

## Friends of Hillside and Calton Area

### Minutes of Annual General Meeting

held at 6pm on 27th May 2008

at Leith Walk Primary School

#### **Attendance:**

Gavin McNab (Chair); Kate Tomlinson (Treasurer); T.Galloway; Ann Stark; Joan Smith; Jean King; Inge Cellini; Cameron Findlater; Carlyn Meeuwsen; Councillor Maggie Chapman; Rob Hainsworth; Fiona McIntosh; Ronnie Aitken; James Gillies; Richard Nicodeme; Elaine Patterson; Cleo Horsburgh; Brian Horsburgh.

#### **Apologies:**

Councillor Louise Lang; Councillor Deidre Brock; Alistair Cairns (Secretary); Aubrey McNab; Fiona Devlin.

#### **Minutes:**

Kate Tomlinson volunteered to take minutes in the absence of the Secretary. This was agreed.

#### **Office Bearers' Reports:**

Gavin McNab (Chairperson) welcomed everyone to Leith Walk Primary School and spoke to the Chairperson's Report (tabled - see attachment).

In the absence of Alistair Cairns, Gavin spoke to the Secretary's Report (tabled - see attachment).

Kate Tomlinson (Treasurer) spoke to the Financial Statement (2nd May 2007 - 31st March 2008) (tabled - see attachment).

Ann Stark gave a report on her work as our representative at Leith Central Community Council. She has attended meetings over the past year and believes that our involvement with the Community Council is very beneficial and should be continued. Rob Hainsworth reported that he is now a co-opted member of the Community Council and will use the Community Consultation network to keep other community groups informed of issues and events.

Kate Tomlinson agreed to continue as Treasurer, since no-one volunteered for this role. She repeated her request for information about suitable training opportunities.

## **New Business:**

### **Amendment to Constitution**

Amendment re Subscriptions was tabled. Proposed by *Gavin McNab*, seconded by *Kate Tomlinson*. After discussion the following amendment to the Constitution was passed unanimously: -

'Item 5. Subscriptions' will now read as follows

5a) Annual membership subscriptions will be payable each year at rates proposed annually by the Management Committee and agreed at the Annual General Meeting. Membership subscriptions will run from May to April.

5b) Any members not having paid his/her subscription for the current year, within one month of notification of the subscription falling due, shall have his/her name removed from the Register of Members

Brian Horsburgh asked whether children and young people would be eligible for membership of the Friends Group. We agreed that they should be eligible for membership, pay subscriptions and have voting rights like any other member.

Subscription rates for the coming year were agreed as follows: -

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Individual membership | £1 for one year (up to end April 2009)   |
|                       | £5 for five years (up to end April 2013) |
| Business membership   | £5 for one year (up to end April 2009)   |

Additional donations will be gladly accepted.

Current members will be notified (shortly) to inform them that subscriptions are due, and to explain arrangements.

### **Planning and organisation of activity in local green spaces**

Rob Hainsworth proposed that FoHCA seek to develop a programme of activity with support from other agencies (e.g RSPB 'Homes for Wildlife Project'; British Trust for Conservation Volunteers; City of Edinburgh Council) to involve local people in improving our public green spaces i.e. London Road Gardens, Hillside Crescent Gardens and Montgomery Street Park. This could start with litter picking events and lead on to planning and action for all ages to increase the biodiversity and improve the environment of the green spaces. He asked for volunteers to carry this proposal forward over the next year or so, initially by undertaking a site visit to assess possibilities, meet with representatives of the other agencies, and network to involve other local people.

*Cameron Findlater*, *Ann Stark*, *Kate Tomlinson*, *Gavin McNab*, *Ronnie Aitken*, *Elaine Patterson* and *James Gillies* volunteered. They agreed to draw up options and assess feasibility and report back to a general meeting of FoHCA in about 3 months time.

Gavin McNab proposed that we become associates of BTCV (free membership) as soon as possible and that we review this decision and consider becoming paying members in the future. This was agreed and Gavin will apply to BTCV for free membership.

### **Developing a plan for Hillside Crescent Gardens**

Many members expressed their dissatisfaction with the current state of this particular local green space. Issues include

- lack of clarity about the Council's plan for maintenance of H.C.Gardens, and a fear that the plan was not being followed. Gavin will check the detail of the plan with Ironside Farrar
- difficulties created by the division between 2 Neighbourhood Partnerships at London Road. Maggie Chapman volunteered to discuss 'cross-boundary' environmental issues e.g. litter and traffic with Councillors in the neighbouring ward to the south of London Road
- consideration of options for fence/railings/hedge/boundaries to H.C.Gardens, and pedestrian routes through and across the park
- woodchippings from recent tree felling inhibit grass growth
- need to establish good working relationships with known Council contacts so that issues can be raised and resolved effectively
- importance of actively consulting and involving the local community in developing H.C.Gardens. An on-line questionnaire on a FoHCA website could be useful here.

Agreed that the group of volunteers identified (see above) should draw up specific proposals and feasibility studies relating the Hillside Crescent Gardens and report back to general meeting of FoHCA in c. 3 months.

### **Update on Community Consultation**

Rob Hainsworth summarised the history of this short-life independent working group. He emphasised the importance of the developing networks between individuals, local councillors and many local organisations including FoHCA, local School Parent Councils, local Churches, and Edinburgh 7 (our free community magazine). Leith Community Involvement Project has facilitated the process.

The consultation group has prepared and administered a survey to help us understand how local people see the Hillside area and what is needed to encourage positive community development. The return rate has been excellent with a wide range of age groups represented. About 400 completed surveys are now being analysed and some very interesting views are emerging. The Consultation Group is hoping to arrange an event (or events) to present the results of the survey to the whole community and generate discussion about what to do next. After the survey work is completed Rob hopes that the group will maintain it's new networks and remain active, perhaps as a Residents Action Group, carrying forward issues highlighted in the survey responses.

On behalf of the Consultation group, Rob agreed that a presentation of the results of the survey will be made to a future general meeting of FoHCA.

Next meeting of the Consultation group is on 19th June at 8pm in London Road Parish Church Halls (entrance off Easter Road). Interested individuals and representatives of local groups will be very welcome to attend.

### **Friends of Montgomery Street Park**

Gavin McNab summarised the events leading up to the recent formation of the Friends of Montgomery Street Park Group. There are now two Friends groups with an interest in promoting and supporting Montgomery Street Park, and this situation makes communications and planning for the Park fraught with difficulties. However, both groups have the best interests of the Park and its users at heart.

In order to seek a resolution to the current difficulties the FoHCA Office Bearers have discussed the situation with representatives of the Council, who have agreed to facilitate the re-building of positive relationships in this area. The Council officers have agreed to discuss the situation with the Friends of Montgomery Street Park group and to offer (or enable) mediation as appropriate.

Brian Horsburgh brought the issue of an e-mail sent out by FoHCA's Secretary on Saturday 24 May 2008 to the attention of the meeting. Discussion revealed that this communication had been sent out in error and included content from a private email which in no way expresses or represents the views of Friends of Hillside and Calton Area and should never have been sent out on our behalf. Office Bearers of FoHCA apologised for this unfortunate mistake, and agreed to circulate a further apology to all members who had received a copy of the e-mail of 24th May. It was agreed that we will examine our procedures and take any actions necessary to ensure that such an error does not happen again.

### **Website Progress**

Gavin McNab outlined a number of options for developing a website, the funding required and possible sources of such funding. We agreed that funding be sought.

However, Rob Hainsworth highlighted the urgency of FoHCA's need for improved communications and suggested that, in the meantime, he should investigate the suitability of free website templates designed for community engagement, prepare a demonstration website, and report back to the Office Bearers. This was also agreed.

### **Dog Incident in Montgomery Street Park**

Rob Hainsworth reported on the incident (details circulated in advance of meeting), and on changes to the status of the grassy area of Montgomery Street Park as a result of Open Access legislation. Discussion raised a number of possible ways forward including

- contact with other Friends Groups across Edinburgh to ascertain their views on the management of dogs in parks
- consideration of the legal situation and possible changes
- encouragement of responsible dog ownership initiatives, perhaps in other local green spaces such as London Road Gardens
- continuing liaison with the Council

### **Any Other Business**

#### **Forthcoming events**

Leith Neighbourhood Partnership Meeting  
10th June, 7pm, Leith Parish Church

Leith Festival  
Leith Links  
Especially on 7th June