MORNINGSIDE COMMUNITY COUNCIL
working together for our local community

MINUTES OF MCC MONTHLY MEETING, OPEN DOOR, WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2026

Present

Members: Alastair Webb (Chair), Goff Cantley (Planning Officer), Tamsin Kilgour (I Love Morningside), Serena Naismith, Theo Spanellis (Treasurer), Ken Harvey, Callum McLeavy, Moira Gibson (Minutes).
Attending: Cllr Ben Parker, Arne Strid, Catriona Oliphant, Phillida Sawbridge, Jane Brown, Sheena Nimmo, two journalism students from Edinburgh Napier University.

Apologies

Members: Caroline McKinley (Secretary), Carol Duncan (Engagement Officer), John Robson (Spokes). Iain Meiklejohn (Chair, Friends of Midmar Paddock), Jennifer Scarce. Others: Polly Purvis

Presentation on Royal Edinburgh Hospital: overview of future plans

Dr Andrew Watson, Associate Medical Director of the 'Royal Ed', gave an informative presentation about the hospital, located in Morningside and the largest psychiatric hospital in Scotland. Founded by Dr Andrew Duncan, it became the Edinburgh Lunatic Asylum, a place of refuge for people with mental illness or learning disability. Patient funding was a mix of private and public fees. In the latter half of the 19th century and into the 20th century, there were huge advances in psychiatry and psychology.

The Royal Ed provides psychiatric and mental health services, including treatment for learning disabilities and dementia, and a wide range of specialist services, which include Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Forensic psychiatry (The Orchard Clinic), Learning disabilities (The Greenbank Centre and the William Fraser Centre), Lothian Eating Disorder Services (LEDS), Traumatic stress (The Rivers Centre), Alcohol and substance misuse (The Ritson Clinic)

The Kennedy Tower is a listed white block, built in the 1960s to house a department of the University of Edinburgh. Its future is uncertain as it has asbestos and now stands empty.

With the move towards 'care in the community', numbers requiring in-patient treatment declined and now stand at around 320. Patients with intellectual disability are housed at Gogarburn, while the Orchard Building is a secure unit. The support of charities and volunteers is much valued.

Some two decades ago, it was thought that patients at the Astley Ainslie site might be relocated to the Royal Ed, but the latest thinking is that they will be treated in East Lothian. The plan for the Royal Ed must therefore be updated – an increasingly complex matter since the Scottish Government is proposing a major re-structure of health service delivery across Scotland. Dr Watson said that mental health is a Cinderella service: in England, 13% of the NHS budget is allocated to mental health matters, whilst the figure in Scotland is 9% and in Lothian 8.3%.

Concerns were expressed at the size of the proposed parking allocation and questions asked about why more use could not be made of public transport. The Planning Officer suggested that the 38 bus, which runs from the Western General Hospital to the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, should run through the site. Dr Watson explained that many patients relied on wheelchair access, which make use of public transport difficult. The Chair thanked Dr Watson for such an interesting and useful presentation.

Action: Cllr Parker offered to investigate whether more dropped kerbs for wheelchair users could be provided, especially between the M&S bus-stop and the hospital.

Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes 15 July were approved. The Matters Arising in the July minutes are addressed under the Travelling Safely and Correspondence items on the Agenda.

Planning

A huge Vote of Thanks was given to Goff Cantley, our dedicated Planning Officer, who has given MCC 18 years of service, meticulously monitoring planning issues, offering insight, suggesting courses of action and attending meetings. His knowledge and commitment have set a very high bar. The baton now passes to John Robson, to whom we are grateful.

The City of Edinburgh Council Consultation Hub is inviting comments on the following at https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/:

1) Proposed lease of Common Good Property by the Royal Observatory Blackford Hill for car parking - closes 28 October 2026;
2) The online consultation on the Council's Astley Ainslie Draft Place Brief - not to be confused with the Community Trust's Local Place Plan – closes on 11 November 2026. Alternatively, you can see the proposals at Newington Library on Saturday 24 October from 10.30am to 1.30pm.
3) City Plan 2040 "Call for Ideas" closes this evening, 21 October.

Other Events:

- Astley Ainslie Community Trust AGM: the date has changed to Tuesday 17 November at 7pm (not 18, as previously announced) in the South Wing at the Eric Liddell Community Centre;

- Reid Memorial Church: a community meeting has been called to discuss the proposed sale of the Church. 4pm on Sunday 25 October at the Church's Large Hall.

The proposal to create a Friends of Hermitage Terrace Gardens, in order to create a useful public space, is under active consideration but owners will have to be canvassed individually and to agree. Both Goff and Sheena know some residents and will take soundings.
Action: Goff & Sheena to contact residents for initial view.

Travelling Safely

1) Cllrs Ross and Parker are still trying to identify an appropriate person to liaise with us on the 'hotspots' outlined at the last meeting.

2) John Robson has liaised with Parent Councils of two schools in Canaan Lane. Cllr Parker said that a 'School Street' will be created in Canaan Lane in late 2027/early 2028. This may affect plans for traffic in the Astley Ainslie site (see the Draft Place Brief). Meanwhile, interim measures may be considered.

3) The 'Problem Statement', outlining the problems associated with the high volume of traffic on Morningside Road and posted on the MCC website (www.morningside.org.uk), is under consideration and an update will be given at the November meeting.

4) Work will soon be done on widening the pavement opposite Waitrose, on Steel's Place, and the installation of a safe crossing on Morningside Drive is pending.

5) Attention was drawn to the danger, especially in the dark, of the 'junction' of Braid Avenue with Corrennie Drive. Pre-Covid, there was a straight run down Braid Avenue, with side roads having to Give Way. Road markings should be reinstated to reflect this.

6) On a wider point, the need for road markings such as yellow lines and speed bump chevrons to be regularly repainted was requested in order to improve road safety.

7) Proposed traffic calming measures on Midmar Drive have not been progressed. Where speeding traffic is an issue, there was a call for flashing speed limit signs to be considered. The one at Buckstone parade of shops was very successful.
Action: Cllr Parker to check what monitoring is in hand.

8) Disappointment was expressed at the decision to withdraw the Voi bike park near the Bowls Club because of low usage and bikes falling over. Alternative sites are sought.

9) Questions were raised about Greenbank Lane, including why the 'pinch point' had been removed.
Action: Cllr Parker, working with Cllr Ross, will seek clarification.

Financial position

- £940 was received in grant aid from the Council. £888 remains. The grant is insufficient for our needs and ambitions. Methods of additional fundraising, including other grants, should be explored and cost-cutting measures (eg cheaper web/email hosting) should be investigated.

Correspondence

There remains an issue to do with the reduction in police liaison and the difficulty of getting any local information from them despite several requests. The Visitor Levy will only support extra police for the city centre, not Morningside. Meanwhile, local crime is still a considerable worry. MCC has received no information on the person arrested in Hermitage Terrace for flyposting, nor the overturned vehicle. A regular crime report (written or in person) is sought but, meantime, concerns should be sent to the MCC Secretary at secretary@morningside.org.uk. Ian Murray MP has intimated that local liaison meetings with Police Scotland may take place before the end of the year.

Cllr Munro, who sits on the Council's Education Committee, has advised that a temporary fix for the problem of overcrowding at Boroughmuir High School will be to place portakabins within the school grounds, thus further reducing the limited external space. Parents wish to utilise the adjacent empty plot and MCC supports this. Neither is a permanent solution.
Action: MCC to write in support of putting portakabins on the empty plot and to seek further information on overcrowding projections and solutions.

Any Other Competent Business

- Morningside's Late Night Shopping is on Wednesday 2 December. The Christmas Tree lights switch-on and South Morningside Primary School choir will be at 5pm. Treats may be offered.
- There are many complaints about leaf fall at this time of year. When wet, the leaves are slippery and dangerous. Other Community Councils (Grange, Merchiston) organise community-building leaf-clearing squads using equipment provided by the Council.
- Iain Meiklejohn and Moira Gibson will attend a meeting of the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils on Monday 2 November. The meeting is to consider options for EACC following the retirement of the long-seving secretary.
- The Council's new dedicated officer to liaise with Community Councils is seeking a meeting: the Chair will organise our response.
- Cllr Munro is pressing forward for action on blocked gullies across the MCC area. There is a process to report blocked gullies (and many other things) on the Council's website.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be at the Open Door at 7.30pm on Wednesday 18 November 2026.