmas markets.
* **Bonfire night.**  Likely to be busy as group mentality encourages escalation of antisocial behaviour amongst youth groups. Tollcross tends to be less affected than other areas, but public order deployment in fire-retardant overalls will be in place, particularly to support other emergency services which can be targets. Bi-laws on public exclusions will be used to disperse antisocial youth will be used as appropriate.
* **Bikes.** Officers present agreed to raise the issue of inappropriately positioned/ strong bicycle lights with their Prevention Team. A balance needs to be found between encouraging the safe use of bikes (including lights) and safety for other road users and it may be possible to add a message on this to wider police communication activity. Officers present also agreed to ask the Preventions Team to contact food delivery operations to remind their drives to adhere to the rules of the road, and not ride on pavements.

**Councillors:** * **Short Term Lets (STL) continues to be a major issue.** The new licensing scheme starts on 1 October. The reaction of STL landlords to the new system is such that the Council approach is to encourage people to register rather than immediately penalizing those who miss the deadline. 1,500 licenses currently being processed. It was clarified that a CLESTL is a type of planning application – Certificate of Lawful Use Existing. Related to this, the rules around licensing for home letting were discussed. There seems to be a loophole around on-going STLs for homes which appears to allow unregistered changes of use. Councillors confirmed this is not possible to address where the property is registered as a primary home – if someone leaves the city for a period of time, but the property remains their primary home, they are entitled to let it out short-term. Should such instances raise concerns for neighbouts, they can raise concerns by reporting it to Planning Enforcement, and asking whether change of use should be explored. CC members agree to redirect members of the community to their councillors if they have specific concerns. Similarly, if neighbours alert councilors to issues of disrepair in properties being proposed as STL, inspections will be carried out as part of the licensing process.
* **Student Housing Crisis.** The magnitude of the experiences related to a lack of access to housing for many of the city’s students emerged at the beginning of the last academic year with many students approaching the Council. The Council has no responsibility for housing students, but it can see that the lack of planning by universities who are increasing student intake while failing to ensure adequate provision of housing is creating a real issue for communities already short on accommodation. The Council has been meeting universities to discuss the issue since the beginning of this Summer Semester trying to build a “Team Edinburgh” approach. The CC discussed the issue around purpose built student accommodation being classed as tourism rather than residential. This had a number of negative consequences, including (i) it’s very difficult for students to gain any tenant rights (technically they’re tourists not students residing for studies), (ii) rent caps do not apply, (iii) students need to move out at the beginning of summer so the accommodation can be used by tourists, which keeps the students transient, unable to become part of their community. HMOs are preferred as these are cheaper (especially given the rent cap) and more secure than Student Accommodation, and stairs prefer long-staying students who become part of the stair community. This is a particularly acute issue in Edinburgh given the high levels of student growth here. **ACTION: Laura and Paul.** Laura has been undertaking research into this issue and will work with Paul to explore how her knowledge can be built into Tollcross Community Council engagement with student accommodation planning applications.
* **The Council’s End of Year Accounts and Audit.** Recently reported, clean audit. It is anticipated there will be a budget shortfall this year.
* **Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC)**. The situation in eight schools is being assessed now. Provision of central government funding to support is under discussion, but it’s likely other Council funded projects will be re-prioritised to cover this additional need.
* **Parks Charging**. This remains an on-going issue for the Meadows Festival, a free community festival organized by a charitable organisation. The Council’s Culture and Communities Committee is looking to raise the cost for using parks which could raise the cost of delivering the Meadow’s Festival by £10k. It was confirmed that the Regulatory Committee will discuss this on Monday and there is a motion underway around which parts of the Meadows can be used (the current lines of where the city center ends means one half of the Meadows is under different rules to the other), which is expected to be passed. There is a consultation on the charges for the use of parks due to report in February, which it was suggested the Meadows Festival use ot highlight their situation.
* **Sexual Entertainment Venues.** The December Planning meeting will cover Sexual Entertainment Venues and Councillors are keen to gain the views in the Ward. **ACTION:** Cllr Mowatt to send the current consultation to the Community Council.
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| 1. Tollcross Matters
 | **The website:** No updates**The Clock:** No updates**Projects:** The CC discussed the paper presented and agreed:* The issues highlighted in Table 1 are correct.
* A pilot project to explore working with Edinburgh’s universities to build CC access to knowledge and ideas for new solutions was supported and members would commit to supporting the student(s) to deliver a successful project. Cllr Mowatt offered to support their access to Council staff and background papers.
* The CC liked the project and wondered if: (i) we can ensure it builds on the current Council project focused on bins, (ii) it would be possible, while keeping the project focused on the specific needs of Tollcross, we can share this work with other CCs in the city, and (iii) focus remains on “value” as a broad term, not just economic value, this is about lessening what goes to landfill as well as lowering costs.

**ACTION:** Rebecca will connect with the University of Edinburgh Business School to progress the project idea. All members who can attend a planning meeting will attend.**Democracy Matters:** Webinar 5 October. |
| 1. Planning
 | No further updates |
| 1. Licensing
 | It is unclear when the Coffee Mill license will be discussed (see August Minutes) |
| 1. AOB
 | No items raisedMeeting closed at 20.25**Next meeting at 19.00, Wednesday 25 October.** **Discussion topic: Membership** |