

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 7 April 2015 at 7pm

PRESENT: Lisa Sibbald (Chair), Maggie Bagan, Tom Bonallo, Joan Carter, Stephen Carter, Colin Christison (Mailing List and Membership Secretary), Jan Fraser (Treasurer), Fran Gifford, Bob Hodgart, Jez Kempston, Tom King (Vice-Chair), Isobel Leckie, May Linton, Kenny McLeod, Ethel Murray, and Jo Scott.

Also present were: Sarah Boyack MSP, Sheila Gilmore, Councillor Ian Perry, Kevin Hawes, Sgt Andy Kerr and PC Sarah Donnelly from Police Scotland, and Lesley Roy (representing Marco Biagi MSP).

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Lisa Sibbald welcomed those present to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Marco Biagi MSP, Susan Brown, Linda Femister, Moira Gibson (Minutes Secretary), Theodora Lola-Luz, Hilary McDowell, Maurice Naftalin, Tim Pogson, and Derek Suttie.

Lisa explained that the presentation from Scott Mitchell, Commercial Director of the Royal College of Surgeons had been rearranged for the meeting to be held on 5 May. The Annual General Meeting would take place in the Community Centre as usual, and then members would proceed to the Royal College of Surgeons for the presentation on the college's plans for expansion and redevelopment, followed by refreshments. The substitute guest speaker was to have been Marco Biagi MSP, but unfortunately he had been called away. It was hoped that he would be able to attend a future meeting, perhaps in June.

2. Police Report from Police Scotland

Lisa welcomed the two officers present. Sergeant Kerr reported that there had been a 'Week of Action' in Dumbiedykes at the end of March, with participation from the Police, the Fire and Rescue Service, and the City Council. It was clear that residents would like to see a higher police presence there. A drop-in 'surgery' at the Braidwood Centre had not been well attended.

There were still break-ins to houses in the Grange, Morningside, and surrounding areas, with car keys being the target, and the stolen cars used to commit further crimes. In the early hours of that morning (7 April), seven youths had ram-raided Blackford Post Office using a stolen Range Rover, having first blocked nearby streets by moving parked cars to create a barrier and divert the police.

There had been break-ins to some shop premises in the Southside.

The new police initiative 'Operation Rack' had started, with a bigger focus on house-breaking. It was explained that officers do not pursue stolen vehicles, in the style of a car chase, as a matter of course, in case of collisions and fatalities, but rely more on CCTV and witness statements. There are very few officers who are trained to chase suspects by vehicle. Sarah Boyack MSP mentioned similar problems in north Edinburgh, and wondered where the perpetrators lived. It was thought that groups come from here and there and just cause mayhem driving convoys of stolen cars, targeting houses and shops. They wear hoodies or ski masks.

It was noted that at least three of the shops on the 'front street' are keeping their doors locked until the person trying to enter has been identified. This is because of the erratic behaviour of those using 'legal highs'. Fears were expressed about the potential difficulty of attracting new businesses to the area.

PC Donnelly continued the report by referring to the assault and robbery of two Chinese students in Brown Street; suspects had been bailed, and were not allowed in public between 6pm and 6am, and were not permitted to fraternise with their associates. They were being watched to make sure they didn't breach their bail conditions.

She went on to report there had been 200 reported crimes in the area since the SA's March meeting, with a 44.5% solve rate. Officers try to be as proactive as possible. Drug-taking in stairs continued to be a daily problem, along with discarded needles, and anti-social behaviour.

There was a lengthy discussion about the problems caused by the supply of 'legal highs', with contributions from the elected representatives and the Community Safety Officer. Analysis of seized substances can take months. People found injecting can be charged with breach of the peace. The introduction of a new by-law was discussed, and the possibility of licensing the premises which sell the products.

Tom King noted that there had been a huge spike in the number of shop windows being smashed, and said that it appeared that the police were not being allocated enough resources to tackle the problem. Sgt Kerr said that government cutbacks certainly contributed to putting a strain on police resources. He said that house-breaking comes in cycles, with culprits tending to be caught together, and incarcerated at the same time; unfortunately there is a resumption of the problems when they are released. It was agreed that the SA should write to Police Scotland to express its concerns about funding. ***Please see the following-***

DOMESTIC PROPERTY SECURITY EVENT

Police Scotland will be hosting a crime prevention and domestic security event to raise awareness of domestic property security and the effective measures which can be taken to protect your home and property. The evening will consist of presentations from Police Scotland, Neighbourhood Watch and the City of Edinburgh Councils' South Community Safety Team. The event aims to offer constructive advice regarding personal safety and the protection of your property and will afford attendees an opportunity to ask questions. The event will take place on

Wednesday 29th April 2015 between 7pm – 9pm at Mayfield Salisbury Church, East Mayfield, Edinburgh.

3. **Guest Speaker: Scott Mitchell, Commercial Director of the Royal College of Surgeons. SEE ABOVE**
4. **Report on Environment and Community Safety from Kevin Hawes, Community Safety Officer, City of Edinburgh Council**

Lisa welcomed Kevin to the meeting. He had taken part in the discussions described in Item 2, and regarding legal highs, he stressed that the Council should be informed about drug-taking and other anti-social problems in stairs and on the streets. In about a month's time, there will be a leaflet drop in Dumbiedykes, Montague Street, Rankeillor Street, and Gifford Park, giving residents advice and contact phone numbers.

Tom King asked about the cost of collecting used needles, cleaning human waste, and clearing detritus from common stairs. Kevin said that about 20 needles a day were being picked up, and that two Council employees were involved in the work. Sheila Gilmore led a discussion about how a solution must be found, as there were now potential no-go areas, to the detriment of the local amenity, and there is an impact on health services. Banning one version of a legal high merely sees the arrival of a different concoction, and licensing of premises is a possibility to be explored. Initiatives in Lincoln have been showing success. After considerable discussion, Cllr Perry suggested that a group consisting of representatives from the Council, Police, the health service, the SA, and other interested parties should meet to suggest some form of strategy to present to the Scottish Government; he will investigate the best way to move forward with this.

5. Minutes of meeting of 3 March 2015, and Matters Arising

Following the very minor substitution of the word "of" for "or" in the third line of the final paragraph of Item 3, the minutes were agreed; proposed by Jan Fraser and seconded by Tom King.

- 5.1 Item 5.3 (Roads Capital Programme) this meeting will be held in the SCC on 30 April at 7pm. The SA will have three votes, although the project put forward by the group, to resurface the highway on the east side of St Patrick Square, had been completed.
- 5.2 Item 8.2 (Homebase petition) 788 signatures gathered so far. The SA had submitted a letter to the Scottish Planning Reporter together with a copy of the petition. Sheila Gilmore had also written to the Reporter.
- 5.3 Item 10.2 (representation on the South Central Neighbourhood Partnership) – Tim Pogson had agreed to represent the SA on this organisation.
- 5.4 Item 12.2 (Nelson Hall meeting) – this will take place on 16 April. Details here

Open Meeting on Thursday 16 April from 7-9pm at the Nelson Hall Community Centre, 5 Spittalfield Crescent, Edinburgh EH8 9QZ (opposite Homebase). The meeting, co-hosted by the University of Edinburgh and the Southside Association, will focus on the City of Edinburgh Council's consultation document on the issue of Student Housing. A Council Officer will set the consultation in context and a facilitator will invite the audience to address the nine questions posed in the document

https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/sfc/studenthousing/consult_view

6. Secretary's Report

There was some minor correspondence – two letters from Council re amendments to waiting restrictions and residents' permits.

7. Treasurer's Report

Jan Fraser reported that the balance remained at £1845.63. The next quarterly fee (£18) for hosting the website was almost due.

8. Planning and Licensing Matters

8.1 J D Wetherspoon had submitted a revised planning application for the premises in Nicolson Street currently operating as a bingo hall. (15/01491/FUL). It was agreed not to object.

8.2 There was a PA for an extension of hours to 1am, Mon-Sun at 2 Roxburgh Place (15/01342/FUL). This is to amend the consent granted in 2003. As there had been complaints about noise from this venue over the years, particularly during the Edinburgh Festival, it was agreed to object.

9. Environmental Matters

Hilary McDowell had sent the following items

9.1 Former *Odeon* cinema – there was a plea to remove the fly-posters and graffiti from the entranceway to the premises.

9.2 The renovation of the garden at St Patrick Square was almost complete. It was noted that the new railings had not been placed in the coping stones, but were secured by other means.

9.3 The replacement of the traffic lights at the junction of Salisbury Road, Newington Road, and Minto Street is almost complete, with resurfacing work to be carried out too. The West and East Mayfield junction will be tackled next.

9.4 Numerous reports have been made to Council staff about the failure to collect waste and recycling bins over many weeks. As a result, the head of the service has made several inspections.

9.5 Many of the street lights, particularly on the side streets, have had 'leds' (light emitting diodes) fitted; this should save money in the long-term.

9.6 New family-friendly cycle route – work has started at Hope Park Crescent and St Leonard's Street. The pedestrian crossing on Clerk Street will be moved to the end of Gifford Park, and will become a pedestrian and cycle crossing. This will allow pedestrians and cyclists to cross to Rankeillor Street without a detour round the railings. It is hoped that the work will be complete by the middle of May, so that.....

9.7the murals can be painted on the gable ends at Gifford Park before the end of May. The painter, Kate George, is pleased to include 'a man in a hat', as homage to

George Pitcher. Volunteers to help with the painting will be made welcome – please get in touch with one of the office bearers.

10. Reports from meetings attended

Stephen and Joan Carter had attended a community council consultation meeting at which Ben Wilson, Principal Planner, had discussed the nine questions asked in the consultation document about student housing (See 5.4, above).

11. Question and Answer session with the attending Councillor

Cllr Perry had taken full part in the discussions above. Jo Scott asked if the HMO Group could meet to discuss the HMO consultation, and submit its views; IP said that he would find out.

There had been an item in the March minutes about the *Odeon*. Here is a summary of the report made after an inspection on 27 March. There was no information about a prospective buyer.

Most areas of the building were inspected and it is clear that there has been a history of water ingress. However, there is no current evidence of this and most areas of previous dampness appear to have dried out. There is some evidence of rising damp in the basement.

There are signs of pigeon infestation, but this looks historic.

Isolated areas of mycelium growth give for reasons concern. These require further specialist inspection and treatment.

The building at the time of inspection would appear to be generally wind and watertight.

A motion detector CCTV system is in place and provides appropriate security. The development which is in progress at the rear of the building has also improved the security of the building.

12. Any other business

12.1 AGM - There was a reminder that nominations were required for office-bearer posts.

12.2 Sheila Gilmore, standing for re-election at the forthcoming general election, said that she had very much enjoyed working with the Association. Lisa thanked her, and the other elected representatives, for their interest, hard work, and approachability.

12.3 Stephen Carter asked for clarification about the timetable for the local plan. The Local Plan had been submitted to the Scottish Minister in March and the report from its examination will be out in September, and it could be adopted by February 2016. There would then likely be a revision of guidance and policy.

13. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 5 May at 7pm sharp, in Room 1 of the Community Centre, followed by a visit to the Royal College of Surgeons (see above).