**JUNIPER GREEN COMMUNITY COUNCIL** www.junipergreencc.org.uk

**Minutes of the AGM held in Hall 2 of Juniper Green Parish Church**

**at 2.00 pm on Monday 13th June 2016**

**In the Chair –** Professor Cliff Beevers

**Present – CC members:** Russell Salton, Richard Watt**,** Neil Ingram, Helen Ogg, Ian Gilmour, Vic Stewart, Norma McGeever, Anne Wimberley, Ken Davies

**Visitors:** Malcolm Brown and Barbara Badger from JGVHO, Ruth Wilson, Eileen Scott, Margaret Follon, Alison Walker, Nigel Rickard, Anne Rickard, Anna Pearson, Shirley Noakes, Thelma Ingram.

**1. Apologies:** From JGCC members Gordon Miller, Susan Perriss, Anthea Grierson, Councillors Dominic Heslop, Ricky Henderson and Bill Henderson, Gordon Lindhurst MSP, and, from the public, Jean Forster and Serena Broadway.

**2. The AGM minutes of 1st June 2015 for approval and matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda**: The minutes were approved as a true record, proposer Ken, seconder Helen.

**3. Reports:**

 **3.1 JGCC accounts** introduced by the Treasurer, Ken Davies as follows:

**Treasurer’s Report for the year ended 31 March 2016**

**No 1 Account**

An annual grant is received from the City of Edinburgh Council to enable us to meet the costs incurred in running the Community Council, and for 2016 we received £690.22. A donation of £200 was received from the Currie & Balerno News to enable us to hold Holyrood Hustings before the parliamentary elections in Scotland in May 2016. The expenditure relating to this event was incurred after the 2016 financial year end. The Currie & Balerno News also contributed £250 to enable us to put on our regular Meet Your Politicians event which this year was successfully held in Balerno Parish Church at the end of January 2016. A surplus of £115.20 resulted from this event.

Direct costs relating to the running of the Community Council comprise letting costs for committee rooms and halls, and other day to day administrative costs such as data protection registration and website maintenance. In this year, £107.50 was spent on room hire, and £149.77 on other costs. As in previous years, the Currie & District Horticultural Society put on a very successful annual show, and we were delighted to contribute £150 towards their costs. Currie Community Council, with the help of JGCC, organised a Health and Wellbeing meeting last Summer, and we contributed £50 towards the costs of the event.

The ownership of a piece of neglected roadway entering Bloomiehall Park was uncertain, so we paid the cost of establishing ownership, £19.20, and as a result were then able to ask CEC to undertake the necessary repairs.

As a result of the above activities, a surplus of £537.25 is reported, increasing the balance in the No 1 Account from £289.27 at the beginning of the year to £826.52 as at 31 March 2016.

**No 2 Account.**

Our Community Fund (No 2 Account) benefitted from a highly successful Book Festival. Grants and donations from CEC, Currie & Balerno News, and the Currie Balerno & District Round Table totalled £2050. Book sales and donations totalled a further £757.50. Costs of books, fees and expenses totalled £1433.44, resulting in a surplus of £1374.06, which we are carrying forward towards the funding of the cost of the next book festival which is to be held later this year.

The Farmers’ Market continued to generate profits for the Community Fund, contributing £613.17 during the year. However, attendances recently have been flagging, and the long term future of the market is uncertain in part due to the closure of the village hall.

As far as the Baberton History Project is concerned, some sales of the booklet were still being made, totalling £34.00. However, much of the effort and expense this year has been devoted to the development of the website, and £945 has been expended on this part of the project.

Curriemuirend Park was the venue for another successful Cross country event involving juniors from two local athletic clubs. The Community Council was pleased to contribute £125 to the cost of trophies and medals. We again contributed to a very successful local Football Tournament played at Bloomiehall Park by paying £106.00 for the public liability insurance necessary for such an event. We also took part in a joint initiative with Juniper Green Primary School to design and produce Fairtrade bookmarks which promoted Fairtrade and also advertised the regular Farmers’ Market. We were happy to contribute £92.00 towards the cost of production. Lastly, under Other Environmental Activities, we paid £69.18 for the cost of replacing many of the plants in the village flower tubs.

As a result of the above activities, a surplus of £691.80 is reported, increasing the balance in the No 2 Account from £6723.78 at the beginning of the year to £7415.58 as at 31 March 2016.

Questions to Ken: Barbara Badger asked if payment had still to be made for the village hall signs, expenditure on which had been made the previous year. No requests for payment had been received.

Answering a question from Margaret Follon, Cliff explained that No.1 account was used for the running costs of JGCC and making grants to local organisations, while No.2 account was used for community events.

Ken thanked our auditor, David Geary, for his services, given free, and suggested he should receive a small gift to show our appreciation, a proposal that was unanimously approved. Action: Ken

Acceptance of the accounts proposed by Cliff, seconded by Richard.

**3.2 Planning convenor:** Neil Ingram reported as follows:

In the year to the end of May 2016 we have seen 34 completed planning applications, of which 23 have been approved, none were refused, 7 were for tree work, 1 was withdrawn and 3 were permitted development. This compares with 44 applications in the previous 12 months. The level of applications is rather lower than in the last two years, but there are 11 applications which are still going through the system.

As in previous years, most of our applications concern extensions or modifications to existing houses. Those falling within the Juniper Green Conservation Area are subject to additional restrictions, mainly concerning the appearance of the property from the road, and the rules relating to these changed in 2012 when new permitted development regulations were introduced. The new rules are generally more restrictive in conservation areas, but more relaxed elsewhere. We also now see applications for work on trees in the conservation area, which are subject to a separate approval scheme.

Work on the major developments in Juniper Green is now over, with completion of the work on McCarthy and Stone’s retirement complex on the site of the existing Baberton Golf Clubhouse. However, vehicle movements related to parking near both entrances to the school continue to cause problems. There is also good progress with the redevelopment of the warehouse at the foot of Baberton Loan for residential use, though the issues of access to the Water of Leith Walkway are unresolved. We have not been successful in opposing the redevelopment of the former nursery building in Woodhall Drive for housing – the loss of this building is particularly disappointing at a time when the future of the Village Hall is also uncertain.

The major planning issue this year has again been the second draft Local Development Plan (LDP), which was issued for consultation last summer and is still not approved. The latest estimate we have for its publication is the end of June. Meanwhile, the Murray Estates development on land east of Millburn Tower has been granted outline approval by the Development Management Subcommittee. This area to the west of the Gyle and the City Bypass has been suggested as an alternative site for housing in SW Edinburgh, but it is not in the draft Local Plan.

The future of the proposed development at Curriemuirend Park, which emerged from the first proposed Local Development Plan in March 2013, is still unresolved. The Curriemuirend Park proposals are unaltered in the second draft LDP, which was published in June 2014. We have campaigned extensively against these proposals, and 770 objections were registered to the second draft of the Local Plan. We are now pursuing increased use for this park, including planting trees and encouraging outdoor recreation.

Significant planning issues in adjacent areas also come to our attention. More applications have been made for building on green belt sites in Balerno, which would give a total of well over 1000 houses. One at Ravelrig has been granted on appeal, and a further appeal is under way for the site at Mansfield Road which has already been turned down at appeal. Applications are also under way for sites at Newmills Road and Curriehill Road, both of which are in the draft LDP. All these developments would add to traffic on Lanark Road.

Neil added that the apparent reduction in planning applications over the past two years might be explained by their being processed more slowly by CEC than in previous years. The application to replace Forester’s Hall in Woodhall Drive was being opposed by JGCC on the grounds of over-development of the site. Responding to Malcolm’s question about parking provision there, he said that the plan showed parking for two cars at each house. There followed discussion of the number of houses Murray Estates were planning to build on land east of Millburn Tower; no clear number had been given, with figures ranging from 900 to 1500.

Returning to parking problems in Juniper Green, several speakers expressed disquiet that regular parking on pavements on JG’s roads was adding to existing traffic congestion while inconveniencing pedestrians. It appeared that legislation was in the pipeline to prohibit parking on pavements. Other observations ranged from motorists frequently driving along pavements on Belmont Road, Juniper Green’s streets being used by commuters as a park and ride facility, slow progress on the provision of traffic calming measures on Viewfield Road, parking on double yellow lines at Baberton Park corner, the height of the kerb at the Baberton Loan car park, and air pollution levels on Lanark Road. With reference to the last of these, Neil said that pollution levels were constantly monitored on Lanark Road and it was the only arterial road on the west side of Edinburgh that had been meeting EU regulations on air quality. However, he would find out the current position. It was suggested that Gordon MacDonald MSP would probably have the necessary information. Action: Neil

**3.3 Baberton History Project:** Helen Ogg provided the following update:

During the last financial year progress on the Baberton History Group’s website has been slower than we would have liked.  Our web developer has done a sterling job in constructing a test site and we are now working with her to refine its appearance and to populate the site with content.  It was decided early on not to simply reproduce the Baberton History Booklet (still available for anyone who is interested), but to put in some new and different content.  We are now working with the developer to finalise some of these changes.  It is hoped that we may be able to add an interesting interactive map of the JGCC area, which will allow members of the community to find out not only what happened in the past, but also where.  We hope the whole community will add their stories and photos – it has been truly enjoyable and interesting to work on this social history project, and we have been fortunate to have a good mix of skills in the project.  Special thanks should go to the initiator of the project, local historian Liz Beevers.  Watch our JGCC website for the announcement of the live Baberton History website.

Questions to Helen:  Eileen Scott asked if there was a local archive that might take historic documents relating to the former butcher’s shop. It was suggested they could perhaps be scanned to the website. Ruth Wilson wondered if the primary school would be interested in building a local history archive.

**3.4 Chairman’s report:** Cliff Beevers, in his final year in the chair, started by thanking the whole committee of JGCC for their commitment to the various projects over the last many years and continued as follows: in particular, thanks are due to the 3 people who have just reported that they intend, together with our meeting secretary, Richard Watt, to stand down at the forthcoming recruitment of a new committee this September. We wish them all well and to Neil and Helen very many good wishes in their new homes outside the village.

In a chairman’s report it is always difficult to avoid repetition of the events just reported by Ken and Helen and the community council’s statutory duty of planning as described by Neil. So, instead, let me try to set out a past, present and future from my own perspective as a resident of Juniper Green for over forty years. Let me reflect, not only on the last year, but rather over a decade since the 300th anniversary celebrations back in 2007.

**Past:** From the work done ten years ago, we know this area has an even longer history than its 309 years since the first recorded mention of the name “Juniper Green”. During the year of celebrations in 2007 we learned that this area had been home to Bronze Age dwellers as long ago as 2300 BC. So, it may have had a different name then, but this part of the world has been home to people for millennia rather than centuries. We tracked the story of this area through its rural past, its development into a mill village and, during the last century, the steady change towards suburbia (see www.junipergreencc.org.uk/jg300). As you have heard from Helen, this history has been brought up to date with the publication of the Baberton Mains story from the 1970s.

As well as recording its history, other enhancements to the village started in 2007 with the creation of the flower tubs and their continued maintenance over the last ten years thanks to the ‘tubbers’. This maintenance extends to the tidying up of Mackay’s Wood. We had a gala in 2007 to revive a tradition and this was repeated when we celebrated the centenary of Bloomiehall Park in 2012. Another practice that has been a feature of life here is the volunteers who work at the school to help with reading and arithmetic.

**Present:** Part of the work of JGCC has been the regular walkabouts with council officials through which, hopefully, the problems of flooding in both Baberton Mains and on Baberton Avenue have been resolved. It is also good to report that, following research by Helen, ownership of Juniper Park Road was accepted by CEC which led in turn to a short, but important, stretch of road leading to the park to be upgraded. Sadly, vandalism remains an issue despite the good work by our community police officer in apprehending motorcyclists at Curriemuirend Park last summer. However, damage at the village hall remains a persistent concern, not helped by lack of continuity at our meetings by our community officers. Checking attendance at our ten meetings last year, it was only on two occasions that the same officer turned up to report on activities. The lack of a written report also remains a source of irritation. During the year the Natural Neighbourhood map drawn up by CEC was questioned by many residents in the East of the village. This has led to a re-drawing of our CC boundary to include those houses on the south side of Lanark Road between Gillespie crossroads and the bypass bridge. Neil mentioned the land East of Millburn Tower which has received outline planning permission for some 1500 units and the hope is that Curriemuirend Park can be removed from the LDP and restored onto the parks account, but we still await the reporter’s decision on that matter.

We have continued with events like the “Meet the Politicians” with this year’s activity at Balerno Parish Church including an MEP for the first time.

We have had lots of residents coming to our meetings during the year and at the start of May there was great disappointment at the closure of the village hall, with many feeling that CEC had panicked, making the closure decision on the basis of problems elsewhere in the city’s schools.

One initiative of JGCC which has gathered momentum over the last three years is the series of 15 meetings organized by the South West Communities Forum comprising the CCs of Balerno, Currie, Ratho, Wester Hailes, Colinton, Firrhill, Juniper Green and Colinton Amenity Association. We have had, amongst others, speakers from DPEA, the head of CEC’s Planning Committee and experts from the Hutton Institute. This pressure group has concentrated on planning matters, but at a recent meeting further integration was suggested as a way of bringing the communities even closer together whilst still emphasizing the unique characteristics of each.

**Future:** Looking ahead, Vic has been guiding a pilot project for JG to become a resilient community, This too looks as if it will include the Currie area in its remit. The Pentlands Book Festival, which started last year to great acclaim, is well on its way to providing a second series of events in Book Week Scotland later in the year. This was an initiative of JGCC in which Currie CC joined last year and which Colinton CC have embraced this year. Colinton CC also joined with the CCs of Balerno, Currie and JG in organizing and promoting the hustings earlier this year. Perhaps all these activities can go ahead in the future. Finally, the problem of loneliness and dementia in our community has been one on which we have agonized on how to take positive action. Following a recent visit by representatives from the charity, Health in Mind, and the initiative of the local parish church in Juniper Green, it is possible that some facility will be set up in our community to provide a social activity for folk who are largely housebound and their carers to attend.

Cliff also mentioned the possibility of holding a village gala day again in 2017.

In response to Cliff’s reference to the closure of the village hall, Malcolm brought the meeting up to date: two local surveyors had given their opinions on the condition of the hall and a company had been employed to provide an independent survey. Their surveyor, Gillian Cook, would report to the JGVHO, and, in the light of her findings, the CEC would decide what action to take, basing their decisions on the costings arising from the report. So far it appeared that rot on the northern side was minimal and there was certainly no imminent danger of collapse. The JGVHO planned to invite a representative of the surveyors and a council representative to a public meeting to present their assessments of the hall’s condition and the action that should follow.

Commenting on the Resilient Communities initiative, Vic referred to the snowfall of winter 2010 when many residents had been snowed in when only the main roads had been cleared by the Council. Learning from the experience of rural communities where farmers had taken the initiative in clearing country roads, suburban communities were being encouraged to set up self-help groups of volunteers who would be trained in planning how to assist more vulnerable residents and others most affected in a similar emergency. Such a group had already been formed in Juniper Green and would meet shortly for discussion with emergency services and, before next winter, would receive training from CEC. Basically, Resilient Communities was a good neighbour scheme. Identifying those residents most likely to be in need of help was a problem still to be resolved.

Anna Pearson made a plea for future hustings to be held far enough in advance of elections to allow time for postal voters to make their decisions.

Margaret Follon asked if initiatives in Currie being taken to find out who in the community needed health care could be extended to other communities in the area through the South West Community Forum. Norma responded that this was a process already taking place which would be discussed at the next day’s Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership meeting. Currie’s plan was to work with Care and Repair as a pilot, which, if successful, could be rolled out to Juniper Green. She would check on progress so far. Action: Norma

Shirley Noakes said that there was a pressing need for volunteers which had been made obvious at the recent successful Health Fair in Colinton. She offered help with distributing leaflets to encourage volunteering.

Nigel Rickard observed that grass cutting and the emptying of bins at Bloomiehall Park seemed to have become less frequent and that there were general complaints about lack of maintenance. Cliff said that our Parks Officer, Craig Dunlop, would be asked to act. Action: Cliff

Anna Pearson remarked that the meeting venue had meant an uphill walk which had caused her difficulty.

A discussion followed of the uses to which the public toilet site might be put if it came into public ownership. Cliff informed questioners that a Juniper Green Village Trust could apply for funding from a variety of sources to acquire property under the terms of the Community Ownership Act, while the Community Ownership Scheme could offer support and advice. Although the village wanted a Post Office, that alone would provide an income of no more than £2,000 per annum. Newspapers were no longer greatly in demand. He asked for ideas on possible uses of a new building on the site which, to be viable, would need to provide a variety of services

**4. Juniper Green Village Development Trust**

A public meeting to discuss a village trust had been held on 16 May, attracting some forty residents. JGCC represents an area with about 2000 homes and just over 4000 people.

The public toilets on Lanark Road represented one of the few council facilities in our village. We have no swimming pool, no library, no evening classes and little public space where people can meet on neutral ground.

Several people had approached JGCC and asked us to find a way to re-open the public toilets, not necessarily as a toilet only, but rather as something that would enhance this community. Moreover, the schoolchildren in the local school had made some imaginative suggestions on how the space could be used to benefit the village as a whole: a library hub, a PO, a news agent etc., all currently missing from our area.

It was at this point we had approached CEC to ask under what circumstances the space where the toilets stand could be acquired by this community. We were aware of the financial pressures the council are under and we were not alone in finding public toilets have closed around the city, but in the other communities they do have public space like libraries, community high schools etc.

As part of this enquiry we discovered that community councils cannot own any property, so if we were to proceed and try to acquire the public toilet space for a village facility there needed to be a legal entity similar to the one in the neighbouring villages of Balerno and Colinton; one has a village trust and another an amenity association.

Enquiring a little further, we had discovered that one option would be to form a SCIO, a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. We obtained a couple of examples of good practice in constitutions of such organisations and Richard and Russell wrote one that has been vetted by the Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations’ Council. When the public meeting endorsed the idea of a Juniper Green Village Development Trust, the constitution had been submitted to OSCR and their scrutiny of its contents was awaited before the trust could become a legal entity.

Also, the last Scottish Government had passed the Community Empowerment Act for which the guidelines were still being discussed. The Act, when it came fully into force later in the year would enable the properly constituted organisations within urban as well as rural communities to bid for funding to improve their own environment. Part of the act was the communities’ right to buy and CEC had put in place some interim arrangements in anticipation of the act becoming fully functional later in 2016.

JGCC had taken this process as far as possible by engaging with CEC officials on the acquisition of the space occupied by the toilet block on Lanark Road and, at a meeting set up for May 31, we had formally submitted our request for the acquisition to go ahead. CEC had accepted our proposal and the next step would be to set up an internal CEC committee to progress the request. On the morning of 13 June, several of us had met with Nicky Donald of the Community Ownership Scheme who had advised on which websites to consult and on a variety of funding opportunities.

**5. Councillors’ Corner:** in the absence of the councillors, Richard read out the brief written reports they had submitted to the meeting as follows:

**Dominic Heslop:** Nothing to add except we still await the LDP. I welcome the signs to the Village Hall but they are probably now a bit superfluous in the short term. And I hope that doesn't sound flippant, but I reiterate that Bill, Ricky and myself are trying to find a way forward.

All three of us voted in favour of the 'Garden District' which we hope will alleviate the pressure of other applications, especially Curriemuirend Park.

Other issues seem to have been resolved.

**Ricky Henderson:** I agree with Dom, the Village Hall is the main concern and top priority just now and we will all work with the community towards finding a solution.

I remain hopeful that Curriemuirend Park will be protected in the future and look forward to the long awaited LDP2 being published.

In addition I would welcome the work towards establishing a Village Trust and look forward to working with it on a number of exciting projects in the future.

Finally, I'm sure all 3 Councillors would wish to thank the members of the Community Council for their commitment and hard work over the last year and to extend best wishes in particular to anyone who is moving on. We look forward to working with the CC in the year ahead.

**Bill Henderson:** The main thing we are working on is getting the village hall repaired or replaced as is necessary. Obviously this is ongoing.

As Dom said the LDP is due to be signed of soon. We,Ricky, Dom & myself all voted to grant planning permission to the site at East of Milburn Tower which is part of the Garden District proposal. We are hopeful that this will allow Curriemuirend Park etc. To be removed from the LDP.

For clarity I don't support development on the rest of the Garden District site.

**6. Open Forum:** it appeared that no one had anything further to add to items already discussed.

**7. AOCB:** see 6. above.

**8. Date of the next JGCC meeting:** Wednesday 22nd June at 7pm in Hall 3 of JG Parish Church. All are welcome.

Cliff outlined arrangements for the Community Council elections in September 2016.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Cliff Beevers, JGCC Chairperson, \_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_