**Minutes of Tollcross Community Council Meeting 29 January 2025**

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| 1. Welcome, apologies, declarations of interest, health, safety and comfort check | **Present**  Members**:** Paul Beswick (Chair), Richard Allen, Roger Colkett, Iain Black, Rebecca Fairbairn (minutes), Tim Puntiss, Liz Summerfield.  Cllr Finaly McFarlane.  **Apologies:** Andy Davenport, Cllr Jo Mowatt, Cllr Margaret Graham.  The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.There were no declarations of interests. No security or health and safety issues identified. |
| 1. Minutes of last meeting | The minutes of the last meeting were approved, proposed by Paul Beswick, seconded by Tim Puntiss.  No matters arising. |
| 1. Updates | **Councillors:** Cllr McFarlane updated on forthcoming Budget planning in February which will include consideration of Council Tax. The loophole allowing Short Term Lets to operate on Small Business Rates rather than Council Tax, while still using the services covered by the Council was discussed.  The SNP has a wellbeing theme in their budget, details to follow, and this will connect to community centre repairs, including proposals that asset management works are built into budgets to cover basic repairs and upgrades for community use buildings.  A project is being scoped to improve the pavement and boundary walls on King’s Stables Road. Consideration is underway of (at least temporary) re-opening of the entry to Princes Street Gardens from that side, as new approaches to existing safety concerns may have been found.  **Police:** TXCC welcomed confirmation of police attendance at the March meeting but flagged that no one police force only has representation of our area of jurisdiction resulting in patchy provision of information. TXCC discussed the incidence of quad bikes, heavy electric bikes and small engine motorbikes tearing around the area intimidating pedestrians and cyclists on Tollcross roadways and in the Meadows. |
| 1. Community Council Elections | **Process for Community Council operation through the election period:**   * Community Councils will not be dissolved for the election period. They will continue to operate until new members are elected. The Council will appoint a Returning Officer. * Notice of the election will be published on 5 February 2025 and the nomination process will run 6-27 February. This is when you can be nominated to stand for election as a community councillor. Should an election be needed it will be held on 27 March 2025. The new term will begin 28 March 2025 and run for 4 years. * Individuals wishing to stand for election must:   + Reside within the TXCC boundary and be named on the Electoral Register for that area. People under the age of 16 ¾ may not appear on the ER and residency can be confirmed by other means (e.g. school registration).   + Be nominated by a proposer and seconder, both of whom must be on the Electoral Register in the TXCC area. Self-Nomination is not permitted.   + Submit a completed nomination form to the Returning Officer by 27 February. Forms and the nomination submission process details have not yet been released (2 Feb 2025).   TXCC agreed their desire to bring new voices, interests and energy to TXCC. Discussion on how to use the Community Council elections to do that focused on how existing members can realistically engage with the process. It was agreed that:   * Paul or Tim will put information on the website, not Twitter, see AoB. * Iain, Tim and Rebecca, and anyone else with any capacity, will put posters up in the local area. This will include:   + Local notice boards (Iain)   + Local shops, restaurants, pubs   + Fair Rent, Gillespie Crescent Residents Associations, and any other RAs   + Local Schools (George Heriot’s, James Gillespie’s, Boroughmuir High School, Tollcross Primary) asking all to circulate to PTAs etc, and secondary schools to circulate with students over the age of 16 who can be nominated to join Community Councils or to observe meetings) * Rebecca, on receipt of the posters and detail of the process, will consider creating small additional messages that can be attached and provide some more local context.   TXCC key messages for the election (and generally in relation to membership) are:   * We want people to come on to the community council, as members or as observers * We want diversity in our membership to shape the focus of the community council.   TXCC reflected on the lack of public knowledge and understanding of CCs and Councils more generally. |
| 1. Local Place Plan | Active Travel Project present to the February meeting. TXCC discussed issues we anticipate covering at this session. This includes:   * The importance on data on accidents on roads in community council areas being provided for projects like this to ensure (i) the project team understand the dangers that need to be mitigated and (ii) Community Councils can use this data in feeding into these project plans. * While “Active Travel” suggests not using cars, the importance of the quality of roads is key. Some roads in the Tollcross area are in such bad condition that it’s almost impossible to use or cross them on wheels other than cars. Roads need to be in a good state of repair to ensure safe driving by cars and buses – without this no road (or pavement) user is safe. |
| 1. Planning and Licensing | The detail of the Planning Report was discussed. Of note:   * **Short Term Lets (STLs).** TXCC discussed the difference between planning and licensing applications. Planning relates to the property concerned, licensing relates to the individual running the activity. 90% of planning applications for STLs are rejected; 90% of licence applications are approved. Of 230 Tollcross STL planning applications in the pipeline, 140 have been refused. CEC Enforcement Officers are now picking up on STLs that have been refused but are continuing to operate. **Enforcement notices and fines are being issued. TXCC agreed to keep raising known breaches to the CEC. All residents are encouraged to do the same.** * **BT Street Hubs.** TXCC is concerned with BT’s approach to its applications to replace some phone boxes with “digital communication street hubs”. It is understood that BT is offering to remove unnecessary phone boxes (clearing pavement space) in return for the ability to create large hubs in key existing locations. Hubs offer mobile phone recharging and free wifi. They are also electronic advertising revenue generation units which take significant pavement space and do not provide the community service phone boxes were originally given space to deliver. * **Application for an HMO licence for 21 vulnerable adults in Leamington Terrace**. Withdrawn, likely to be resubmitted. TXCC discussed – in line with the views of other TXCC – that there is no issue with the provision of accommodation for vulnerable people, the problem is applications to create and deliver substandard accommodation. * **Scottish Widows redevelopment.** TXCC discussed the importance of protecting cyclist and pedestrian access during redevelopment. Cllr McFarlane has explored this with the CEC (City of Edinburgh Council) following the meeting and confirmed that this is a complicated issue as it relates to private and council owned land. The Council is exploring this issue and Cllr McFarlane will write to the developer personally if the Council cannot engage direct on the matter * Relatedly, the restaurant on the corner of East Fountainbridge and Lothian Road is still operating bright flashing lights despite the rejection of its retrospective planning application. This will be followed up. * **Guidance for Tollcross and planning decisions.** It is now clear that despite Guidance for Tollcross explicitly being against the Change of Use from retail to café in much of the Tollcross area, planning is being granted on the basis of “supporting development”. TXCC notes that this neglects the fact that the area is not underdeveloped and puts visitors interests ahead of the needs of residents.   **Licensing.** A new late night catering application on Lothian Road has been submitted. The consensus in TXCC is that if residents nearby are not objecting, we would not object. |
| 1. AOCB | **Twitter/ X.** It was agreed that Tim will pin a Tweet stating that TXCC will move to Bluesky, and set up an account there.  Meeting closed at 20.40  Next meeting at 19.00, Wednesday 26 February 2025  March meeting will be a welcome meeting for new Community Council members. |