

THE SOUTHSIDE ASSOCIATION

117 Nicolson Street

Edinburgh

EH8 9ER

Founded 1972

Scottish Charity No SCO12262

Minutes of meeting held in the South Side Community Centre on Tuesday 3 June 2014, at 7pm

PRESENT: Lisa Sibbald (Chair), Tom King (Vice-Chair), Moira Gibson (Minutes Secretary), Hilary McDowell, Jan Fraser, Vera Anderson, Susan Brown, Kenny McLeod, George Pitcher, May Linton, Derek Suttie, Jo Scott, Jez Kempston, Isobel Leckie, Tom Bonallo, Ethel Murray, Bob Hodgart, David Wood, Margaret Bagan.

Also present were: Councillor Jim Orr, PC Janie Harman and, from the University of Edinburgh, Senior Vice-Principal Prof Mary Bownes, Director of Estates and Buildings Gary Jebb, and Estate Development Manager Jane Johnston.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Lisa Sibbald welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Colin Christison (Membership and Mailing List Secretary), Colin Symes, Pamela Spiers, Random Switch, Marjory Watson, Molly Ross, Linda Femister.

2. Police Report

Lisa welcomed PC Janie Harman who reported on local crime. There have been several arrests for breach of the peace and vandalism. A serious assault took place recently in Nicolson Square and there was also a violent incident in East Preston Street. There has been a recent spate of cycle thefts and PC Harman emphasised the importance of getting bikes marked. A four-week operation against violent crime and anti-social behaviour has had positive results. Hilary McDowell reported a site in Holyrood Park, to the rear of St Leonard's police station, where drug taking appears to be taking place and PC Harman promised it would be investigated.

3. Guest speakers from University of Edinburgh: Professor Mary Bownes, Senior Vice-Principal; Gary Jebb, new Director of Estates & Buildings

Lisa welcomed the speakers. Professor Bownes gave a short presentation on the history and work of the University. It was founded by the Council in 1583 as the Tounis College and is now ranked as 17th best university in the world. It does world class research into cancer and many other diseases, life sciences, informatics, energy, engineering, and also contributes to the cultural life of the city through festivals, concerts, exhibitions and events. It has over 30,000 students, of which around a third are from 140 countries outside the UK, and students contribute around £68m annually to the local economy, supporting over 1,500 jobs. Students run a free legal clinic, a free clinic for pets in homeless hostels, a small animal clinic at the Vet School and many more students

do voluntary work and fundraise for charities. The University is the third largest employer in the city and spends millions of pounds with local suppliers. It runs evening classes, summer schools and offers expert consultancy to businesses and entrepreneurs, creating new spin-out companies in the city and attracting investment to the city.

Gary Jebb explained that he was new to his post but already very aware of local concerns about the scale of development in this part of the city. He mentioned the recladding of the Appleton Tower, the McEwan Hall project, the refurbishment of the Law faculty within Old College and the new development on Holyrood Road. He talked about the recent consultation on the proposed student residential development on University land at Meadow Lane and that, in response to comments received during the consultation, the University had reduced the scale of the proposed development.

Both speakers emphasised that they were primarily here to listen to concerns about local developments and there were many members who responded.

Amongst the issues raised were concerns about too many students on the Southside ('is the Southside just a student campus?'); inconsiderate students in tenement flats; the quality of student halls; one person's 'managed' accommodation in student halls is another person's student ghetto not integrated into the local community; the lack of consultation with the community; the decline in small businesses locally; the need for more social housing suitable for families and older people; the need for a more balanced profile of the community - the latest census data shows that the 30% student threshold has been breached; the need to see if students can/will live in other parts of the city (Shrubhill/Leith Walk was suggested); that shops and services in the Southside are increasingly oriented to student needs; the expense of adult evening classes when compared to Council classes.

The speakers responded by saying that these concerns were true for nearly all university towns and that accommodation for students in halls of residence had previously been welcomed by the community as freeing up local flats and managing student behaviour. The recent Meadow Lane consultation had resulted in a reduced height for the buildings with the loss of 100 bed spaces, so the views of the community were certainly taken on board. The University cannot invest in social housing because the money it receives from public and other sources is ring-fenced for teaching and research.

Other members felt that students made the community a more lively and vibrant place with a good social mix; that student expenditure locally was important in maintaining a healthy shopping environment; that volunteering and fundraising were very much appreciated; and valued the use of spaces such as InSpace for community purposes.

Cllr Orr asked about future plans and was assured that the Meadow Lane development was the only new University residential initiative currently being considered. He asked for greater emphasis on cycling and was assured that the University encouraged this.

The University was asked to report back to members on three things:

- could they sponsor the Southside Christmas Party?
- could they offer concessions on evening/adult classes to Southsiders?
- do they have figures for the number of Southsiders who attend the University?

The University promised to try and respond to these queries.

Lisa and the members thanked Mary and Gary for their talk and for their interest.

4. Minutes of meeting of 1 April 2014, and matters arising

Approved; proposed by Jo Scott and seconded by Moira Gibson.

Members were asked to note that, re item 5.3 in the previous minutes, the refurbished Methodist Church was now open.

5. Secretary's Report

- 5.1 The Chair noted that the OSCR return was due and that it would be completed by Colin Christison.
- 5.2 An email from the Neighbourhood Partnership had been received and circulated inviting members to participate in awareness-raising sessions about how local communities can influence Council policies and processes.

6. Treasurer's Report

- 6.1 The balance is £1,730.00, and members were reminded that membership fees are due.
- 6.2 The Chair has applied to EVOT (Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Trust) for a grant to fund a new website, printing of flyers/posters, and postage. A decision is due at the end of June.

7. Funding and Expenditure Matters for the Future

Tom King (Vice-Chair) spoke to this item concerning the income of and expenditure by the Southside Association and its financial sustainability. It is well-nigh impossible to increase membership fees so the alternative is to trim outgoings. The biggest item is the Christmas party and Tom suggested that the switch-on in St Patrick's Square should be stopped and the party held in the Community Centre.

Tom also suggested that The Southsider had had its day and there was no longer a need to give or ring-fence funds for its production, particularly since the Southside Advertiser offers free advertising space to community groups.

It appears that the annual public liability insurance premium is required whether or not the outside event takes place. At the Christmas party, lighting rig, PA system, centre venue, refreshments and carol sheets are donated, leaving actual costs at around £120. However, it was felt that the Association could not take for granted some £650 worth of donations (mainly from the South Side Community Centre).

Some Association costs are fixed, such as postage, printing etc and the Chair has applied for a grant from EVOT, but other options for the event should be examined, including just an indoor party and/or possible sponsorship by the University or other organisations.

8. Planning and Licensing Matters

- 8.1 Lutton Court – application for student accommodation previously refused will be appealed to the Scottish Government.
- 8.2 Hot Food Takeaway on Nicolson Street – permission granted.
- 8.3 The site of the Empire Bingo Hall at 50 Nicolson Street is the subject of an application by Wetherspoon's to create a superpub – a proposal that Southside Association should object taken to a vote: 7 for objecting, 9 against. Therefore there will be no Association objection but individuals are free to object if they wish.
- 8.4 Holyrood Park Road – one advertising hoarding has come down and one is under appeal.
- 8.5 191-213 Causewayside (Paramount Printers) – an application for 188-bed student hall of residence has been lodged. The development is just outside the Southside area (Grange/Prestonfield) but still of interest.
- 8.6 Homebase site on St Leonard's Street – Unite is holding public consultation on proposal for 500+ bed student hall of residence. The exhibition is on 25-26 June, 3-7pm, at the adjacent church.

9. Environmental Matters

- 9.1 Following a consultation, the Meadows Manifesto update has been postponed until end August. A small group therefore met with local MSP Marco Biagi who has passed on to the Council the group's views, ie 15 days maximum duration of individual events, and that future events should be tendered. Hilary has written to local Councillors to press the case for no approval of events until new rules are in place.
- 9.2 Pavements on both sides of Buccleuch Street are being replaced. A 'bulge' is being constructed opposite Summerhall which will enhance safety for pedestrians.
- 9.3 Hilary is investigating a Wall Art project to deter graffiti at Gifford Park. Shopkeepers are keen and, although no direct advertising is permitted, Hilary has sourced an artist who will present options.
- 9.4 Commonwealth Games parking restrictions on Holyrood Park Road and some surrounding streets will be in force between 13 July to 3 August.
- 9.5 Orchids are blooming in Holyrood Park.
- 9.6 It's barbeque time again, with insufficient use of purpose-placed slabs and not enough staff to monitor this and impose fines for misuse.

10. Reports from meetings attended

George Pitcher reported on the Meadows Cycling/Pedestrian Improvement Group Report. This report, produced by a group which included the Council, Police and representatives of local and cycling interests, will be submitted to the Neighbourhood Partnership Board on Monday 16 June.

11. Question and Answer session with the attending Councillor

Cllr Orr will attend the Neighbourhood Partnership meeting on 16 June and is prepared to look favourably on grant applications from the Southside Association.

12. Any other business

12.1 Suggestions for speakers at the Southside Association meetings next year would be welcomed. So far, suggestions include City of Edinburgh Council Planning Department (as promised by Cllr Perry), and Cathy Evans, Community Safety Officer for South Edinburgh.

12.2 The AGM of the Southside Community Centre will take place on Tuesday 24 June at 6.30pm.

13. Date of next meeting

Because of summer holidays and the Festival Fringe, the next meeting will take place on Tuesday 2 September at 7pm.