Northfield and Willowbrae Community Council

Minutes of the Community Council Meeting
Held on 08/09/2026 at 7pm
at Northfield Community Centre

	Agenda Items	Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies – RP welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked members of the public to hold any questions/comments until the public forum at the end of the meeting due to the time limits of the meeting. Present: Ruth Pearson (chair), Margaret Bennett, Chris Alcorn, James Keating, Sunila Nimalasuriya, Rebeca Diaz-Vazquez. Cllr Alex Staniforth and three members of the public. Apologies were received from Gordon Macdonald, George Callaghan. And PC Iain Hamilton (Community Police Officer)	
2.	Minutes of last meeting & matters arising: The minutes of the last meeting on 14/07/26 were approved (proposed by MB seconded by JK). • Calvary Park update – MB reported that a Freedom of Information (FOI)request by Mrs Wilson recently revealed that a lease to Portobello Rugby Club (PRC) was signed in April 2025. We have asked to see the terms of the lease repeatedly over the last 18months and Mrs Wilson was assured in a reply to a FOI request she made in March 2026 that a lease had not been agreed. However, a subsequent request to the Council's Information Compliance Officer for a review in May 26 resulted in the Council's Head of Estates admitting that he was under the impression that the lease was not signed when he gave his initial response. It is hard to see how he would reply to an FOI request without checking this. This matters because we have been unable to make any progress in holding Edinburgh Leisure (EL) and PRC to the terms of the lease without knowing what they are. After scrutinising it, we are concerned that once again Mr & Mrs Wilson's rights have been ignored and that both EL and PRC are not always complying with its terms. We are pursuing these issues with the help of our elected Councillors and hope to meet with the Director of Place again soon. • Willowbrae Church Sale update - MB reported that the steering group (SG) submitted their draft application to the Scottish Government Community Land Team (CLT) on the 13/08/26. Their reply on 23/08/26 was disappointing and highlights how difficult it is for a group of community volunteers to comply with all the requirements. Some of these relate to the software being used by CLT, others to the huge number of technical requirements and the time involved in gathering the information and signatures required. The failure of the Church of Scotland (CofS) to engage with the steering group in any way has added to the difficulties. It appears that the chances of success are now very low and that if the group intend to proceed it could only be as a late application. The circumstances of this case are fairly unique so there is no precedent. The SG would like to discuss the whole process with MSP elected members to point out that it seems unfairly weighted against communities. MB to find out who is responsible for Communities at Holyrood. • Women's Conversation Café – MB reported that, in the light of the low numbers attending in June, it was decided to take a break over the school holidays and restart in September with a trial monthly meeting on the first Wednesday from 1.30-3pm. Council Officers currently running the Centre are happy for us to continue on this basis for the time being. We have asked local schools to highlight the meeting in their newsletters and have leaflets to give out in various locations. • Piershill Flat – MB reported that, with the help of Cllr Aston, the EO was finally able to present the petition and the case for reopening the flat to the Housing, Homelessness and Fairwork Committee on 25/08/26. After a short presentation on the history of the flat and our engagement with the community, Councillors asked questions and continued the discussion with Council Officers before a vote was taken. By a majority of nine to two, Cllrs voted to ask for a detailed feasibility study to be carried out and the result to be reported back to the committee by 1st December. Subsequently, the EO met with the Council Officer responsible for doing this to discuss possible partner organisations. The final decision will be taken by City Councillors in December.	MB

3.	• Buses update – Services #5 and #69 – Re the No 5 bus route, CA reported that he is unsure that the verge is too narrow on Mountcastle Drive North, as reported by the CEC contractors back to the Public Transport (PT) Team, and he will push again for narrow L-shaped shelters on Mountcastle Drive North. Re the No 69, CA reported that figures from the operator HCL indicate that on average c1,100 people use the service each month. CA has been putting timetables in bus shelters on the 69 route and will identify any he can't get into for PT to assist. A member of the public raised the issue of whether the No 69 could go to Duddingston Village, siting visitor attractions such as Jock Tamson Gairden & Dr Neil's Garden that might be of interest to the older community if made accessible. MB responded that this could be looked at during the next review, but that the route must take no more than one hour. CA to ask the question of CEC- PT Team & HcL.	CA
4.	Police Report (Community Police Officer – Iain Hamilton) – as PC Hamilton was unable to attend he emailed the following report: "We have received several reports regarding damage to parked vehicles, either smashed/cracked windows or scratches on paintwork. This seems to be even more prevalent across the city just now. A male has been identified and charged for a high number of these offences. I would ask residents to report any suspicious behaviour via 101, Police Scotland Contact Us or Crimestoppers. Consideration should be given to parking vehicles in driveways/garages where possible or in areas of good lighting or CCTV cover. We also continue to receive reports of drug dealing/use in the area. This is either reported by residents or caught by officers making proactive stops. I would encourage the reporting of any information relating to drug dealing/use as this allows us to target specific areas with plain clothed patrols. The Summer has also seen an increase in illegal Sur-Ron (electric off-road motorbikes) use around the city. These vehicles are illegal to use anywhere other than on private land with the landowner's permission. Those that use these bikes are often also involved in drug dealing and violence/use of weapons. Any information on the use and especially the storage of such vehicles would allow me to direct plain clothes patrols in order to try and catch those on the bikes. This is a difficult task as they have to be caught unaware either stationary or moving extremely slowly for it to be safe enough to get hold of them. We have been successful in getting a few in the past couple of months so any information provided would be of great help. Lastly, there is still a large rise in housebreaking across the city with vehicles often being the target. I would encourage residents to ensure homes/vehicles/motorbikes are kept locked up whilst unattended. Any signs of suspicious behaviour should be reported to Police."	
5.	Treasurer's update on financial position (CA/GC) – RP asked that it be recognised that a lot of work has gone in behind the scenes over the last two weeks by CA and GC to format the new accounts spreadsheet. GC has also opened a new account with Virgin Money which gives us free banking provided transactions are below ten per month which we have never exceeded. The new spreadsheet will help to simplify the accounting process and show us clearly the separation of restricted funds that come from grant money and are allocated to specific projects and the 'free' funds that are in our account to spend on our own comms and expenses. CA then gave the update in the absence of the treasurer. Current balance is £6392.85. Restricted funds from grants for Lilyhill Terrace Noticeboard and Northfield Heritage Information Board stands at £3156.00. There is £261 to come out of the account for annual insurance and banners for the fair, leaving a balance of unrestricted funds of £3236.85.	
6.	Planning update (CA) – In the eight-week period since last meeting in mid-July, eight applications had been Granted, nine were still awaiting a Decision, six new applications had been submitted, none were refused, but the Short Term Let (STL) at 3A (1F1) Piershill Place, which N&WCC had objected too, was Withdrawn. Cllr Staniforth explained that this was a delaying tactic by many STL consultants and applicants were deploying as Enforcement could take months and they would still operate with a licence, but no planning permission. The former Iceland store opposite Scottie's Pub at the north end of Northfield Broadway had its Change of Use from a home delivery warehouse to a shop unit Granted. There was a suggestion the building may become a gym. Three Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) were submitted in Duddingston Village Conservation area, but none warranted a TPO.	

7.	Local Place Plan – LPP (CA) – CA confirmed that while on 3 responses had been received during the month Information Period from mid-June to mid-July, final amendments from those comments received are being made after circulation of all those received and related suggested changes to all Community Cllrs to consider and final copy will be available at the Community Environment Fair along with a short display. It was agreed by Community Cllrs present to adopt the LPP and submit it to CEC Planning to meet their end of September deadline.	
8.	Community & Environment Fair 2026 – RP reported we have ~30 stall holders (about same number as last year). Those unable to come have asked to be kept on mailing list for next year. We are still waiting to hear if we have been successful in our grant application from Foundation Scotland. ECCAN grant funding was oversubscribed and we were then too late to apply to the council Community Grants Fund. RP thanked SN and MB for their preparation work and reminded members how the fair relies on everyone doing their bit throughout the day, particularly as we are now only eight members.	
9.	Local Authority Response on Community Council issues – RP expressed her dismay at hearing of situations where community councillors email council departments for advice, information and action and often don't even get a holding reply. As volunteers it feels as if our time isn't valued. Paul Laurence (CEO) committed to ensuring community council communication improved when he took office, and met all community council in August 2025, but there is no evidence that this has happened, despite previous representation to him. MB suggested that a letter to the EACC highlighting this issue, to make a collective complaint, might be the best course of action. RP asked that MB/CA write a letter highlighting the instances when a reply has not been forthcoming.	MB/CA
10.	Public Forum & any other business: Proposed bus lane trial 7am-7pm, 7 days a week – we have received three emails relating to this issue from businesses concerned about the impact it will have. There are currently two petitions in place to fight it. Members agreed that there was evidence of a very active opposition, that there was a consultation process being made available to businesses and residents with drop-in sessions at Meadowbank, and that therefore we were best placed to monitor the trial at this stage. RP to write to the businesses that have contacted us. Printing of the LPP – MB asked for permission to set aside up to £120 for three copies to be printed for the Community Environment Fair, the library and a copy for our own use. This was agreed. The chair of the Duddingston Conservation Society raised various issues regarding the LPP and whether these would be incorporated into the final version of the LPP. RP asked if these issues were the same as had already been communicated before the response deadline. The chair of DCS confirmed that they were. CA is currently working on final version and will incorporate all DCS requested changes.	RP CA
11.	Date of next meeting – Tuesday November 10th, any items for the agenda must be submitted no later than Monday 27th October to be included in the meeting.	

To keep up to date about the work of the NWCC, look up our website (https://www.northfieldandwillowbrae.org.uk).

You can also like us on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/nandwcc/).