

Notes from the EACC, Feb 2016

The main part of the meeting was a talk on "an integrated approach to development planning " given by Paul Lawrence, the newly appointed Executive Director of Place. An Edinburgh newcomer, Paul brings with him considerable experience from Newcastle and Manchester. (Besides being Director, he will have particular responsibility for South East Edinburgh, so he will be key for us.)

He started by explaining a bit about where the city is in the transformation process-that is, it is in a state of flux. Staff losses are huge and make life awkward as we are no longer able to speak with those we have got used to contacting (when we can speak to anyone at all!). He expects that by early June new staffing should be more or less in place.

Next, he took an overview on Planning. There is a National Government Review of Planning*; the implication is that the system we currently have is not working well. He gave the example of the continuing trend of Reporters overturning Council decisions. He reflected that he personally doesn't think the LDP or SESPlan deal adequately with population growth.

Lastly, he talked a bit about how working in Localities will function. All public agencies will work across areas, he says. He talked about the difference between Services Planning and Resources Planning, and raised the question of how can the Council can give local groups the resources to do things for themselves.

His buzz phrase was Sustainable Development.

Questions were good and varied. Some examples are:

Merchiston CC asked about whether we are to get NHS Lothian Locality Managers?

Stockbridge raised a question about alternative service delivery models- will the new structure be open to this idea? If so, how will they ensure they are viable etc?

Crammond/Barnton raised the problem of when a CC has a plan for some improvement, for which they have done a great deal of ground work, they then find they are not able to execute it because they have no backing from the Council nor autonomous resources. How would this be improved by the new structure/new planning processes?

Paul did not try to definitively answer the questions but discussed around them. His theme was integration of all council committees and duties and not subservient planners.

There was discussion about the identity of communities.

South Queensferry CC Chair stood up and talked about what has been going on in S Queensferry this past year. That community is faced with many huge changes being imposed on them: the new bridge; new houses that would increase the housing stock by

40% in just a couple of years; and a new High School. They felt they needed to take more control and try to have some say in how it all pans out. They did not want to be just reactive and confrontational with CEC. So they decided to create a Town Plan.

They held 32 round table meetings, trying to find out from all parts of the community what they think of their community and want for it. They covered many subjects from Public Transport to Identity and Belonging. They pulled together the findings into a single page plan with diagrammatic representation of degree of importance and text summaries. (I have paper copies.)

The CEC was impressed and have taken it seriously enough to get Planners out to look at it, but it seems to have stalled there. The CC Chair said his main issue now was dealing with the community's expectations.

It was observed that it may be easier for S Queensferry than other CCs to do such a Plan as it is a more discrete unit than most other city communities. However, it was verging on inspirational!

*Tony, (from Grange/ Prestonfield?) will be going to Glasgow to give evidence at one of the sessions National Government is running for this Review.

Business section of the meeting:

Next meeting will be 28th of April- The New Localities Model: Your Questions Answered- Nick Croft and his Team.

Another subject for a meeting is the Planning Concordat-feedback, revision?

Asking for further ideas of subjects for meetings- send by e-mail

Saturday morning sessions to be arranged too.

Minutes from the last meeting were not ratified-postponed to next meeting(!)

CC elections will be in September. The process is getting approved- in place by 10th March. There was a call for the Council to promote the CCs.

The Communications group of EACC reported that it is still struggling to get control over its own website.....

More standing Orders are suggested and will be presented in good time...