

The Southside Association
117 Nicolson Street
Edinburgh
EH8 9ER

Founded 1972 *Scottish Charity No SCO12262*

www.southsideassociation.co.uk

Members' Meeting
Tuesday 12 September 2017 at 7pm
The Cafe, Southside Community Centre

Minutes

PRESENT: Colin Christison (Chair), Maggie Bagan, Tom Bonallo, Jan Fraser, Fran Gifford, Bob Hodgart, May Linton, Hilary McDowell, Philip McDowell, Kenny McLeod, Ethel Murray, and Jo Scott. Also present were Cllr Steve Burgess, and PC Chris Harris.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Colin Christison welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Sarah Burns, Moira Gibson, Isobel Leckie, Dora Lola-Luz, Ola Uduku, and Colin Symes.

He said that over the past few months it has become increasingly apparent that the quality of Council services has deteriorated. While we appreciate that there are many constraints on staffing levels and budgets, it is disappointing that requests for action or information go mostly unacknowledged and unanswered. We had hoped that Sarah Burns would have been able to reassure us that improvements are on the way, but unfortunately she was unable to attend, although she will be present at our November meeting.

2. Police Report

PC Harris discussed various police activities which had taken place over recent months in the area. Five warrants had been issued for peddling drugs, leading to two evictions. Officers had been present at local events such as the Dumbiedykes Community Fair, the Synagogue Open Day, plus Festival and Fringe venues. Licensing and noise issues were tackled during the Festival period.

He said that enforcement of the 20mph speed limit was continuing, and there had been some noticeable reduction in speeds as motorists became accustomed to the change. There was a discussion about penalty notices for speeding, and for inappropriate behaviour by cyclists, such as wearing dark clothing at nights, not using lights, jumping red lights and so on. The police try to educate offenders in the first instance. It was noted that some cyclists do not always observe the rules at the pedestrian crossing on the south of St Leonard's Street and it was agreed that it had been badly designed.

After a decline in house-breaking (this term includes sheds) it is now creeping up, and this time of year is common for thefts of pedal cycles, particularly those belonging to students. The Universities warn students about the problem.

If people want advice about crime prevention they should e-mail the following address - EdinburghSouthsideNewingtonCPT@Scotland.pnn.police.uk

3. Guest speaker: Sarah Burns, Manager, South East locality

Sarah was unable to attend, but she will be present at the meeting on 7 November.

4. Minutes of meeting held on 5 June 2017, and matters arising

Agreed; proposed by Hilary McDowell and seconded by Maggie Bagan

4.1 Item 8: anti-social behaviour in Deaconess Park – a watching brief is being kept but it was thought that the problems had diminished.

5. Chair's Report

5.1 Room 1 in the Centre has been booked for the SA's meetings until June 2018. The AGM of the Community Centre will be held on Saturday 30 September at 11am, and will be followed by a buffet and refreshments.

5.2 Nelson Hall – after the Community Centre's Management Committee's decision to relinquish its lease of the Nelson Hall, there were still concerns about the availability of the premises for community use, and which pieces of equipment would remain there for use by groups. It was understood that negotiations with SCOOSH are ongoing, and Cllr Burgess said that he would try and ascertain the position, and find out about the terms of the new contract.

5.3 Edinburgh Doors Open Days – Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 September.

5.4 In August the Causey Development Trust asked to meet our planning group but with holidays etc we have been unable to fix a date. We understand that a new TRO will be revealed in due course. A meeting will be arranged in the next couple of weeks.

5.5 Membership update – Jan reported that the current paid membership stands at 23.

5.6 Christmas Lights event - it is unclear if LED lighting will be provided for the trees at St Patrick Square this year. The Public Safety section is dealing with this budget, and we hope to hear from them soon so that arrangements can be made. There was a discussion about an alternative programme, perhaps holding the Carol Service on the steps of the Centre or indoors. **Afternote** – the Council will provide lights for St Patrick Square. Carol Service on Tuesday 5 December.

5.7 Two books of local interest had been published: "Edinburgh's Festival and King's Theatres through time" by Jack Gillon, and "Edinburgh South Side through time" by Jack Gillon and Fraser Parkinson.

6. Treasurer's Report

Hilary McDowell reported that the bank balance was £1161.80, with some £20 cash in hand.

7. Planning & Licensing matters

- 7.1 Planning Application 17/02140/FUL: Change of use from Class 2, Beauty Salon, to Class 3, Restaurant at 58 South Clerk Street, EH8 9PS – application refused as the proposals would have an adverse impact on neighbouring residential amenity and fails to comply with certain aspects of the Local Development Plan. A second application is understood to be on the way, and a second objection will be made on grounds of over-provision as well as the above reasons.
- 7.2 Planning Application 17/01876/FUL: Change of use from shop to restaurant at 12 Clerk St, EH8 9HX – application granted as the proposals comply with the Local Development Plan and will have no detrimental impact on the residential amenity or the character of the listed building.
- 7.3 Licensing – 72-74 Newington Road, EH9 1QN: Objection sent about application for variation in conditions to playing amplified music. Numerous problems reported in the past, and the new arrangements for relaxing rules are meant for city centre premises.

8. Environmental matters

Hilary McDowell and others reported on the following -

We have been informed about a **new telephone number** for the following City Council service: WASTE: missed collection, special uplift, environmental and other waste enquiries – **0131-608 1100**

***Murals** – no progress had been made with the attempt to provide a new mural at Buccleuch Pend, in conjunction with the local housing association. It was agreed to concentrate efforts on the Gibb's Entry pend in the meantime.*

Replacement trees at Luton Place – attempts to get the Unite Group to deal with these have failed, and the University of Edinburgh has been approached.

***Abandoned pedal cycles** on bike stands and railings: these rusty, dilapidated objects are an eyesore. The Council's Cycle team and the Road team have been approached on several occasions, and Cllr Burgess said that a report recommending a policy on the matter would go to the Transport Committee.*

Planters in Pleasance 'triangle' – despite promises that these would be filled with flowers (rather than weeds) in July nothing has been done. An opportunity had been missed to provide at least some visual attraction to the many Fringe-goers in August. Staff shortages seem to be the cause.

***Clerk St/Gifford Park** cycleway – some blue signs have been placed on the pavement at this junction which give cyclists the idea that it is permissible to cycle on the pavements. Cllr Burgess will ask for a review about the positioning of these signs.*

There's still a big problem with **graffiti** which blights the area and making it appear uncared for. And flyposting was rampant during the Festival. The company that has the current contract to deal with the problem is ineffective. There are still many small fliers stuck to poles etc. A 'deep clean' of the

area has been requested. Collection and emptying of the **communal bins** is erratic and many bins are overflowing. We don't know if anyone checks commercial bin contracts. Some glass collections are not apparently frequent enough and other businesses put out bags of waste at the end of their day and leave them overnight. The city centre gets frequent street sweeping but further out it would appear there are long periods between any visits. Many pavements are cluttered with glass and food waste bins belonging to restaurants and take-away shops.

For information - the following six sections are summaries of e-mails sent to various Council departments over the last couple of months.

*We asked **Planning Enforcement** about the two cash machines which have been installed, apparently without planning permission. We understand that the company, called Note Machine, has a policy of installing these machines and applying for planning permission retrospectively, if challenged. Both the locations below have cash machines which have 'halos' of blue LED lights surrounding them which are very obtrusive, especially at night and not in accordance with the Local Development Plan for this conservation area. (DES 13). The addresses are*

136 Nicolson St, Mr Fix, which has an illuminated cash machine. No planning applications for that building found; and 77 Nicolson St, AIT Solutions which has an illuminated cash machine. No recent planning applications.

We wrote to **Planning Enforcement** about the cash machine at the Newington Pharmacy at 46 – 48 Clerk St which has switched on its illumination in contravention of the permit given in December 2016. The pharmacy installed an illuminated cash machine a year or so ago without planning permission. When applied for this was refused and enforced. A further application was made for a non-illuminated machine and that was granted in December 2016. The blue halo illumination has been turned on again. Two illuminated advertising panels have been put up on the outside of the building between the windows without any planning application. This building should have listed building consent for any work. It is in a conservation area and is very out of keeping with the other buildings nearby.

*We wrote to the **Roads Dept** as follows – we thanked them for arranging for the trip hazards on the pavement of Newington Road to be removed. We asked if the Roads inspector could look at the tactile crossing by Gifford Park on the Rankeillor St side of the road. The tactile slabs on the North East corner of the junction are very wobbly and dangerous. We suspect that they get driven over by vehicles cutting the corner. Perhaps a bollard or two might help to encourage vehicles to take more care here, or the foundations for this section of pavement could be improved.*

The bus shelter opposite the former Odeon cinema on Clerk St outside the Doghouse Pub has a great deal of graffiti on it. Lots of different hands have been at 'work' here and it looks awful. We have asked for this to be cleaned.

We asked who is responsible for checking the height of notices which protrude across the pavement. The Local Development Plan states that nothing should be below 2.25 metres in height. A new restaurant, the Annakut at 13 Newington Road has a 'hungry house' sign which is much lower than that and could be a problem for tall people with poor sight or anyone carrying a child on their shoulders.

*We also asked if there is a date for work to commence on resurfacing the Newington Road to South Bridge corridor, which we thought would start in the autumn. **Afternote - the resurfacing will take place early next year and will primarily involve removing the old road surface, laying the new surface and putting back the existing road markings with some minor improvements where required. The traffic signal equipment at the Nicolson St/W Richmond St, S Clerk St/Bernard Tce, and S Clerk St/E Preston St junctions will also be upgraded as part of the same project.***

We wrote to **Planning Enforcement** as follows - The Southside is being blighted by lots of neon, LED and other flashing advertising signage in many shop windows and above the frontages. This is a conservation area and these signs are not appropriate for this historic area. Please will you arrange for the area to be inspected as planning permission has not been sought or given. These signs are particularly obtrusive at night. These lights and signs make the street look seedy and unattractive. Please will you let us know what action you plan to take. Here are some of the shops and the offending signs. There may be others.

- 95 Newington Road: a new neon pink name of business above the business. Neighbours all complaining about it at night. This is a listed building.
- 83 Clerk St: 'Infinity' with an orange halo round the whole window which is especially bad at night.
- 10 Clerk St: USA Nailz has 3 LED signs, some flashing.
- 3 Clerk St: Barbers with LED flashing sign
- 5-9 St Patrick Square: Edinburgh Bargain Stores - the costume section has LED flashing lights round the window.
- 7 St Patrick Square: Bhatti's Fried Chicken -new take away has huge red flashing moving sign. This hideous signage has no planning permission.
- 90 Nicolson St: Turkish Barbers -neon scissors sign in window.
- 53 Nicolson St: I JAZ Market – open sign flashing and LED lights round the window.

*We also wrote to **Planning Enforcement** about the Southern Bar - This pub has recently added to its frontage two large pull down awnings. No planning application has apparently been made. The awnings have leaf patterns on so very obtrusive and not the same black colour as the pub is painted. Perhaps it is supposed to tone in with the small trees and shrubs in the 15 barrels which are kept permanently on the pavement along with a bicycle (purely for decoration) and other clutter. Please will you take action.*

We asked the Council about **tables and chairs** licences at the following premises which all had tables and chairs out on Sunday 10 September with no permit visible. We asked if these places have actually been granted permits, and if checks are made to ensure that excessive lengths of pavements aren't being blocked. We also asked if businesses have to display a permit for the current year.

- b Burger, at 86 Nicolson St. It has a lot of other advertising blocks as well as tables and chairs and is taking up about half the width of this very busy narrow pavement.
- Souq, 57 South Clerk St
- Kilimanjaro Coffee, 104 Nicolson St. This is a long standing business which used to have a permit but no longer on display.
- Edinburgh Coffee Lounge, 9 St Patrick St

Here is the link to the list of tables and chairs licences, which would seem to be out of date

http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/directory/97/tables_and_chairs_permits_-_search_by_street_name

9. Report and Q & A with the attending Councillor

Cllr Burgess had responded to the issues as they arose, and will make the appropriate enquiries.

10. Any other business

- 10.1 Maggie Bagan referred to some issues relating to her flat and back garden. Cllr Burgess noted these.
- 10.2 During the meeting several members spoke of their dismay and frustration at being unable to contact the Council by telephone, and delays of up to 20 minutes were experienced before they hung up in exasperation. Switchboard staff put callers through to what appear to be unobtainable numbers, in the latest complex telephone automated system. The new system by which council staff need to log into the telephone system means that on many occasions the caller just receives a 'number unobtainable' sound. The call isn't picked up by another member of staff. Sent e-mails are frequently ignored, and automatic 'Out-of-office' replies are rarely sent. If the recipient is also off sick then there is apparently no way to make contact as no e-mail is sent back to tell the sender who else they should contact.

Managers need to be able to open and deal with e-mails sent to their departments when staff are off or have left. Telephone calls need to be diverted to others within the department. The current level of service is totally unacceptable.

11. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 3 October, in Room 1.