

The Southside Association

**117 Nicolson Street
Edinburgh
EH8 9ER**

Founded 1972 *Scottish Charity No SCO12262*

www.southsideassociation.co.uk

Annual General Meeting

Chair's Report 2016-2017

We held the usual nine meetings in 2016-2017, including the AGM, as well as the traditional Christmas Lights Carol Service.

Once again, we have to report that membership is falling, with a current paid membership list of 20. Average attendance at the meetings was 15, down by three. Many groups and organisations find it difficult to attract new members nowadays. The Association can make a difference to community living by helping people with all manner of issues, via Council contacts, or just by pointing them in the right direction.

We continue to be very grateful for the reports from Police Scotland, and for the opportunity to exchange information with the officers who attend our meetings.

And we thank Councillors Burgess, Orr, Perry, and Rose for attending in rota and for both keeping us informed and for helping resolve questions and problems to the best of their ability.

The Christmas Event was again very well-supported. Thanks to the Rev Richard Frazer from Greyfriars Kirk for officiating and to Cllr Perry for compering. We were glad to have donations from local shops and pizza outlets. Arrangements were made fairly late on in the year due to uncertainty about the lights being provided by the Council, and we wonder what the position will be this year. Outside sponsorship is a possibility but the various consents have to be obtained, and the Council has to oversee the technical part of the event. Thanks to the choir from Preston Street Primary School and the choir and band from the University of Edinburgh, and for all the volunteer caterers and helpers. A special thanks too to Scott Wilkins and his staff from the Community Centre for their help and for providing the sound system.

Guest speakers included a representative from the G1 Group in June, who updated us on the progress of the renovation of the former *Odeon* Cinema in Clerk Street. The restoration work is being done in a very painstaking way, and is of course taking time. We hope to have more news later in the year.

At the September meeting we welcomed Dan Rous, the Development Manager of the Greyfriars Charteris Centre, an offshoot of Greyfriars Kirk. He gave us a brief history of the Centre and outlined their vision for connecting communities.

Steven Cuthill, the Local Transport and Environment Manager for the newly formed South East Locality attended our November meeting. He explained that there had been a restructuring of management of local Council services to try to make them more efficient and cost-effective. The South East Locality includes three Neighbourhood Partnerships (South Central, City Centre, and Liberton and Gilmerton) and four wards (Southside/Newington, Meadows/Morningside, Liberton/Gilmerton, and City Centre).

And in March we had a presentation from City Centre Posters, who helped with advice on how to combat the problem of flyposting.

Many of us were involved in the efforts to save the Southside Surgery; fortunately it is not going to close after all but has been relocated to the Conan Doyle Medical Centre at Cameron Toll. This is not ideal for some patients.

We are very grateful to Hilary McDowell for her untiring efforts at identifying, reporting, and chasing up numerous environmental matters. This can be a very frustrating business at times. Redundancies and the accompanying restructuring within the Council have led to difficulties getting things done, and it is taking time for new responsibilities to become clear.

Following the positive response to the Gifford Park mural, we are investigating the possibility of new murals at Gibb's Entry, Haddon's Court, and the pend between St Patrick Square and Buccleuch Street. This is likely to be a long-term project, and we hope to have the support and involvement from local businesses and as many members of the community as possible.

We have made representations on some planning and licensing matters as usual.

We continue to liaise with the Southside Community Council on various matters. Our representative on that group, Dora Lola-Luz is unable to continue in that role, and we'd welcome another member to replace her.

After our Treasurer's resignation, we were very grateful to Hilary McDowell for taking on the role, and to Jan Fraser for agreeing to become membership secretary.

In these very uncertain times, and with finances stretched at all levels, I think that the Southside Association still has the strength and ability to improve life for residents in the area, even with a reduced membership. Depleted Council staff numbers means that problems are not picked up so readily, and we can and do help there. It is very important to recruit new members, and I ask existing members once again for their support with this.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to the other office bearers and committee members and especially to Moira Gibson for her role as minutes Secretary for the past three years; and to the members of the Association for their continuing interest in the Southside area.

Colin Christison
Chair/Secretary

April 2017