

# ***The Southside Association***

**117 Nicolson Street  
Edinburgh  
EH8 9ER**

*Founded 1972*      *Scottish Charity No SCO12262*

**www.southsideassociation.co.uk**

**Members' Meeting  
Tuesday 3 March 2020 at 6.45pm  
Room 1, Southside Community Centre**

## ***Minutes***

**PRESENT:** Colin Christison (Chair), Maggie Bagan, Stephen Carter, Jan Fraser, May Linton, Liz Logie, Hilary McDowell, Philip McDowell, Kenny McLeod, Ethel Murray, Maggie Peatfield, and Jo Scott; Cllr Ian Perry.

### **1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

Colin Christison welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Bob Hodgart, Carol McHugh, and Colin Symes.

### **2. Police Report**

No officer available to attend.

### **3. Minutes of meeting held on 4 February 2020, and matters arising**

Agreed; proposed by Jan Fraser and seconded by Ethel Murray.

3.1 *Item 4.2* (community grant) – acceptance papers signed and returned, but funds not yet received.

3.2 *Item 6.1* (Salisbury Hotel) – in spite of action by planning and the threat of an enforcement notice, the wooden construction work continues apace, using flimsy materials, and the entire garden is taken up with the structure. *Afternote* – an enforcement notice was served on 3 March.

3.3 *Item 7* ('No Right Turn' notice on South Clerk St) – sorted a couple of days after the official complaint made.

3.4 *Item 7* (proposed zebra crossing at Bernard Terrace) - the FoI request did not come up with anything useful as the official has failed to read the question properly and omitted the whole paragraph which told them the background and ignored the questions. A formal review, i.e. a complaint has been lodged. This is likely to take another 20 working days. Southside Community Council and Preston Street Primary School Parent Council are also trying to get clarification about the matter.

- 3.5 *Item 7* (wall behind Charteris Centre) – the Centre confirmed that it does not own this wall.
- 3.6 *Item 9.2* (Spotlight Cinema) - scaffolding up on the former *Odeon* but no obvious sign of work happening on the front or roof.

#### 4. Chair's Report

- 4.1 The Meadows City Tennis Club is taking the lead on writing and submitting an enquiry to local Councillors and MSPs about the present and future opening hours of the East Meadows Public Toilets. In recent times they have been closed for lengthy periods. The Southside Association, the Southside Community Council, the Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links, and the University of Edinburgh Lawn Tennis Club have agreed to support this enquiry, as organisations with a strong interest in the long-term future of the facility, which is a key amenity for users of the Meadows and the local area.
- 4.2 We have asked the Historic Scotland Ranger Service if they would provide a speaker for a future meeting to talk in general about their work, and in particular about the future accessibility of the Radical Road.

#### 5. Treasurer's Report

Hilary reported that funds stood at £734.63.

#### 6. Planning & Licensing matters

None.

#### 7. Environmental matters

Report by Hilary McDowell, sections 1 to 7

- 7.1 A Freedom of Information request has been submitted to ask about the **Roads Capital Project** to ask if there are any funds for us to apply for etc.
- 7.2 Several reports logged of **blocked gullies** especially in the Salisbury area. Reports can be made about these online via the CEC website.
- 7.3 The team working to ensure that **commercial waste** is properly dealt with and with business compliance has been disbanded, and the responsibility passed to the Environmental wardens. Various examples were cited.
- 7.4 There are lots of instances of **flyposting** especially by nightclubs aimed at the student population. Also, lots of stickers for various things, especially the University staff strikes and the Climate Strike in April. It's not environmentally friendly to stick lots of plastic on street furniture. It was suggested that people doing community service could perhaps be involved in environmental cleaning other than litter picking; Cllr Perry said that the Scottish Government administered the scheme. *Afternote* - However please see this link <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/paybackunpaidworksuggestionform> which says "Please use this form to suggest unpaid work under Community Payback. Suggestions can come from individuals, local community organisations or groups."

- 7.5 **Street sweeping** - some streets are swept every week and kept very clean but others, such as Brown Street and the pedestrian access between West Newington Place and Causewayside rarely if ever appear to get swept. Request made for these streets to be cleaned regularly and the issue monitored.
- 7.6 **Illegal parking** has resumed at the bottom of Brown Street on the grass. Police and Councillors informed. Bollards were installed some time ago but no longer in place. Promise has been made to get them replaced.
- 7.7 A spate of acknowledgements received about **reports of dark street lights**, some of which were made four or more months ago. Told by a councillor for another area that this was because staff were moving department and clearing their inboxes. No wonder it takes so long to get some street lights working again!
- 7.8 Liz Logie said that a **sign** displaying parking times and restrictions was missing from Cowan's Close; Cllr Perry would enquire. She also mentioned various issues concerning the Council's depot there, as minuted in February, saying that she had written to Sarah Burns about them.

## 8. Report and Q & A with the attending Councillor

Cllr Perry had contributed to various discussions throughout the meeting. The article in today's Evening News about the closure of some community centres was mentioned. He said that no centres would be closing, and that £12M will be spent on the required refurbishments over the next five years. This follows on from a spend of £500M to renovate and build new schools over the past few years.

There was a lengthy discussion about the Council's budget, and the difficulty in deciding which services to maintain considering there is a £100M cut to funding. The Economic Development Dept has been slimmed down as the city is growing anyway.

Stephen Carter referred to previous items under discussion, noting that there was widespread disappointment and frustration at the seeming lack of progress with many long-term issues, as well as unanswered questions and poor communication; much time was wasted trying to find answers to questions about why work wasn't getting done and why issues weren't being resolved. He asked why the Council does things it is not resourced to do. Cllr Perry said that there is a reluctance to stop doing things, and hard decisions and judgements had to be made. Further discussions took place, with Council tax, tourist tax, staffing levels, and Council services in general mentioned, as well as the current issue of coronavirus.

## 9. Any other business

- 9.1 This is the response from the Council (via the local MP) to concerns about street begging by Eastern Europeans, following questions submitted by a local resident

*The Street Begging Community Improvement Partnership (CIP) which is led by the Council and includes membership from Police Scotland, business sector, third sector partners including Streetwork, Cyrenians and Bethany Christian Trust are aware of the recent prevalence of what would appear to be an increase in Eastern Europeans begging in Edinburgh.*

*Streetwork who are a homelessness charity and are part commissioned by the Council to work with homeless people and street beggars have raised their concerns with the Serious and Organised Crime Unit in Glasgow. They are however not advocating that the individuals described who are begging are being trafficked, just that there may be concerns. They have noticed that there seems to be more Eastern Europeans begging who have*

*taken over traditional UK National pitches that are more lucrative, which possibly indicates that there may be an organised element to the begging.*

*Streetwork are currently looking to employ someone with specific language skills as they are finding it difficult to engage with those concerned. They do however believe that most of the Eastern European beggars although legally entitled to work here, do not have recourse to public funds so there are very likely to be support and assistance issues that will need to be addressed.*

*Police Scotland are also aware of the current situation and local community officers make regular vulnerability patrols, which includes visiting street beggars and rough sleepers. This has included using officers with language skills to engage with beggars from other countries. At this time, they agree that there is no evidence to support that any of these persons have been trafficked, however they also agree with Streetwork that there may be an element of organisation and they continue to look into this element and will act upon any further information or evidence received.*

*The Council and their partners are aware that those people street begging are vulnerable whether organised or not and we are working closely with our partners to ensure that they have access to the appropriate support especially during these winter months.*

*If you do have ongoing concerns regarding possible criminality please do not hesitate to contact Police Scotland.*

- 9.2 The Causey Development Trust hearing is to be held on 22 April at the City Chambers. There are still concerns about safety for pedestrians and cyclists and people with impaired vision.
- 9.3 Hilary had visited the old Royal Infirmary site, now the University of Edinburgh's Edinburgh Futures Institute. She said "A dozen or so of us from a variety of different interest groups were shown round part of the site. Hard hats and boots were provided for everyone. This was the first of a series of visits planned to take place every 3 months. We saw parts of the very long corridor which runs the length of the building on the basement and also the second level. It was interesting to see the building stripped back to brick and stone. We were given an idea of how the site will operate once work is finished. A huge enterprise, and quite exciting. The community will be welcomed into the complex to take part in a variety of activities."
- 9.4 It was noted that the north gable end of the City Restaurant next to the Festival Theatre now sports an attractive mural.
- 9.5 It was noted that the appearance of the former Engine Shed, now the Holyrood Distillery, is greatly improved after its refurbishment.
- 9.6 Liz Logie asked that a rota for Councillor attendance at the SA meetings be provided.
- 9.7 The public house at 72 Newington Road is being refurbished and is to be called 'My Friend the Murderer', after a novel by Arthur Conan Doyle.
- 9.8 Maggie Bagan asked about the Nelson Hall lease; Cllr Perry will enquire.

## **10. Date of next meeting – 7 April - CANCELLED**

**Future Dates** – Tuesdays – 5 May, 2 Jun, 8 Sep, 6 Oct, 3 Nov, 1 Dec