

THE SOUTHSIDE ASSOCIATION
117 Nicolson Street
Edinburgh
EH8 9ER

**Minutes of meeting held in the South Side Community Education Centre
on Tuesday 5 April 2011, at 7pm**

PRESENT: Carol McHugh (Chair), Vera Anderson, Margaret Bagan, Caroline Barr, Tom Bonallo, Stewart Brechin, Pauline Calder, Colin Christison (Secretary), Jan Fraser, Bob Hodgart, Tom King, May Linton (Membership Secretary), Sandra McCormick (Vice-Chair), Kenny McLeod, Ethel Murray, George Pitcher, Cllr Cameron Rose, Grace Ross, Molly Ross, Fiona Scott (Treasurer), Lisa Sibbald, Keith Smith, Pamela Spiers, Random Switch, Colin Symes, and Joan Young.

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Carol welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Ruth Bailey, Sergeant Allan Campbell, PC Jeanette McCulloch, Margaret Dalziel, Mary Devine, Linda Femister, Jean Miller, Rose Mongan, Robert Ross, Jo Scott, Louise Smith, Marjory Watson and Maggie Wilson.

2. Guest Speaker: Colin Symes, Community Church Edinburgh

Carol introduced Colin, already a well-known member of the Association. Colin is part of the management group of the Edinburgh Street Pastors organisation. This is a group of church-based volunteers who operate on the city streets (around the Omni centre and George Street areas) in the early hours (1am to 4am) of each Saturday morning to help people who have perhaps overindulged, or got into some difficulty. The group's watchword is "Caring, Listening, Helping".

In a detailed illustrated talk, Colin described how Street Pastors operate. The group was pioneered in Brixton, London, in 2003, and was staffed by volunteers from interdenominational churches in response to urban problems. There are now 150 such groups in the UK, with over 4000 volunteers deployed. A need for a group is identified, and after consultation and research, training, liaison with partners such as the local police and local council, and sponsorship (both personal and from the churches), the group can be established. The volunteers are trained for up to six months before they take part, are vetted by Disclosure Scotland, and they work in groups of three (with one male and two females, or two males and one female), with a team leader in charge. Pastors always receive a warm welcome from the club-goers, as well as from people such as taxi-marshals, security staff, and door-keepers. On the street, Pastors listen, care, and help, and they do not preach. They help people get home safely, particularly vulnerable women on their own. They sweep up broken glass from glasses and bottles; the glass presents a hazard for women who have discarded or removed their shoes, and pairs of flip-flops are issued if required. Their presence helps to release police time, and they are monitored by CCTV, with their distinctive uniforms instantly recognisable by all. They can ring home for youngsters, and have First Aid skills and equipment, and can assist until an ambulance arrives if necessary. Their equipment includes torches, gloves, water, flip-flops, First Aid kit, notepads and pens, leaflets, evidence bags, dustpan and brush, and spikeys (designed to cover a drinks bottle to prevent its contents being compromised). Pastors do not get involved in violent situations.

Colin outlined the impact that Street Pastors have in Edinburgh. They take pressure off the emergency services, and their presence can lead to a fall in the crime rate. They help make the areas a bit safer, and remove at least 50 broken glasses and bottles per night. They can assist with people getting home or to a place of shelter for the night. They are required to have a good background awareness of such things as the local geography, key statutory agencies, misuse of drugs, youth initiatives, and to possess good counselling skills. The 13 Newington Churches have expressed interest in establishing a beat in the Southside (South Bridge, Bristo Square, Nicolson Street, and possibly the Cowgate), on Friday nights from 10pm to 2am, but the police have yet to be consulted.

There were numerous comments and questions, after which the members thanked Colin warmly for his presentation.

3. Police Report

Sergeant Campbell was unable to attend.

4. Minutes of Meeting held on 1 March 2011

Approved; proposed by Maggie Bagan and seconded by Lisa Sibbald.

5. Matters arising

Item 7.2 (John Ross Memorial Fund) – Fiona and Colin had a meeting with Lloyds TSB on 31 March, and the bank required two new forms to be completed, as well as a Resolution from the Association, to comply with their requirements for new signatories for the account.

6. Secretary's report and correspondence

6.1 Odeon: objection submitted to the planning application for partial demolition. Lisa Sibbald reported that over 500 objections had been handed to the Council in the form of the postcards produced by the Community Council.

6.2 The Community Parks Officer has issued the Association with keys for the notice boards in St Patrick and Nicolson Squares; we are allowed an A4 poster in each.

6.3 June Meeting – the speaker will be Anne Stewart, a support worker from People and Places Scotland Care and Support, together with a colleague and a service user. They will give a short talk on their services and work.

6.4 EVOG (Edinburgh Council of Voluntary Organisations) can offer guidance about the forthcoming digital TV switchover.

6.5 It was agreed to hold an informal social evening after the AGM on 3 May.

7. Treasurer's report

Fiona said that the most recent balance was £1203.44.

8. Environmental matters

George Pitcher reported the results of the South Central Neighbourhood Roads Capital Programme for 2011-2012. The top ranked project was the carriageway around 126-134 Pleasance, and repairs would start in due course. He also mentioned that proposals for 2012-

2013 were sought (applications must be submitted by 30.12.2011). He had asked for more information for other funding sources, and hoped that the idea of improving local shop fronts and St Patrick Square could be revived.

9. Question and Answer Session with the attending Councillor

Cllr Rose departed before this point in the meeting, although he contributed to the discussion after Colin Symes' talk.

10 Any other business

10.1 Pauline Calder expressed enormous frustration at her lack of success in preventing fringe-goers, as well as fringe staff and performers, from making excessive noise from about 9am until 6.30am the following morning, every day during July and August, outside the Roxy Venue in Roxburgh Place and the Pleasance Courtyard. Although she had been in touch with the police and the local council, as well as the Festival and Fringe offices, she and her neighbours had got nowhere, and she had to leave her flat for a week to get peace. Members expressed their sympathy with her plight, and recommended that Pauline and her neighbours form a residents' association, take her concerns to the Community Council, speak to senior officers in the L&B Police, get a mediation service involved, and not to give up. Enforcement of existing laws was being ignored. The licensing hours had been reduced from 1am to 11pm but people still congregated in the street, and although the venue had closed in October after the collapse of the Edinburgh University Settlement, it was believed that a sale was imminent.

10.2 Random Switch mentioned the noise pollution from the pawn shop in Nicolson Street; loud music was blared onto the street all day. Colin would see what could be done.

11. Date of next meeting

AGM, Tuesday 3 May.
