

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 February 2014, at 7pm

PRESENT: Lisa Sibbald (Chair), Graham Bell, Tom Bonallo, Cllr Steve Burgess, Colin Christison (Secretary), PC Mark Dickson, Jan Fraser (Treasurer), Moira Gibson, Bob Hodgart, Jane Johnston, Isobel Leckie, Hilary McDowell, Carol McHugh, Ethel Murray, Dermot Patterson, Tim Pogson, Jo Scott, and Pamela Spiers.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Lisa Sibbald welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Margaret Bagan, Caroline Barr, Sarah Boyack MSP, Susan Brown, Linda Femister, Sheila Gilmore MP, Tom King (Vice-Chair), May Linton, George Pitcher, Molly Ross, Keith Smith, Louise Smith, Derek Suttie, Marjorie Watson, Scott Wilkins, and David Wood.

2. Police Report

Lisa welcomed PC Mark Dickson, from Team 5 of the Community Police, based at St Leonard's Police Station. He said that he had been with the police for 14 years, and was reasonably familiar with the area. Discussing some recent statistics, he said that from 7 January until 3 February, 145 crimes had been recorded in the Southside, with 72 of these solved. These included breaches of the peace, thefts, traffic offences, drugs offences, and two housebreakings. Under operation RAC (respond and capture) an initiative to combat housebreaking (which includes sheds, garages, and business premises as well as residences) had been launched in and around the Grange area. There had been a significant increase in the number and method of patrols. In a change to tackling anti-social behaviour, by-laws relating to drinking alcohol in the street had been extended to cover the whole city.

See <http://www.scotland.police.uk/whats-happening/news/news-by-division/edinburgh/>

A member mentioned that the police call centre had given a low grading to a theft of pedal cycles from Lutton Place in spite of the incident happening in front of several witnesses, and it wasn't until an officer's relative called the police, that they arrived and apprehended the culprits.

It was reported that aggressive begging was becoming a problem, with cards listing beggars' requirements being thrust at people; and one member said that she had been followed on to a bus by a beggar. Begging was still going on at the sites of cashpoint machines, perhaps intimidating people. This was not illegal but all aggressive begging should be reported by dialling 101.

3. Guest speaker: Dermot Patterson, LDN Architects

Lisa introduced Dermot Patterson, who in turn introduced Graham Bell and Jane Johnston from the University of Edinburgh. Dermot started his presentation by describing his firm's activities and mentioned that they had been the architects for the Edinburgh Festival Theatre and the Assembly Rooms. The firm had been working with the UoE for about four years on the McEwan Hall project, and it was hoped work would be completed in three years. He gave a detailed history of the Hall, which had been designed by the 19th century architect Robert Rowand Anderson, who also designed the Scottish Portrait Gallery. It is fortunate that comprehensive records exist for reference.

The planning application, which has been given consent, is summarised as *'The refurbishment of McEwan Hall with a basement extension, a new entrance pavilion, new staircase and lift installed in the north tower and the re-landscaping of Bristo Square.'*

The renovations will extend the hall's usefulness, and allow it to be used all year round. Dermot described the aspects of the renovation. Conservation and repair of the decaying stonework is underway. The Derbyshire quarry which provided the sandstone has closed, but a petrographic match will be found from nearby quarries. There are problems with damp in the basement, and cracks on the second floor. The general fabric of the building is in need of repair and restoration, and the service areas, with poor access and not much support accommodation, are in need of replacement. The organ requires repair. Heating and ventilation is ineffective. There is no access to the second tier, disability access is required, and toilets need upgrading. Part of the former medical school will be colonised to create modern back-of-house facilities; there will be a control room for live video streaming of graduation ceremonies etc; lighting will be improved, including using remotely controllable blinds; seating will be improved; acoustics will be improved by padding the wooden seats; and the stage area will be renovated. The problem of damp in the basement will be solved by excavating around the perimeter. There will be extended basement accommodation with a new entrance through a glass pavilion with oak panelling, as well as a new public square. The renovated and extended basement area with oak floors and timbered ceiling will be used for lectures, concerts, receptions and so on. The circular pavilion will house a reception and information point. New landscaping will be provided, and the old Edinburgh Corporation lamp will be relocated.

The McEwan Hall cost under £200,000 to be built; and the upgrade is costing about £33M.

Lisa and the members thanked Dermot for his presentation. See also

<https://citydev-portal.edinburgh.gov.uk/idoxpa-web/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=MOJCPIEWLO000>

4. Minutes of meeting of 7 January 2014, and matters arising

Agreed; proposed by Tim Pogson and seconded by Jo Scott. There were no matters arising.

5. Secretary's Report

5.1 Speakers – March Victim Support Scotland.

- 5.2 Prestonfield Neighbourhood Project in partnership with the Southside Community Centre have started a new advice service aimed at the over 50s who live in the south of the city. A representative from the group may attend a future SA meeting to give details, or send some literature about it.
- 5.3 Website – it was considered that some progress should be made with the SA’s website. Moira Gibson wondered if some IT students would be able to assist.
- 5.4 There was a discussion about a rumour that the Homebase branch at St Leonard’s Street could be closing.

6. Treasurer’s Report

Jan Fraser reported that the most recent balance was £1827.30.

7. Planning and Licensing Matters

- 7.1 The following application from September had been withdrawn -
13/03520/FUL Planning application for change of use to form hot food takeaway at 86 Nicolson Street, EH8 9EW. It was agreed to object on grounds of loss of retail unit and considerable over-provision of take-away shops.

However it had reappeared in the new lists published that afternoon and it was agreed to object once more.

- 7.2 Illuminated hoardings at Parkside Bowling Club – further information should be forthcoming in the near future.

8. Environmental Matters

- 8.1 Hilary McDowell made the following report

Gullies - *Apparently the gullies in our area were last serviced about 4 months ago. It is hoped that the team will be back in about 12 months. It takes approximately 16 months to get round all the gullies in the city but work cannot be done in very cold weather. That hasn’t been a problem so far this winter. If there is a problem with specific gullies the team should be notified and they say that will deal with them. Stuart Smith is the person to contact on 458 8048. Various problems have been brought to his attention in the last couple of weeks.*

Running overflows - *There has been water pouring out of the back of the Shelter shop in Haddon’s Court for several years. This has been reported to a number of agencies but the water still flows. Cllr Burgess said he would follow this up, but it was noted that there had been numerous unsuccessful attempts to find the source of this overflow.*

Road surfaces - *Work has started to repair the carriageway on South Bridge now that the Ibis Hotel and other buildings at the fire site are complete. There are a number of big potholes, particularly on the south bound carriageway of this particular road. Derek Roden (529 3720) is the person who deals with our area.*

Footpaths - *Various footpaths are being resurfaced in the Meadows area. Included in this current phase of work is the tarmacking of a desire line, created by the installation of the*

pedestrian crossing by the Magnet playground. We have been asking for this for years. Unfortunately the timing of this isn't good as many of the crocuses, which should be starting to create a colourful display soon, have been covered by equipment and otherwise disturbed. Perhaps we should ask for more bulbs to be planted there in the autumn to compensate. – agreed.

Meadows - *A new drive was created last spring to allow vehicles for the Ladyboys to get on to the Meadows from George Square by the University Library. This path has been flooding. Mike Shields said that he is looking to improve the drainage. The Meadows aren't flooded this winter. This part of Scotland has not had more rainfall than normal. However, it is very muddy, probably partly because it is used so much for sporting activities. We currently have an opportunity to comment on the number and type of events permitted on the Meadows and I would encourage any of you who are concerned about the large commercial events currently using the Meadows every year to reply to the consultation on www.edinburgh.gov.uk/eventsinparks before 21 March.*

Probable planning and listed building breach - *at 109 Newington Road. The owner this HMO is apparently creating a self-contained flat in the basement of this flat. She doesn't have planning permission.*

Street Signage – *several requests had been made to have the 'no right turn' signs on Clerk Street relating to Rankeillor and Montague streets to be re-positioned correctly so that motorists could see them". Cllr Burgess to follow up.*

8.2 Proposed wildflower garden at the Royal Commonwealth Pool – discussions were continuing with the various interested groups.

9. Reports from meetings attended

9.1 Students as volunteers in the community event (29 January) – it was felt that the meeting could have been better organised, and that it was weighted towards students, rather than the community.

9.2 Environment & Town Centre Planning Group (13 January) – minutes available.

10. Question and Answer session with the attending Councillor

Cllr Burgess had participated in various discussions throughout the meeting.

11. Any other business

None.

12. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 4 March, at 7pm.