

Crosshill and Govanhill Community Council
Meeting: Monday 9th November 2015 at 7.00pm
Samaritan House
Coplaw Street
Glasgow G42

Members of the Council: Jean Adair, Joe Beaver, Iain MacInnes, Anne Marie Millar, Keith Hawley, John Peebles, Jim Wilson and Mary Wright.

Present: Sixteen present, including D. Agnew, Liz Crosbie, C. Coutt, M. Gara, C. McCormick A. Macdonald, J. Macleod, J. Maloney, J. Murphy, F. O'Neill, G. Smith G.C.C., R. Scott, Inspector Hutton and Police Constable Galloway from Police Scotland.

In attendance:-Nicola Sturgeon, MSP, Councilor Mhairi Hunter and Councilor Soryia Siddique.

Apologies: Rosalyn Carruth, Councilor Hanif, Betty Painter.

Minute Taker: Moyra Robertson.

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting

Minutes: After a correction to the minutes of the October 12th it should have read - a letter has been written to the Chief Executive of Glasgow City Council instead of to the Chief Constable. The date and place were correct at the time of writing. Moyra Robertson apologized for the typing errors. The minutes of the meeting of October 12th were then proposed by Jean Adair and seconded by Joe Beaver.

Matters Arising:

- The Child Protection Issue – a letter has been sent but no response yet.
Action: Councilor Soryia Siddique will take this forward and get a waiting list for local schools.
- Discussion on the data sourced from Police Scotland via FOI Request
Action: The Chairman will prepare a list for the next meeting and arrange a meeting with new Area Commander via PC Galloway. This will be a closed meeting
- The Hub has not yet been contacted about housing related issues.
Action: the next meeting will be housing/rent related so the Hub will be invited to the December meeting.

Because our local MSP, Nicola Sturgeon was in attendance to talk to the Community Council the reports this month were brief.

Police Report: PC Galloway gave a brief report on the crime figures in the area stressing that actual crime has gone down while the perception has risen. There need to be more education and information for the public to allay the perceived fear.

Report: Councilor Mhairi Hunter: Began by offering an apology on behalf of Councilor Hanif who is ill

Report: Councilor Soryia Siddique: discussed the following issues

1. Dog fouling
1. Private Tenants Housing Bill
2. The proposed changed to Victoria Road – very interested in the opinions of local people. This proposal is open for consultation until 26th November. Govanhill Baths will be the venue for this event.
3. Cleansing complaints decreasing in general.
4. Despite the Government having put in place for Govanhill and its problems people do not feel safe. Govanhill is an advanced enforcement area – the first in Scotland so there is a recognition of the challenges in this area
5. A community consultation is being held on the fate of the old Victoria Infirmary

Planning Report: there is nothing to report as no planning notification was received.

Treasurer's Report: There is £2295.25 in the bank.

Date of Next Meeting: Monday December 14th 2015

The Chairman said that second half of the meeting was a discussion round the table, primarily for the Community Councilors to question the First Minister, but later he would open the meeting to the public.

Issues Discussed:

The First Minister was asked by the Chairman to the Private Tenants Bill and to outline how this bill would be used by the government and local authorities and would there be a general improvement in the maintenance of buildings, the lack of proper factoring and landlords not taking responsibility for the fabric of buildings?

1. This legislation is very new and needs to run before it can be fully assessed. The focus is on tenancy agreement clearly defining the terms on which a

landlord can terminate it e.g. antisocial behavior. There are no rent caps but this could be considered.

2. The enhanced enforcement and the four blocks in question – Govanhill is test bed for this project, more powers have been given to Glasgow City Council to deal with bad landlords. This legislation is only part funded and limited to the first phase which is hopefully the first of a much longer project. More funding can be obtained and the change in the housing mix will help in the longer term
3. Money to buy up the properties in the four blocks is relatively limited and it is going to take time to change the mix in Govanhill but this should lead to properties refurbished, proper factoring, and further tranches of funding to keep the project going until Govanhill is fixed.
4. There is no plan for compulsory purchase if landlord refuses to sell but this will need to be considered in the future
5. The landlord register is different from HMO's and tends to be passive not taking action against bad landlords but she could not accept it was entirely passive and could be proactive. The maximum fine has recently been increased £5000 but only £300 for a first offence. However it takes time to look again at the law and get legislation through parliament.
6. There are no checks on rented properties compared with HMO's but change in landlord laws are moving in that direction. The government is waiting for third party on property rights to report.
7. We need to get the balance right between the tenant and landlord now the Glasgow City Council has enhanced powers there will be a shift in balance and she stressed the statute book is there to be used. The legislation is for the councils to be proactive in pushing for change and solutions to density of population, squatters, the balance between private rentals and ownership.
8. Factors have too much power at present. There are some excellent factors e.g. GHA, but many do as little as possible and overcharge for the bare minimum.

There is a code of conduct but it is very limited in its application, at present the system is to deal with problems as they arise.

9. There was a discussion on the need for all landlords to have a proper qualification Alex Neil is heading a hit squad which included the Hub. They were adopting a multidisciplinary approach. The report is pending, this would provide a comprehensive list and a breakdown that makes sense as proper communication was sadly lacking.

It was important to communicate problems with the relevant authorities e.g. the Hub. The First Minister is a great supporter of the Hub, she meets frequently with them and

when they made aware of problems, they get things done. It's not perfect but problems cannot be fixed if not communicated.

As regards social housing there is the right of tenants to freedom of information. This must be made known as a right deferred is a right denied. A good Housing Association will provide this information to its tenants.

Policing and Crime:

Question: There is high profile about the level of crime in Govanhill, concerns about safety, old people being mugged and scared to leave home, gangs hanging around street corners etc.

Inspector Hutton said that according to police statistics Govanhill has no more crime than other areas of Glasgow. Statistics, however, are irrelevant if people are scared and the police understand this. Here in Govanhill they keep a high profile to make criminals aware of their presence, the use of CCTV to be installed soon will help in the future.

The fear of crime was fed by people's perceptions and articles in the press so it was important to get the balance right.

This caused a reaction from the people attending who were able to cite incidents giving reasons for their lack of confidence

- Police presence is not seen in some areas of Govanhill
- Crowds gathering at corners
- Sexual assaults
- Older children not allowed out without parental supervision.

This is not a lawless area the figures are healthy here but there is the very real fear of crime and this must be communicated to the public. There has a change of tactics while maintaining a high profile more plainclothes police has been deployed. There has been more intelligence gathering, listening and action on information provided. The general public should be reassured that all is being done to stop crime.

There is under-reporting of crime as it seems people cannot be bothered. The police are reactive and the incident has to be reported before the police can make a decision or not to investigate. Many were puzzled about what is classed as a police matter – the answer is to call 101 when the operator will be able to tell and refer it on. Resources are prioritised so this determines police action. The cameras will be arriving in January.

The MSP was asked about stop and search which is higher in this area but has no effect on crime. She is totally concerned with this issue which has had a high profile recently. This is not lazy policing but about safety in the community. There are

grounds for stop and search and it is mandatory for the police to have the ability to stop and search. The stop and search review shows that number of these is down dramatically. Increased police presence means a random increase in stop and search and the more police the more offences found.

Police: Drug demonstration – unable to give much information at present but this issue attended to on a daily basis.

Cleansing: The City Council has increased services to Govanhill but there remains a problem with social cohesion with the mix of different ways people react. According to the GHA things have changed in a more positive way. There needs to be a more strategic approach to this problem – when good things happen they should be communicated and emphasised.

South Seeds

South Seeds has a project for improvement of tenement windows and advice for keeping warm this winter. There is an action plan out for consultation. The Community Council has a role in promoting the positive side of Govanhill.

Questions from the floor:

There was question on parking in Victoria Road if the new proposal for cycle paths happens. There is still the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on this and people need to engage with this. It should boost business for local shops and as it will be single lane traffic there will be ample provision for parking.

There is a problem with green bins there is no budget for provided to supply and many feel this is the wrong priority, Gordon Smith will refer this back to the Hub. People have to pay a share against the introduction of green bins and all owners have to pay for bins. Not all backcourts are suitable for green bins. Soryia Siddique is lobbying for funding for this.

The First Minister finished by saying there is a perception that MSPs live at an elevated level and are not aware of their constituency problems. This is not true her local office is nearby and local Councillors can help. She is in regular contact with the Hub and is often in the constituency. They are all there to be approached.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the First Minister.

Next Meeting

December 14th