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Queensferry & District Community Council – February 2018 Report

Edinburgh Council Budget

The annual budget meeting of the Council took place last week. As part of the Liberal Democrat Group, we sought to focus money on getting the basics right and those areas where we receive most significant feedback from constituents in terms of poor service.

Given the dreadful state of many roads in Queensferry and Dalmeny, we sought a fivefold increase in the additional money available for maintenance and resurfacing. However, this was not agreed to by the SNP/Labour administration. We fear the limited money available risks meaning the situation will get worse.

We also sought additional money for breakfast clubs, an extension of school lunches for eligible children over the summer holidays and additional investment in parks and green spaces.

Despite overwhelming opposition from local people, as shown through the official Council consultation, the SNP/Labour administration has forced through its plans to introduce a new annual charge for the collection of garden waste for recycling. We strongly opposed this move, believing that such a service should be paid for through Council tax. We also believe the change could result in increased fly tipping and the placing of garden rubbish in landfill bins.

Builyeon Road housing plan

The Council's Planning Committee met last week to consider the planning application to develop housing on the fields south of Builyeon Road. We submitted a request for a public hearing so we could speak before the committee on behalf of the community and highlight local concerns before any decisions were taken.

Despite over 290 local people emailing the Convener of the Planning Committee to support our request, the hearing was turned down. The committee moved forward to a decision and agreed to the principle of building up to 980 housing units on the site.

The committee still requires the developers to come forward with more detailed plans. This includes the layout of housing and roads. However, the requirements on developers to carry out proper public consultation with the community is more limited now the principle of housing has been agreed.

That is why we felt it so important to get clarity on how concerns relating to traffic, roads, schools as well as other issues would be addressed before decisions were taken. We are sorry that did not happen.

We will now work to ensure developers do consult properly with local people on the detail of the development here and take into account local views to try and mitigate, as far as possible, the impacts. The planning committee has decided that detailed plans must come forward within 3 years. We do not expect any significant changes in the short term.

Bo'ness Road follow up

We are both extremely unsatisfied with the lack of commitment to tangible improvements to the road with our requests for a pedestrian crossing or traffic calming measures being declined. This position has been endorsed by the Transport Convenor.

Considering the strength of local opinion and the numbers who both completed the petition and who attended the meeting, this is clearly a very real concern for the community. We have now written to the Convenor of Transport inviting her to attend a follow up meeting to explain their reasons and justify their position, as well as take questions from the many residents who are looking for answers. We look forward to their response and intend on booking a meeting, back at the school, as soon as possible.

In the meantime the Campaign Group wish to add their voice to ours and have drafted a letter which they intend to send to the leader of the Council, the Transport Convenor, and the Chief Executive.

Queensferry High School and Primary School

The Council's Planning Committee has now approved the planning application for the new Queensferry High School and swimming pool. The plans deliver a new build replacement secondary school with playing fields, external spaces, car parking and landscaping and will increase the school capacity from existing 1000 pupils to 1200 pupils. It incorporates a new sports hall and, after a very successful community campaign, a bigger swimming pool which can be opened up to greater community use. All being well, the school should be built in time for opening in 2020.

Separate to this, the planning application for the expansion to Queensferry Primary was approved in February.

Scotstoun Avenue

Louise raised the promised traffic calming measures for Scotstoun Avenue at the January meeting of the Council. With work on the development site at Dalmeny Park nearing completion, it is now intended to commence design work for the traffic calming scheme (which will include the introduction of traffic calming cushions along the length of Scotstoun Avenue and four full width traffic calming tables to tie into the main crossing points). Consultation with the local community will be undertaken as part of the design process.

Gritting and grit bins

In our January report, we highlight the problems with the standard of gritting and the provision of grit bins which created particular problems this created in Queenferry and Dalmeny. There was cross party support for a motion at the January Council meeting for a review so lessons can be learned and improvements made. Our own amendment focused on the need for drastic improvements to the processes for installing new grit bins. This is important given the delays faced by local people in getting their requests actioned.

Meantime, we are pleased that some of our efforts to get new grit bins in Atheling Grove, Ashburnham Loan and The Glebe have been successful. We still have a number of new bin requests outstanding.

Shore Road Sheltered Housing

We have contacted by a number of constituents about the decision by Castle Rock Edinvar to change its policy with respect to the staffing of the sheltered housing complex in Shore Road. The changes, which are due to come into effect in April, come despite the current Council funding being maintained. We wrote jointly with Graham Hutchison to the chair of the Board asking for a reversal and are due to meet with senior staff shortly.

High Street project

Along with other councillors, we are due to meet with officials and the newly appointed consultants for the £1m high street project on 7 March.