

# THE SOUTHSIDE ASSOCIATION

117 Nicolson Street

Edinburgh

EH8 9ER

*Founded 1972*

*Scottish Charity No SCO12262*

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## Minutes of meeting held in the South Side Community Centre on Tuesday 2 September 2014, at 7pm

**PRESENT:** Lisa Sibbald (Chair), Tom King (Vice-Chair), Moira Gibson (Minutes Secretary), Hilary McDowell, Kenny McLeod, May Linton, Fran Gifford, Jo Scott, Jez Kempston, Isobel Leckie, Tom Bonallo, Ethel Murray, Bob Hodgart, Margaret Bagan, Tim Pogson.

Also present were: Councillor Jim Orr; PC Tom Archer, Police Scotland; Kevin Hawes, Community Safety Officer; Sarah Boyack MSP.

### 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Lisa Sibbald welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Colin Christison, George Pitcher, Derek Suttie, Susan Brown, Pamela Speirs, Marjory Watson, Molly Ross, David Wood, Jan Fraser, Linda Femister.

### 2. Police Report

Lisa welcomed PC Tom Archer who reported on local crime. It's been a busy summer in the Southside with both the Commonwealth Games and the Edinburgh Festival. The Annual Survey has been published and in future statistical reports will be broken down by area to give a clearer picture of local patterns of crime. With the darker nights coming in, thefts and attempted thefts will rise. Police advice is to: make a note of serial numbers on all items including bikes; lock sheds; strengthen security and locks on front doors; dial 101 if you are suspicious about anything.

Hilary raised concerns about a group of six men seen drinking, shouting and hanging about at the junction of Salisbury Road and Minto Street. PC Archer said residents should dial 101 in situations like this, and the matter would generally be dealt with as anti-social behaviour.

### 3. Community Safety Report

Kevin Hawes is a member of the South Central Neighbourhood Partnership's Environment and Community Safety Team and would be happy to attend future meetings of the Association, his diary permitting. His area includes Morningside, Meadows, Newington and Dumbiedykes and his remit covers anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood disputes, graffiti, damage to trees and cars etc.

Legal highs are the most concerning aspect of his work. Trading Standards are trying to stamp out sales by serving notices on shops, with seizure of 30,000 sachets valued at £3-£20 each. He urged

local people to check basements and sheds to ensure they were not sheltering users. This proactive approach has seen a decrease in the numbers of people found 'under the influence', with a corresponding drop in the number of needles found.

#### **4. Minutes of Meeting of 3 June and Matters Arising**

- 4.1 A correction was made to the minutes: contrary to 8.4, no hoardings had come down at that point. Subsequently, they have been removed, following two years of appeals. Approval of the minutes was proposed by Tom King and seconded by Jo Scott.
- 4.2 It was agreed that the responses requested from the University of Edinburgh at the June meeting would be given at the Association's October meeting.

#### **5. Secretary's Report**

- 5.1 Apologies had been received from the Membership and Mailing List Secretary. In his absence, the Chair reported on one or two matters not covered by other reports due later in the meeting.
- 5.2 Comments on the Local Development Plan must be in by 3 October and there is a publicly available schedule of opportunities to view the Plan and talk to officials.
- 5.2 A consultation on the introduction of 20mph speed limits across many streets in Edinburgh is ongoing. There are several opportunities to attend meetings, including two in the City Chambers at 7pm on 16 September and 7pm on 23 September. All comments must be received by 17 October.

#### **6. Treasurer's Report**

- 6.1 Apologies were received from the Treasurer. In her absence, the Chair updated members.
- 6.2 The application to EVOC for a £250 grant had been unsuccessful. It was suggested that the Association apply to the Local Development Committee and that Maureen Thompson should be approached.
- 6.3 An application to the South Central Neighbourhood Partnership for £600 for the Christmas Party had been successful. This figure includes £150 to cover public liability insurance and £250 for food and drink. This did not preclude a donation from Tesco.

#### **7. Planning and Licensing Matters**

- 7.1 The Chair reported that a public meeting was held on 20 July for local residents concerned about a slew of recent proposals for student developments. Sheila Gilmore MP, Sarah Boyack MSP and Lisa Sibbald, Southside Association Chair, organised the meeting which was attended by approximately 90 people including Cllr Jim Orr and Marco Biagi MSP. From this number, around 40 people signed up to attend a Working Group to consider how best to progress concerns about too many students crowding out families and the threat to local

services such as schools.

- 7.2 The Scottish Government Reporter's decision to accept the Lutton Court developer's appeal, announced in August, appears to undermine the Council policy on which its refusal of the original application was based. This may make it harder for the Council to refuse forthcoming applications for student residences. A meeting of the Working Group will be held soon to discuss whether there are any grounds for challenging the Reporter's decision.
- 7.3 Work has already started at the rear of the former Odeon cinema although Mr Boyle's company is no longer involved. At a recent meeting at the Council called to discuss this matter, it emerged that the leaseholders were acting legally since the terms of the lease had technically been met, having been drafted too loosely. Council lawyers advised that any appeal would be deemed 'unreasonable'. Members felt it was unfortunate that Duddingston House Properties is unwilling to negotiate with those who would like to rescue and develop the Odeon.
- 7.4 Tim suggested that rather than just being against student development, an alternative or additional way forward might be to develop a positive vision for the Southside. For example, the Association could ask Castle Rock/Edinvar about the potential for social housing: what would be the options, the barriers etc. In addition, he asked why the rule insisting on 25% social housing in new developments did not apply to student blocks?
- 7.5 Hilary referred to an exhibition of the new Edinburgh Local Development Plan at Gilmerton's Faith Mission on Thursday 4 September, when officials would be available for questioning. This offers an opportunity for people to make their views known on numbers of students and HMOs. On Wednesday 10 September, Councillors will attend a meeting of local people and this is a further opportunity to ask why the Council is selling local sites for student development when the 30% threshold has already been breached, why it continues to grant HMO licences, and whether or not student halls of residence are liable to pay business rates. She wants the Council to show more leadership in controlling student numbers on the Southside and cannot understand why the University is proposing to knock down student halls at King's Buildings.
- 7.6 Tom expressed disappointment that the Council did not have an integrated approach to local concerns, selling land for student development while knowing that its policy is to refuse applications which breach the limit on student numbers. It seems short-sighted for the Council to obtain a premium price for a site and thereby cut off the possibility of longterm continuous income from council tax. He would like to see encouragement for developers interested in social or retirement housing. If, as is implied by the Reporter's decision on Lutton Court, 'adjacent' can be interpreted as 800m from George Square, this poses a huge threat to the whole of the Southside.
- 7.7 Sarah Boyack underlined the importance of a letter-writing campaign – to Councillors, Head of Planning etc. She welcomed the discussion thus far and said it would be good to develop an Affordable Housing Agenda, not forgetting that current student accommodation provision is often not affordable for students. The Council should do more to join up its planning and housing policies. Sarah will write to Scottish Government Ministers.
- 7.8 It was suggested that [www.planningdemocracy.org.uk](http://www.planningdemocracy.org.uk) and Planning Aid Scotland might be resources helpful to the Association.

- 7.9 Bob spoke up for students, saying that they were not all transient since postgraduates stayed for 12 months. Aside from their expenditure in the local community, students contributed through volunteering and culturally. The Chair reconfirmed that concerns were not based on anti-student feeling, but rather that a limit had been reached (or exceeded) which was creating an imbalanced community.

## **8. Environmental Matters**

- 8.1 Roads and pavements: the dip in the road in St Patrick's Square, probably caused by buses, should be repaired by October mid-term. Poor re-instatement of pavements following cabling work was being addressed, with the contractor being served 30-40 defect notices.
- 8.2 New cycle route: funding for artwork to address graffiti at the end of Gifford Park has been identified. All property owners will be contacted. The artist, who has previously done similar work in St Patrick Square, will create a work on suggested themes including food of the world, textiles, and cycles (in a nod to the source of funds).
- 8.3 Meadows: responses from the Southside Association, FoMBL and others to the consultation on events on the Meadows had emphasised a 15-day maximum events period in order not to affect grass and drainage. The Council prefers a 23-day slot for the Meadows, which is very disappointing, but had promised to introduce a tendering process. In another initiative to combat graffiti, there will be an official launch of five murals on the electricity substation at the corner of Middle and North Meadow Walks on 22 September. Problems with barbeques continued with hot containers not confined to the allocated slabs and, according to the Evening News, firefighters called out on 19 occasions during July. Apparently, Environmental Wardens have powers to impose on-the-spot fines for littering but not for damage to grass. There is a view amongst some members that no one should be allowed to barbeque in this park, which would resolve the problem.

## **9. Reports from meetings attended**

There hadn't been many meetings over the summer. Linda had attended the MABLAG meeting but unfortunately was unable to be here to make a personal report. However, it was understood that concerns about ground damaged by events on the Meadows over the summer remained.

## **10. Question and Answer session with the attending Councillor**

The site occupied by the LadyBoys was looking better post-event than it had in previous years. Cllr Orr was delighted that the SCNP had awarded a grant to the Association.

## **11. Any other business**

- 11.1 Isobel reported that representatives of the Causey Development Trust had met with the Council's Environmental Convener, Cllr Lesley Hinds, who showed enthusiasm for the project and advised them to seek a meeting with the Council Leader. The possibility of a £500,000 grant from SusTrans will only be realised if match-funding (whether from Council, University, World Heritage Trust) can be found.

- 11.2 Hilary raised concerns that a proliferation of private bins were blocking pavements. Cllr Orr said that such bins were required to have permits. The question was asked whether Environmental Wardens were able to check these permits and issue fines to offenders.
- 11.3 Suggestions for speakers at the Southside Association meetings who could talk on matters of local interest were sought but none were immediately forthcoming.

**12. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 7 October at 7pm.