

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 4 March 2014, at 7pm

PRESENT: Lisa Sibbald (Chair), Margaret Bagan, Tom Bonallo, Marion Bradley, Susan Brown, Colin Christison (Secretary), Linda Ellison, Moira Gibson, Bob Hodgart, Isobel Leckie, May Linton, Hilary McDowell, Kenneth McLeod, Ethel Murray, Cllr Jim Orr, Cllr Ian Perry, George Pitcher, Tim Pogson, Molly Ross, David Sinclair, Pamela Spiers, Derek Suttie, Colin Symes, Random Switch, and PC Nicola Walker.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Lisa Sibbald welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Vera Anderson, Caroline Barr, Sarah Boyack MSP, Linda Femister, Jan Fraser (Treasurer), Sheila Gilmore MP, Tom King (Vice-Chair), David Raine, Jo Scott, Keith Smith, Louise Smith, David Wood, and Joan Young.

2. Police Report

Lisa welcomed PC Nicola Walker, who gave a short report. 201 crimes had been logged in the last month, with most solved. The increase was due to more stops-and-searches, with the discovery of drugs and knives. Operation RAC (respond and capture) was continuing in the Grange, Marchmont, and Trinity areas. She mentioned the 'Smartwater' campaign. Smartwater is a forensic fingerprint that has revolutionised traditional property-marking by providing total traceability of stolen items and has the power to directly link criminals to crimes. After a few questions from the floor members thanked Nicola for attending.

3. Guest speaker: David Sinclair, Victim Support Scotland

Lisa introduced David Sinclair, the Director of Communications for Victim Support Scotland (VSS), which has its headquarters in Hardwell Close. David said that VSS was established in 1985, and from a small start now deals with 180,000 victims and witnesses each year, with that figure expected to rise to over 200,000 in the next 12 months. This increase is because they now work directly with Police Scotland, with notifications being made electronically; VSS contact the people involved to offer support, which may or may not be taken up.

The charity helps deal with victims from a broad range of crimes; anti-social behaviour, petty crimes, and so on, up to murder. They receive a core grant of about £5M from the Scottish Government. They employ 135 full- and part-time staff (equivalent to 90 full-time), with 750 fully-trained volunteers.

David said that 60% of referrals came from the Glasgow area, 24% from the Edinburgh area, and the remaining 16% from elsewhere in Scotland. He discussed many other aspects of the

charity's role, mentioning:- its campaign in Europe which led to a European Directive for victims of crime, ensuring that they are offered support; the Victims and Witnesses Crime Bill which was passed in the Scottish Parliament, which declared that victims should be at the heart of a justice system; its grants from local authorities, funds from trusts; the VSS board; the support from its President, the Princess Royal; and their conference at which 50 Victim Support representatives from all over the world were welcomed.

A victims' fund has been established by the campaign board; it is part of the VSS but run separately, and was started with £30,000 from the SG with matched funding from the VSS. The recent V&W Crime Bill allows for a surcharge on fines, which is collected by the Courts and forwarded to VSS, to be shared with other agencies such as Rape Crisis Scotland. This is expected to amount to between £800,000 and £1.2M this year, and to be in excess of £2M in the years ahead.

There were a number of questions from the floor. David referred to the services offered by the charity for witnesses. Free confidential advice; liaising with local authorities, GPs, social workers; supporting witnesses who feel intimidated attending courts; familiarisation visits to courts for witnesses; escorting witnesses; VSS policy is to support the need for the removal of corroboration, especially in cases of domestic abuse; the VSS objective is to have advice and help available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year; potential volunteers may contact the Nicolson Square office (see website, link below), there are a range of tasks for volunteers, who are subject to background checks by Disclosure Scotland; and VSS work at schools in some areas.

Lisa and the members thanked David for his most interesting talk.

<http://www.victimsupportsco.org.uk/page/index.cfm>

4. Minutes of meeting of 4 February 2014, and matters arising

Approved; proposed by Hilary McDowell, and seconded by Tim Pogson.

Item 2: Tim Pogson offered to try and arrange a speaker from Streetwork to attend a meeting to discuss the issue of begging, and Derek Suttie mentioned that Crisis Skylight could also perhaps contribute.

5. Secretary's Report

- 5.1 Post Office moving from 41 South Clerk St to 11-13 Clerk St in April.
- 5.2 The SA has a key for the St Patrick Square notice board in order to display notices of meetings. Strangely, the agenda for the March meeting was removed by another key-holder a week before the meeting.
- 5.3 Future speakers: no-one was booked for April. It was suggested that the meeting be devoted to discussing the number of upcoming planning applications for student accommodation blocks in the area (Buccleuch Place/Meadow Lane, Lutton Court and Homebase). Cllr Perry offered to arrange for a planner to address the meeting, particularly about the figures from the 2011 census, and the proportion of students in the area. ***Afternote 11.3.14** – it became clear that the census information would not be ready by April, and the planner would attend a meeting in the autumn.*

- 5.4 Colin Christison said that he would be unable to continue as an office bearer after the AGM in May.

6. Treasurer's Report

The balance remained at £1827.30.

7. Planning and Licensing Matters

- 7.1 PA 13/04186/ADV Illuminated display sign at Parkside Bowling Club – refused.
- 7.2 PA 14/00330/FUL Change of use to form hot food takeaway at 86 Nicolson Street – representation acknowledged.
- 7.3 PAN (Proposal of Application Notice) received on 4 March for the site between Meadow Lane and Buccleuch Place *“for a proposed development of new student accommodation blocks on land currently used as UoE car parking. The new build accommodation will share communal facilities with refurbished student accommodation in the existing Buccleuch Place buildings. Courtyards and landscaped gardens will enhance the long-term visual amenity and recreational value of the area.”*
- 7.4 52 Nicolson St: planning application by Sainsbury's for ATM and signage.
- 7.5 It was noted that the Gregg's branch in Nicolson Street would be refurbished, and a small seating area provided.

8. Environmental Matters

- 8.1 Proposed amendments to waiting restrictions at Davie Street/Simon Square; Nicolson Square; and St Leonard's Street (Hamilton's Folly Mews).
- 8.2 Meadows and Bruntsfield Links Advisory Group – minutes from meeting held on 25.11.13 received.
- 8.3 George Pitcher said that he had proposed at a recent SCNP environment meeting that proper securing of bins to the stanchions (where provided) be carried out by the bin-men, and that more effort is made to pick up all the rubbish from bins which had overflowed. He acknowledged that it is people who are careless with their rubbish and litter, and that everyone should play their part in minimising the amount of material which has to be picked.
- 8.4 Isobel Leckie considered that the Southside Association should commission a survey to examine a wide-ranging numbers of factors (economic, social, educational, employment, architecture etc) as they affect the area. The Scottish Government has a fund, currently closed but to be reopened in due course, for such an investigation

9. Reports from meetings attended

- 9.1 Random Switch had attended a meeting of the North Central Neighbourhood Partnership in the Grassmarket, and said that an analysis of figures from the 2011 census clearly showed the breached student mix ratio (higher than 30%) in the city centre (with the Southside excluded). It was hoped that the SCNP would have hold a similar presentation.
- 9.2 Hilary McDowell had attended a meeting of the Friends of the Meadow and Bruntsfield Links on 24 February. The Council Forestry Manager Steven Webley discussed 'Trees in the City'. There was a plea to workers repairing the paths not to damage tree roots.

10. Question and Answer session with the attending Councillor

Marion Bradley and Linda Ellison asked about the possibility of the reinstatement of a bus service between Dumbiedykes and the Southside. The lack of such a service contributed to the feeling of isolation among some residents, and with medical and community facilities as well as shops being located in the Southside it was considered vital for either a reinstatement of a service, or for the re-routing of a service such the 36. Cllr Perry said that Lothian Buses had been formed by an Act of Parliament, and that Council had no power to make demands of it, unless it subsidised an entire route. Cllr Orr said that the various bus services were being examined, and it was hoped that a decision would be made at the forthcoming meeting of the transport committee. In the Pilton area, a tailored bus service is provided, and that is a possible solution for Dumbiedykes. There was a discussion about the deregulation of bus services.

11. Any other business

- 11.1 Susan Brown asked about a speaker from the University of Edinburgh. Moira Gibson hoped to arrange this for the June meeting.
- 11.2 Colin Symes said that the food bank at the Community Church had been operating for a year.

12. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 1 April 2014.