

Crossgate Community Partnership

Annual report 2013

Crossgate Community Partnership (CCP) is a charity whose objects are:

- to promote the conservation and improvement of the physical and natural environment of Crossgate and the surrounding area in Durham City
- to promote the establishment, continuation, and improvement of local amenities
- to build and maintain a strong, safe, healthy, and balanced community by encouraging the residents of Crossgate and neighbouring areas to participate in community activities.

The principal way we do this is to hold monthly residents meetings to identify current issues and address them. We are grateful to the North Road Methodist Church for hosting these meetings for a modest charge. We also have an email list where members can exchange views between meetings.

We have 102 local residents registered as members (up from 72 last year). Most of this increase took place after the October meeting, at which at least 97 people were present. The median attendance at our meetings was 15.5, plus guests (the average of 21.8 was skewed by the large numbers at the October meeting).

Police representatives have attended 10 meetings since April and we have a half-hour PACT¹ session at the start of each meeting, which sets priorities that we would like to see addressed by the police. The main issues have been rowdiness and anti-social behaviour in North Road and elsewhere, disturbance from late-night student revellers, bicycle and scrap metal theft, and licensing issues including Boxers Bar in Crossgate, where we supported a licence review initiated by the police, resulting in the bar losing its licence. Our main contact has been PCSO Steven Bell, who took over from PCSO Leesa Bennison in the spring. PCSO Martin Haigh from the Alcohol Harm Reduction Unit has attended on two occasions to brief us about ongoing issues, and take away our concerns regarding them. In September the Chief Constable Michael Barton dropped in and spoke briefly. Our thanks to all of these officers.

In the spring we learned that the County Hospital site had been sold to a consortium who were proposing to redevelop it. We invited representatives to our July meeting and they gave a presentation which was well received, largely because they were proposing to keep the Victorian building at the heart of the hospital, and because they said that all options were on the table. Because they had been meeting with the Council we also sought a meeting to put across our views. At this we learned that the only option that the developers had discussed with the Council was for student accommodation. Concerned local residents arranged a leaflet drop which resulted in a standing-room only October meeting which re-emphasised our opposition to student accommodation on this site, and highlighted the absence of any coherent policy regarding large privately-run student halls of residence.

We have continued to monitor and make representations on proposed developments and planning applications in our area. Major issues are the proposed conversion of the Nevilles Cross club to student flats, and 51 The Avenue, where the front hedge was removed and the garden converted to gravel and cars parked there. The Planning Department was alerted to this failure to seek conservation area consent in February and the matter is ongoing. We have also reported failures to observe the voluntary code of practice regarding letting boards.

¹ Police and Communities Together

CCP has submitted evidence to the pre-submission draft of the County Durham Plan regarding student accommodation, particularly the absence of a policy for large scale privately-run halls. We have maintained strong contacts with the Durham Green Belt Campaign and supported their submissions.

A major cause of concern remains the problem caused by the large number of students living in the area. This has led to problems with late-night disturbances in term time, and a deserted city with much reduced support for traders out of term time. Unfortunately neither the Council planning officers nor the Area Planning Committee (which has a majority of members from outside the City area) are supportive of objections by ourselves or by local residents to the construction or conversion of more houses in multiple occupation for student residents. We are maintaining contact with the national HMO lobby who report progress made elsewhere in the country by more responsive councils.

Our hopes that we might build a dialogue with the University have stalled, as the attendance in December 2012 of a university representative proved to be a one-off. The university consistently fails to comment on major planning applications for student accommodation and to liaise with the local community.

The recycling and rubbish collection remain an uphill struggle. The large number of students cause problems though a mixture of being unaware of what the system is, ignoring it, and depositing large volumes of rubbish at the end of term. Their landlords also dispose of rubbish inappropriately. We have been grateful for the help provided by the council when problems are drawn to their attention.

We have been pleased that our local Councillors, Grenville Holland and Nigel Martin, have been frequent attenders at our meetings and since May they have been joined by Richard Ormerod, the newly-elected councillor for Elvet & Gilesgate which since a boundary revision includes part of our area. David Freeman, the other Elvet & Gilesgate councillor, keeps in touch but is a less frequent attender. They have taken away and acted on many issues raised with them. We were very pleased that new play equipment has been installed in the small park on Allergate to replace that removed two years ago. This was funded from the councillors' neighbourhood budgets. We are also supporting and keeping an eye on the proposals for Wharton Park.

CCP supports the creation of a Neighbourhood Planning Forum, the body being set up to deal with planning issues in the unparished area of Durham City. Four of your trustees are members of the Forum, including Roger Cornwell, who is its vice-chair.

The January meeting elected six trustees to look after matters between monthly meetings. They are Roger Cornwell (chair), Ruth Chambers (secretary), Mike Costello, Ann Evans, Carole Reeves and Simon Squires (treasurer). As well as many less formal communications, they have met formally on three occasions: on 8th January to elect the officers, on 26th September for to agree our approach before the meeting with the Council over the County Hospital, and on 1st November to discuss our response to the County Durham Plan.

A fuller account of the work of CCP is on our website at crossgate.durhamcity.org.uk which includes the minutes of our monthly meetings (see crossgate.durhamcity.org.uk/minutes) and how to apply to us for small grants to enhance the area.

6 January 2014

Crossgate Community Partnership

Financial Statement

Year to 30 September 2012/13 2011/12

Income

Grants Received

Donations Received

-at meetings

-businesses

-other

Interest Received £2.49 £2.67

Total Income £2.49 £2.67

Expenditure

Grants to Local projects £15.00

Insurance

Community Action Day

Awards Ceremony

Willow Sculpture

Community Gardens

Meeting Expenses £135.00 £198.67

Printing and Photocopying

Postage

Stationery

Total Expenditure £150.00 £198.67

Surplus/Deficit for Year -£147.51 -£196.00

Balance Brought Forward £2,609.00 £2,805.00

Balance Carried Forward £2,461.49 £2,609.00

Represented By:

Co-op Bank Account £2,398.49 £2,546.00

Cash Balance £63.00 £63.00

Debtors £0.00 £0.00

Creditors £0.00 £0.00

Total Assets £2,461.49 £2,609.00