

## **Living in South Edinburgh**

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### **Planning Committee**

**10 August 2006**

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 To refer to the Planning Committee the minute and associated notes of the South Local Development Committee (LDC) of 20 March 2006.

#### **Main Report**

- 2 The South Local Development Committee held a themed session on issues of concern to the student population living in South Edinburgh.
- 3 Ruth Cameron, President of the Edinburgh University Student's Association gave a presentation on the work of the association. Gordon Greenhill, Acting Head of Community Safety spoke on housing safety, noise pollution control, regulation of landlords and HMO licensing. The audience then took part in breakout groups which considered issues relating to the student population and their role in the community.
- 4 The LDC agreed: -
  - 1) To thank the Edinburgh University Students Association for its assistance in holding the special meeting of the Local Development Committee and welcomes the contribution made by the higher and further educational institutions to the economy and wellbeing of the City.
  - 2) To note that the last census in 2001 showed that more than 13% of the population of the South LDC area were aged 20 to 24 and that the students and young people who study at Edinburgh and Napier Universities make up a significant proportion of the population of the LDC area.
  - 3) To confirm that the LDC is committed to ensuring local communities continue to prosper, balancing the rights of all residents with their responsibilities to their neighbours and other members of the community.
  - 4) To recognise the efforts of the Council, the Police, universities, community groups, EUSA and others to improve the quality of life for all residents of the LDC area.
  - 5) To call on the universities to continue to work closely with the Council to increase the amount of affordable, good quality, purpose built student

accommodation in Edinburgh and asks the Director Designate, Services for Communities to report on progress to the Executive and to ask the Scottish Executive to review the financing of the re-provision of student accommodation.

- 6) To resolve to report the minutes of this Special Meeting and associated notes to the Planning Committee, Regulatory Committee and the Executive of the Council to aid future policymaking.
- 7) To recommend that the Executive calls for a report on the feasibility of introducing a discounted bus travel scheme to for full time mature students.

### **Recommendation**

- 5 The South LDC resolved to report the minutes and associated notes to the Planning Committee to aid future policymaking.

**Councillor Fred Mackintosh**  
Convener, South Local Development Committee

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<b>Appendix</b>	Minute of South Local Development Committee of 20 March 2006
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<b>Wards affected</b>	All
<b>Background Papers</b>	None

## Committee Minutes

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### South Local Development Committee

Edinburgh, 20 March 2006

in Teviot Row Student Union Debating Hall, Bristo Square

**Present:** - Councillors Mackintosh (Convener), Anderson, Gilmore, Mrs MacLaren, Mackenzie, O'Malley and Tritton.

**In attendance:** - Approximately 28 individuals/representatives of groups.

#### 1 Themed Session - 'Issues of Concern to the Student Population in South Edinburgh'

Ruth Cameron, President of the Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) gave a presentation on the work the Students' Association had carried out to help ensure that a positive relationship with the local community was promoted and maintained.

She stated that Edinburgh University had officially been accredited Scotland's first Fair Trade University and in particular had made valuable contributions to and played a positive role in working towards improving the economic, educational, social and cultural role in the city. The presentation highlighted that: -

- the Students' Association regularly hosted a community forum allowing students, residents, councillors and community groups to openly discuss both problems and opportunities in order to work towards common solutions and improve relations between students and local residents.
- an accommodation guide had been produced and distributed to all students which contained information on tenant etiquette, rights and responsibilities and the needs and expectations of the local community.
- the university had received huge acclaim for its responsible freshers' week, which focussed on holding daytime events, including tours of the city, visits to local landmarks, political debates and society taster sessions.

South Local Development Committee  
20 March 2006

- numerous student societies actively contributed student involvement in the community on a regular basis, such as, the highly successful schools volunteer group, the children's holiday venture, people and planet, nightline and dirty weekenders.
- regular stay safe, sensible drinking, personal safety, recycling and energy efficiency campaigns had been run promoting responsible and environmentally aware student life.

Gordon Greenhill, Environmental Health Manager gave a presentation outlining the Council's work with the student community through housing safety, noise pollution control, HMO licensing, the Cooksafe programme and the regulation of landlords. The presentation highlighted: -

- the role of the Council in relation to assisting in the improvement of local communities' physical and social wellbeing and the role of the Council in ensuring students were provided with better housing conditions under HMO Licensing which included standards for space, lighting and ventilation and electrical and fire safety.
- the increase in the number of HMO's in the city - in October 2001 there were 112 licensed HMO's compared to 4364 in March 2006.
- ways in which students could improve tenement living with members of the community, such as better noise control, clean city living and abiding by smoking legislation.
- areas of assistance open to students and local communities, in relation to health advice, cooking skills, debt and housing advice.

The audience then took part in breakout groups which considered a series of questions on what the Council and EUSA could do to help develop better communities and the Scottish Executive's role. A breakdown of the groups' comments is attached as appendix 1 to the minute.

The Convener then invited the audience to question a Panel comprising of Councillor Mackintosh, Graham Jones, Lothian and Borders Police, Anne Baird, Chair of Marchmont and Sciennes Community Council, Ruth Cameron, President of the Students' Association and Gordon Greenhill, Environmental Health Manager.

During the question time session, a number of issues were raised and answered the following questions on: -

- whether the mediation process was effective in solving problems between neighbours

South Local Development Committee  
20 March 2006

- access to the city, reducing student poverty and the feasibility of extending discounted bus travel to mature students
- where the boundaries were for the noise control team and the procedures in place for dealing with noise disputes outwith properties e.g. in the street.
- whether support measures were in place to encourage graduates to stay in Edinburgh, such as, reviewing council tax with a view to supporting newly graduated students in full-time employment, financial incentives, etc.

### Decisions

- 1) To thank the Edinburgh University Students' Association for its assistance in holding the special meeting of the Local Development Committee and welcomes the contribution made by the higher and further educational institutions to the economy and wellbeing of the City.
- 2) To note that the last census in 2001 more than 13% of the population of the South LDC area were aged 20 to 24 and that the students and young people who study at Edinburgh and Napier Universities make up a significant proportion of the population of the LDC area.
- 3) To confirm that the LDC is committed to ensuring local communities continue to prosper, balancing the rights of all residents with their responsibilities to their neighbours and other members of the community.
- 4) To recognise the efforts of the Council, the Police, universities, community groups, EUSA and others to improve the quality of life for all residents of the LDC area.
- 5) To call on the universities to continue to work closely with the Council to increase the amount of affordable, good quality, purpose built student accommodation in Edinburgh and asks the Director Designate, Services for Communities to report on progress to the Executive and to ask the Scottish Executive to review the financing of the re-provision of student accommodation.
- 6) To resolve to report the minutes of this Special Meeting and associated notes to the Planning Committee, Regulatory Committee and the Executive of the Council to aid future policymaking.
- 7) To recommend that the Executive calls for a report on the feasibility of introducing a discounted bus travel scheme for full time mature students.

South Local Development Committee  
20 March 2006

**Appendix 1**  
**(As referred to in item 1 of the foregoing minute)**

**SLDC Younger Peoples' Meeting - 20 March 2006**

**FEEDBACK FROM BREAK-OUT GROUPS**

**Each group was asked to consider the following three questions:**

- What do you think the Council should do to help develop better communities?
- Is there anything that EUSA could do to help?
- What should the Scottish Executive do?

**Group 1**

- Safety - HMO and Noise Team help
- Over provision of HMO properties - need to look at this issue across the city
- Distribution of student population - lower rents, encouraging people to live in other parts of the city
- Impact on rented sector on maintenance repairs etc-
- Different lifestyles - mix individuals within stairs, transitional individuals (not just students)
- Accessibility - communication links - facilitate engagement from community to students
- Investigate and encourage managed student accommodation provided - ensure well managed to lessen problems
- Ability of University to resource provision of accommodation?
- Community Forum - more emphasis on engagement - both sides
- Encourage local shopping - cheap accessible - healthy buses.
  
- Understanding about communal living - impacts - raising awareness
- Information to tenants - moving from your home to someone else's
- 'Community Meeting Group Campaign' - consider drink related issues - leaflets - participate in community - meetings/Council
- 'Get to Know Your Neighbour Campaign' - Autumn 2006
  
- Limit number of HMOs - proliferation - no consensus on this point.
- Fund initiatives to foster good relations
- Need more cycle lanes - encourage transport policies.

South Local Development Committee  
20 March 2006

### Group 2

- Financial Resources - Landlord accreditation
- Council could help manage rent deposit scheme
- Communicating Factoring information more widely
- EUSA - Already have well used Advisory Services
- Continue to recommend good Landlords (advertising)
- Better advertising of Energy Efficiency (LEEP)
  
- Continue positive elements of Landlord accreditation
- Council Tax
- Continual study rule removed
- Promote energy efficiency - discounts

### Group 3

- HMO Licence - Landlords will not meet costs - passed onto students - very expensive per year - results in a real rise in rents
- Look at Council Tax - not knocking on doors to identify HMOs - to ensure evenly spread - may push down costs
- Recycling - need smaller banks - consider plastic bag recycling - plastic bottles, can we use coding system (numbers for what can be recycled)?
- Closer working with students e.g. conservation weekends, dirty weekenders, energy efficiency and People and Places Officers (Services for Communities)
- More (covered) bike facilities on the streets
  
- EUSA encourage people to recycle etc - at Pollock Halls, New Arthur Place, SAS local facilities, guide for students in community - tenements - stair clean
- My Edinburgh Portal - can EUSA put information on re cleaning, cycle racks, recycling, cycle lanes?
- Poster - should be simple - five steps to good tenement living
  
- Cover all rental - people decrease rooms, so not classified as HMO - spread HMO costs (cost + supply = reduced prices)
- Tramline 3

### Group 4

- Council could encourage Neighbourhood Street Parties - getting to know/meet people - exchange views - designate one week
- Umbrella Group for Voluntary Organisations/Societies
- Less duplication - increase efficiency
- Improve recycling facilities - need to consider plastic bags - gaps in recycling education
- Improve public transport - infrequent and unreliable

South Local Development Committee  
20 March 2006

- Integration of cycle routes and road network
- Provision of information - distribution of A-Z misses the start of student year
- Information re: part time employment
- Planning - sustainable balanced communities
  
- EUSA - improve communication and co-ordination of voluntary groups
- Allowing access to students/EUSA by local groups etc
- Traffic safety signs around university sites and campuses
  
- Oversee implementation of policy and legislation on the ground
- Improve response times to specific issues
- Improve time scales for amending/introducing new legislation
- Change the way they fund free condom scheme.

#### Group 5

- Problems to look at - 15% city residents in private rented housing compared to 13% in Council accommodation
- Graduates remain within rental market - for financial reasons
- Perceptions of noise, and the association with HMOs - most complaints in terms of ward area are not HMOs by origin - Noise Team general succeeds
- Quota for HMOs - justifiable? - in certain areas
- Excellent response by students to Noise Enforcement by Night Team
- 'Fit and Proper Person' - Landlord registration
- Landlords want to provide good service - by requesting information and training
- Crime prevention measures - don't attract burglars - door entry systems - students regarded as easy targets - think more about own safety and behaviour which may attract crime
- Edinburgh one of safest areas to live in UK
  
- Promote what's expected of people living in stairs
- Encourage better communication with neighbours - similar events to Marchmont Street Party
- Encourage student contact with Councillors - better organisation/flexibility of surgeries
- Encourage regular contact with Council/Police/outside agencies - on campus
- Recycling - need better facilities
  
- Should 'Re-Brand' HMOs.