

***EDINBURGH ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS***

**Website [www.eacc.info](http://www.eacc.info)**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2010**

The ninth Annual General Meeting of the Association was held at 10.00 am on Saturday 21st June 2010 in the Business Centre of the City Chambers, Edinburgh.

The meeting was preceded by a presentation by Convenor of Economic Development Committee and Spokesperson for Community Planning Cllr Tom Buchanan. The following provides a summary of his presentation, which was entitled Edinburgh Community Councils:

“I have been Convenor of the Economic Development Committee at the City of Edinburgh Council since May 2007. This committee was established by the Lib Dem/SNP Administration after the elections in 2007. It has a broad remit, from helping our most disadvantaged in our society find sustainable employment to attracting high-level investors to our key development areas. It has links across all areas of the council. Responsibility for Neighbourhood Partnerships also falls to this committee, hence my connection to Edinburgh’s Community Councils (CCs) and to today’s event. I also speak to you as a former active member of Liberton CC, so from both sides of the table I understand the challenges facing CCs in generating local support and input.

There is a clear commitment to empowering communities from National Government, from COSLA and from the Council. Here in Edinburgh it is a key feature of the neighbourhood approach which has been adopted by the Council. It is at the centre of our plans to achieve more appropriate and improved services for residents. CCs are an important part of this process, being represented on and feeding into Neighbourhood Partnerships (NPs) and as an important influence to the Edinburgh Partnership, the city-wide community planning body which brings together partners such as Police, Fire, Lothian Health and Chamber of Commerce to discuss key issues facing the city.

CCs will be asked increasingly to make decisions and judgements on issues affecting front-line services. A great example of this is the Participatory Budgeting process, currently being piloted in Leith NP, in which CCs are given opportunity to decide how a proportion of the community grants fund will be allocated. This project is being managed by a steering group comprising elected members, representatives from the Neighbourhood’s Community Councils and the voluntary sector. This approach may not suit all areas, however I am confident that across the city CCs will allow a range of measures which will help increase levels of participation and allow for local, on the ground decision making. This will, as a result, improve services. .

As well as this commitment to CCs and their involvement in the delivery of local services, I want to emphasize the importance with which I view the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils (EACC). This Association was set up in November 2001 and Norman Bonney played a key role in this. It provides a forum for discussion

and collective voice, offers advice and support to other CCs and has grown from strength to strength over the years. The programme of Question Time events is receiving great praise in particular, some coming from beyond Edinburgh.

More specific successes included being involved in the development of last year's Neighbourhood Partnership Conference, helping to develop and deliver training events such as the CC induction programme, the Applying for Funding Workshop and the CC Joint meeting. The EACC has also been at the forefront in efforts to shape the Dispute Resolution Process within CCs, a move which will help to make CCs more secure and stable in the longer term.

The EACC is supported both by the Council and by the Edinburgh Partnership. The nurturing of these relationships will be integral to continued success. I hope that my attendance here today can be seen as a symbol of the Administration's wish to maintain a strong and productive relationship with the EACC. In order to engage with the change required for a challenging economic picture presented in recent months, we must engage with the grass-roots – the communities themselves.

Patricia Eason's role in raising the profile of CCs within the Edinburgh Partnership is greatly appreciated. She asks appropriate and probing questions which make sure that the EACC and the EP are ever more closely linked.

There is however much to do. I recently met with a core group of EACC representatives who stressed the need for some NPs to strengthen their relationships with their respective CCs. The EACC has an important role to play in this and I would like to see the current relationship with the Association developed at a strategic level – to bring it into a more active role within the NP management and support structures. This could allow CCs to play a more significant part in community planning arrangements.

At the same time, there are several questions to consider which do need answers for our continued growth and development. How should CCs engage with the wider community and represent their views? How does the EACC raise its profile and reach out to all the CCs in Edinburgh?

Finally let me reaffirm my view that the local knowledge and expertise which CCs bring to the table is greatly valued by partners on both the NPs and the EP and we are committed to enhancing the relationships which already exist between us."

Questions from the floor highlighted that:

- It is difficult to attract young people to CCs. Three CCs mentioned that young people do attend, either as a Youth Council rep, as representatives from a local school's student council, or following the encouragement of activists within the local community. It was noted however that the education system does not engage with CCs, with no mention being made of them within the democracy units of the Modern Studies curriculum.

- Cllr Buchanan responded to a comment that communities are not taking part in local democracy, by suggesting that CCllrs make contact with people in their local areas, encouraging them to engage with the process, and to appreciate the potential of making use of their CC to make a difference in their community.
- Re a question about budget cuts, Cllr Buchanan said that the discussion within the current economic climate should focus on outcomes, asking ‘How are we going to do more with less?’ He would like to see ‘zero-based budgeting’ – that is, achieving a saving rather than cutting a service.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buchanan for his attendance at the EACC AGM and welcomed the quality of the presentation and his responses to the questions that followed.

The meeting proceeded to the agreed Agenda for the meeting.

### **1. Attendance and Apologies.**

Attendance: There were 24 CCllrs in attendance.

Apologies: Ann Wigglesworth (Tollcross)

### **2. Minutes of the Previous AGM**

Agreed: Terry Tweed (Craigmillar)

Seconded: Mary Donoghue (Hutchison/Chesser)

### **3. No Matters Arising.**

### **4. Chairman’s Report**

The Chair (David Salton, Corstorphine) began his report by paying tribute to the service rendered to the EACC and to the Craigmillar community by Valerie O’Rourke, who died recently. He described her as ‘committed, passionate and doughty’.

He acknowledged that, thanks to the change to the constitution in 2009, which provided for each CC in Edinburgh to have a representative on the EACC Executive committee, just over 20 (21) members do so. He said: The message that goes out from this AGM is that we want to see the remaining 22 CCs taking up the opportunity made available to them and sending a representative to the EACC.”

He noted that following the 2009 elections, there are now 43 CCs, including new councils at Juniper Green and Westerhailes. There is provision for a possible 46 CCs in Edinburgh.

The Chairman acknowledged the good attendance and feedback praise awarded from various bodies and individuals across the city for the six EACC Question Times held throughout the year. Topics included Neighbourhood Partnerships, Enforcement, Edinburgh Partnership, Transport and Policing. He referred also to the role that the Association has played in helping to draw up and implement a Disputes Procedure developed by CEC and applied in a recent dispute in the city.

The Chair acknowledged the receipt of a funding grant of £1100 received for 2009/10 from Edinburgh Partnership. This covers all CC membership fees, which allow for administrative costs and includes a secretarial honorarium for ‘clerking duties’. He

reminded members that Patricia Eason carries out her duties conscientiously as EACC representative on the Edinburgh Partnership, to ensure that both EP and EACC are best served by joint working. He also referred to the part played in this dialogue by Community Engagement Co-ordinator Pamela Roccio in working with Patricia and Jenny MacKenzie (Secretary). With reference to Neighbourhood Partnerships, the Chair said “we continue to get complaints that some NP managers are a law unto themselves”, and remarked that similarly some LA councillors appear “more interested in political point scoring than working to reach consensus with partners on service provision”. At the same time, he acknowledged the positive support provided to CCs via the EACC by both Head of Community Services David Lyon and Convenor for Economic Development and Spokesperson for Community Planning Cllr Tom Buchanan in working to tackle these and other issues.

Finally the Chair noted with regret the perceived lack of transparency and accountability from CCs national association, the Association of Scottish Community Councils (ASCC). He said that many members believe that a proportional system of voting for representatives should be used, and noted that newly elected Edinburgh Representative Norman Bonney has committed to putting these views forward.

## **5. Secretary’s Report**

The Secretary (Jenny MacKenzie, Leith Central) noted that the changes to the constitution incorporated at the 2009 AGM have enabled easier access and subsequently increased numbers to Executive membership. The EACC team has worked very hard to build on these relationships, to encourage, support and work with those who have shown interest in working with us. She acknowledged that the EACC is ‘delighted’ with the changes that have taken place, the increased engagement, dialogue and ideas put forward, and “has been enriched and developed by the skills of those new members”.

Visits had been made to CCs in Edinburgh, including Liberton and Craigtintny/Meadowbank, which have helped the EACC to understand more of the real needs of CCs in Edinburgh.

A meeting was also held with Penicuik Cllrs with links to the Midlothian Federation of CCs, a similar body to the EACC. It is hoped that this will lead to fruitful collaboration in the future. The secretary extended warm thanks to various active members of the Association for providing guidance, support, feedback and co-operation to and with the secretary while carrying out her duties. They include Patricia Eason (Cramond), Tony Harris (Grange/Prestonfield), Terry Tweed (Craigmillar) and the EACC Chair (David Salton, Corstorphine) and Vice-Chair (Richard Ellis, Morningside). She also thanked Stewart Blaik, the Chair of her own CC, Leith Central, for his timely reminders that Executive members are here to serve our CCs, not personal ambition or pet issues.

Reference was made to the ‘measured’ decision made two years ago to produce several newsletters with a view to raising the profile of the EACC, increasing membership and sharing information in an effective way. Most members acknowledge that these goals have been realised, and that EACC is better known by elected councillors, affiliated bodies and organisations and most importantly CCs and their members. At the same

time, it is acknowledged that other creative ways may need to be found in the future to outreach effectively and share information, in light of the economic climate.

## **6. Treasurer's Report**

No audited financial statement was made available to all members by the treasurer Dave Halbert (Craigleith/Blackhall), although several copies of a balance sheet were available. He said that calculations have not been completed or signed off by an auditor. He noted that a 'working document' had been incorrectly circulated to members by the secretary. The treasurer told the meeting that the credit balance in the account amounted to £749.42. Members were disappointed not to have received an audited simple balance sheet made available to all, detailing income and expenditure. One member noted that the EACC constitution requires that such an audited statement be provided at the AGM. It was noted by both a financial secretary and an accountant from the floor that a simple software programme made available to all CCs enables all necessary and relevant information to be made available online.

An EGM will be called once the books have been reconciled and agreed by an auditor. Proposed by Richard Ellis, seconded by David Salton.

The treasurer noted that he had not been included in the discussions about the Letter of Application which was forwarded to Edinburgh Partnership seeking a renewal of funding for 2010/11. The treasurer also noted that he would be stepping down as office bearer. The Vice-chair thanked him for the work that he had done. Thanks were expressed from the floor for highlighting how expenditure had been conducted in the past. It was suggested that, considering the economic climate of the times, expenditure will need to be very carefully monitored from now on. Though a further newsletter has been approved for 2010/11, the treasurer recommended that this plan be held back until this year's funding is secured.

The EACC will give consideration to the appointment of an independent auditor for the future

## **7. Determination of membership fees for 2010/11**

“The Chair referred members to a report called **Support for the Edinburgh Partnership of Community Councils**. Dated 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2005, the report describes its purpose as being to outline proposals to support the EACC in their role on the EP Board and EP conferences.

Under **Item 4: Proposals** the report says: The Edinburgh Partnership recognises the need to support the EACC to increase its capacity to support their representatives within the Edinburgh Partnership. If the organisation is to do this effectively then there must be no financial barriers to the inclusion of all community councils within the association. It is therefore proposed to provide an award of £400 per annum to the EACC to substitute the membership fee.

The EP also recognises the need to provide clerking support to the organisation. Clerking duties will include preparation of agendas in conjunction with the Chair,

writing and distribution of minutes, general correspondence, maintenance of membership lists and co-ordination of attendance at the Edinburgh Partnership events. A total award of £500 per annum will be made for these purposes.”

**Under Item 8: Recommendations** the report states:

“That the EPWG agree to allocate £900 per annum to support the EACC in their role on the EP and request that this will be renewed annually.”

The report is signed by **Jim Inch, then Acting Director of Corporate Services.**

Some discussion ensued from the floor about the difficulties of relying on member CCs to submit membership fees as an alternative source of funding. The Chair reminded members of the EP the commitment in the report to covering the cost of membership fees and clerking duties. Concerns were expressed that this commitment could change with so many budget cuts being considered.

## **8. Proposed Amendments to the Constitution as follows:**

### **First Motion to amend the EACC Constitution**

Recorded in Approved Minutes for February 4<sup>th</sup> 2010 – Secretary’s Report Item 7, as below:

#### **Secretary’s Report (February 4<sup>th</sup> 2010)**

- Approval sought for a proposal to be made for a change to the Constitution, altering Clause 4 to read:  
‘There will be a minimum of one AGM and four Executive meetings each year’.  
Clause 6e, which reads: ‘The Executive will meet no less than four times a year’ could then be deleted.  
Approved. The change will be proposed at the AGM 19th June 2010.  
Motion proposed by Terry Tweed (Craigmillar)  
Seconded by Tony Harris (Grange/Prestonfield)  
**Motion carried**

### **Second Motion to amend the EACC Constitution**

**Proposed by Leith Central Community Council**  
**Seconded by Southside Community Council**

With reference to Item 6a in the EACC Constitution, which reads

6 a. Each community council shall be entitled to have one member on the Executive Committee. A Community Council can, if they wish, have a substitute to attend in the absence of their member but each Council is only entitled to one vote.

The Office Bearers of the Association must be members of the Executive Committee and will be appointed at the AGM."

**There are two proposed amendments.**

The first, which would be added after the sentence which ends ..... "entitled to one vote" reads:

"The member will stand down every two years but will be eligible for re-election. Nominations for membership will be submitted to the EACC secretary no less than two weeks prior to the AGM".

**Motion carried**

The second proposed amendments relates to the sentence: "The Office Bearers ..... " and requires that the work 'appointed' be changed to 'elected'. It also proposes that the following sentence be added: 'Nominations for office bearers will be submitted to the EACC secretary no less than two weeks prior to the AGM'

Proposed by Stewart Blaik (Leith Central)

Seconded by Ian Doig (Merchiston)

**Motion carried.**

**9. Election of Executive Committee**

One individual respectively was nominated for each of the four Office Bearer roles:

Chair: David Salton (3 nominations)

Vice-Chair: Richard Ellis (2 nominations)

Secretary: Jenny MacKenzie (3 nominations)

Treasurer: Tony Harris (3 nominations)

The Chair noted that as there was no contest, each nominated individual was duly elected to the position of Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

10. Brief summary from EACC Edinburgh Partnership Representative Patricia Eason. Patricia noted that EACC needs to remember that the EP is a strategic body, but at the same time she is always willing to respond to queries from CCs and to represent them on issues relevant to the EP.

Patricia was nominated as EP representative for a further year by Norman Tinlin (Fairmilehead), Seconded by Ian Doig (Merchiston)..

11. Presentation by ASCC representative for Edinburgh Norman Bonney (West End). Norman acknowledged that a recent election had seen him win appointment to the post. He is aware of CC concerns at the lack of up-to-date information provided to CCs about ASCC activities. The website has not been recently updated. Dissatisfaction has been expressed about the conduct and content of the Annual Conference held in November. He said that it is difficult to engage in dialogue with the Office Bearers, but that he is hopeful that a regional meeting to be held shortly

will provide some information that he can convey to CCs in Edinburgh. He encourages members to visit his blog and he will work with Eileen Hewitt to ensure that the email address list that he is given for CCs in Edinburgh is current and active.

12. AOB. There was no other competent business. The Chair closed the meeting at 12.45pm.