

NEW TOWN AND BROUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Administrative information

The committee members who served as Office Bearers during the period since the last AGM were:

Chair: Peter Williamson

Vice Chair: Vacant

Secretary: Vacant

Treasurer: Mike Birch

Engagement Officer: Simon Holledge

Committee Convenors

Communications Nick Reid

Culture & Communities Simon Holledge

Environment Peter Williamson

Licensing Annick Gaillard

Planning NTBCC Planning Management Team Annick Gaillard, Ken Lochrie, Stephen Hajducki, Richard Price and Peter Williamson

Transport Mike Birch

Minutes Secretary Bruce Ryan

Introduction

The New Town and Broughton Community Council (NTBCC) is one of Edinburgh's 46 Community Councils. NTBCC is established under statute to represent the views of the community within the New Town and Broughton area. The boundaries of the NTBCC area are set by the City Edinburgh Council's Scheme for Community Councils. Under that Scheme the expectation is that Community Councils 'should engage widely with their local communities to represent their views when engaging with the City of Edinburgh Council', and be able to show that they are representative of the local community, to devise strategies to secure greater involvement by all sectors of their communities and to demonstrate that they are communicating widely with the community through a variety of means

The Annual Report 2023/24 And Annual Accounts: Overview

This Annual Report is part of that communications process. NTBCC works with a committee structure that is designed to match as closely as possible the committees of the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) that are most germane to the work undertaken by NTBCC. While this considerably helps NTBCC to organise its working arrangements with the CEC, it does necessitate a sizeable effort by our Committee Convenors and other Community Councillors to examine CEC strategy and policy papers across a wide range of issues and follow these up through the CEC's decision-making processes. This is all done with the purpose of formulating responses to CEC proposals that represent the views of the local community. As Chair, I am always impressed with the sheer quality of work that NTBCC produces in this regard. I am very happy to record my gratitude to Committee Convenors and others for the time, commitment and knowledge they bring continually to the work of NTBCC. The sections in this Annual Report on the different areas of work of NTBCC give a valuable overview of what was undertaken by NTBCC during 2023/24. More information is always available, including a wide range of reports for meetings and background documents, on the NTBCC website (<https://www.ntbcc.org.uk/>).

2023/24 NTBCC Going Forward

In 2023, CEC launched its Community Council Scheme and Boundary Review. Initially, there was some concern within NTBCC that this might lead to significant changes to its boundaries. NTBCC in Phase 1 of the Review made a submission to the CEC that NTBCC's 'existing boundaries provide an effective "community" in terms of size and make-up upon which to undertake representation and engagement, especially in relation to having a collective view regarding the New Town Conservation Area.' NTBCC also undertook meetings with its neighbouring Community Councils in advance of its submission to the Review to make sure that it was not inadvertently cutting across the thinking of fellow Community Councils. While the proposals under the Review remain to be finally signed off by the full City Council, it would appear that the CEC and NTBCC have a common position on the matter of boundaries. The proposal put out for consultation by CEC essentially maintains the existing boundaries, if with some welcome tidying up of NTBCC's Western edge boundary that borders Stockbridge and Inverleith Community Council.

In its response to the Review, NTBCC also made some proposals for changes to the Scheme for Community Councils as originally drafted by CEC for consultation. NTBCC argued that the Scheme should include changes that improved the interaction between CEC and Community Councils. In particular, it was suggested that more should be done by the CEC to help Community Councils to obtain, collate and express the views of the community they represent. It was also proposed that the CEC could do more to promote the legitimacy of Community Councils in the eyes of local communities. NTBCC covers an area with approximately 18,000 residents in 9500 households, and the challenges for a voluntary organisation with very limited resources to represent this constituency can be significant. Representation of the views of the local community is particularly important in respect of a number of major transport related initiatives that CEC is in the process of bringing forward and matters relating to the management of World Heritage Site, including the response to 'climate crisis' in a heritage site. There is an undoubted need on these matters for CEC to consider ways to extend and improve information-giving to and consultation with the community that NTBCC represents. This would in turn do much to improve NTBCC's capacity to respond on behalf of the community. Similarly, it is suggested that the City Council should do more to recognise the statutory role Community Councils have regarding planning.

It is important to recognise the help NTBCC received from local City Councillors on a range of matters during the year. City Councillors have worked with NTBCC on a number of issues of concern to particular groups of residents as well those of importance to the wider community. This has been of real benefit to NTBCC, as has the advice and information given. This contribution is undoubtedly valued.

While this is a report on what happened during the year 2023/24, NTBCC during that period did begin to look forward by reviewing its activities and considering the best way to undertake its roles as effectively as possible. The matters under review for future development for the future included: communications with residents and businesses; refreshing links with residents in the areas of Powderhall and that east of Annandale Street up to Pilrig; working with neighbouring Community Councils on matters of mutual interest regarding the City Centre; working more closely with residents' associations on promoting the World Heritage Site to those bodies charged with its oversight; and producing a clearer set of priorities for NTBCC's planning of its work. NTBCC after careful consideration also agreed that it would not of its own accord initiate Local Place Plans but would look to support any neighbourhood that wishes to pursue one.

The delay with the elections to Community Councils connected to the Community Council Scheme and Boundary Review and the prospect of a general election has in turn delayed the appointment of new Community Councillors to NTBCC and with this the filling of officer and convenor positions. While manageable, not being able to fill certain positions undoubtedly curtailed some of NTBCC's activities in the latter half of 2023/24. NTBCC will be undertaking a significant communications exercise to encourage local residents on a wide basis to come forward for election to NTBCC. It is crucial that NTBCC is able to bring on board those who can make positive contributions as NTBCC goes through a period of change to its membership and to certain officer/convenor positions.

Peter Williamson
Chair, New Town and Broughton Community Council