

BRIXTON

Neighbourhood Forum

Minutes of General Meeting on 26 May 2016

Present: Devon Thomas (chair), Alan Piper (secretary), Nick Weedon (treasurer), Bill Linskey, Chief Inspector Roy Smith, Ken Floyde, Mathew Clarke, Roger Baker, Regina Manicom, Irena Kowalewska, Tom Bridgeman, Bogdan Hristov, Tina Jennings, David Joyce, Jean Kerrigan, Delmay Parker, Caroline Funnel, Sarah Henderson.

Apologies: Cllr. Jack Hopkins, Deborah Bestwick, Brad Carrol, Jane Duncan-Ribeiro.

Welcome from the Chair. Thanks to AP for circulating Bulletin. BNF aims to go digital for broader engagement, and Manuel Santos has been engaged to upgrade our communications.

Policing and Crime issues:

Update from Chief Inspector Roy Smith who is keen to support this forum.

- He has a broad area to cover, including Vauxhall, Streatham and Brixton.
- An incredibly challenging time recently, with 14 stabbings across the Borough in the last two weeks. Also 3 shootings, one with a sawn-off shotgun.
- Youth violence is escalating and bubbling.
- Please Twitter@RoySmithmetpoliceservices to see the types of weapons seized every day eg. Combat knife from 14 year old.
- No apologies for prioritizing resources to prevent children being killed.
- Pastor Lorraine of Dwayne Simpson Foundation held an award ceremony that Chief Inspector attended. Also attending another 13 community events in the borough to show interest and support.
- Snaptrapper, an initiative for the prevention of crack/drugs selling where 70 people including 15 prolific sellers were arrested. Resources used to use 1000 police team to raid and arrest.
- Territorial Support Group (TSG) have been deployed to address the particular problems on Angell Town. The community have requested that Bobbies on the Beat should be present and now there is a regular daily 20 min 'walk-through' from this kind of policeman.
- Chief Inspector Roy Smith is committed to local policing and community work but his priorities lay with serious crime such as sexual violence and murder.
- The terrorist threat is very real and there are many guns in London, so in response there is more frequent use of armed policing in the borough.
- Adding to the work load are cybercrime, sexting and online abuse.
- As a result of financial cuts, the Community Safety Team does not exist, there is no out of hours noise service from the council, mental health needs are not

being met. These cuts are putting pressure on the police to pick up problems for which they are not specially trained.

- Chief Inspector asks for a degree of understanding in such a climate.
- His three priorities are Visibility (new uniforms), Relentlessness (in pursuit of criminals), Pride (in the positive role of policing community).

Two residents RM and IK expressed their exasperation at the constant drugs dealing around their homes at Arlington Lodge and Baytree Road. They described intimidation from young men that carry knives. Despite emailing the police and Andy Burton the ward officer the problem continues as it has for the last three years. The residents called the police three weeks ago following a serious incident on the stairways of the block.

Porden Road was mentioned as a drug selling hotspot with drugs hidden in gardens. It emerged from this that the council and the police are not working together and the residents specifically requested clear communication strategies be created between agencies.

The Chief Inspector agreed to look into this situation and offered to walk the ladies home so that he could witness the atmosphere of their area.

He added that following a meeting with Sean Harris emergency council staff will be based at the Police Station. RS noted that although housing officers are invited to Police meetings they rarely attend.

A forum discussion followed about safety clauses in tenancy agreements around behaviours. NW reported that a reinforced door had to be fitted at Effra Court following similar anti social behaviour.

JK added that prostitution and drugs have long been on the agenda at ward meetings for Brixton Hill, and that regular reports of antisocial behaviour arose at housing meetings. JK added that this is a recurring problem when Brixton Town Centre is cleared because issues are always displaced to surrounding estates.

BL asked the Chief Inspector whether the Police had been consulted about the All Night Tube services for the Night Time Economy.

RS replied “No, this is a Mayoral decision and there are no extra Police allocated”.

TJ asked for community engagement around the Night Time Economy and its particular problems. Percentage of Police provision seems small, 2 officers... What can we do to help?

MC commented that licensing began to be relaxed when Mediterranean-style coffee bars were introduced in Britain. These became nightclubs with louder sound systems and the main complaint in Lambeth became noise. Noise complaints historically lay with the Council and are not a Police concern. Generally Brixton Town Centre was safe and estates less safe. Although CCTV is present it remains a cosmetic approach.

RS defended the Council as a public organisation and pointed out that budgets are being cut for all services.

McDonalds and its manager were raised as an example of a business that had thoroughly engaged with Brixton and its community. Jamie Akinola from Lambeth was also responsive. However elected councillors on the licensing committee were too ready to grant licences to unsuitable people.

A resident of Porden Road explained how an agreement between a local night club and the residents was being monitored by meeting every three months.

RS reported that more night time businesses had closed in the last two years, and willing businesses could cooperate in solving problems and reducing nuisance. He noted that Paris has compulsory Air-Lock doors at nightclubs to contain the noise, and recommends this as a way forward for London.

Lambeth Police have preserved the use of CCTV in the borough and improved lighting on Windrush Square and improved the visibility of the TSG.

DT made mention of the sirens of the eighties that heightened stress and MT suggested a new siren sound to match the new uniforms recently employed by the Police.

The Chair DT thanked Chief Inspector Roy Smith for his eloquent presentation.

Future Brixton Planning:

Tom Bridgeman took the floor and introduced his colleague David Joyce, Assistant Director. TB leads on Future Brixton Planning. At the last meeting questions were raised around skills and employment, affordable housing, tall buildings, transport capacity and infrastructure.

Transport:

Lambeth are in conversation with TFL around the potential for re-opening Brixton East to give access to London Overground services. The Brixton area suffers from 'end of line' syndrome with heavy interchange between bus and underground services. Use of Streatham station has increased significantly and this implies that increase in demand reflected the limitations of the network rather than local developments.

TFL say that this will be solved by the arrival of Crossrail 2 by 2032, but Lambeth proposed that the line should go via Streatham and not Balham as initially suggested.

It was noted how difficult it is to get a bus on Brixton Hill and in Clapham Road between 8.30-9.30am, and how there is a queue outside of Brixton Tube Station during rush hour.

This is not just a Lambeth problem but applies to all of Zone 2.

MC mentioned the decline in car ownership in London and reduction of car parking spaces. DT noticed an increase in walking, AP noted that the buses are full. TJ mentioned car ownership and freedom of choice and necessity.

DJ explained that new developments do not generally include car parking facilities. Air pollution, 70% is caused by surface based transport. Cycling infrastructure is being increased. A balance is important.

MC stated that cars dominate but Car ownership is on the decrease with an increase in car clubs.

DJ expressed that he was scared to cycle and that Lambeth has six of the top 10 cycling danger spots. Quiet routes are slowly emerging for cyclist but these may encroach upon pedestrian routes.

BL spoke on the practicality of getting people out of their cars especially with regard to the increase in home deliveries. Drop off points would still be needed for hotels and apartment blocks.

DJ made mention of a Delivery Consolidation Centre and smaller local sites for Brixton Businesses to better plan their deliveries.

Uber cabs were highlighted for waiting times with engines running.

JK highlighted that we are in a service driven economy and people are having to work further away from home.

Affordable Housing:

DJ explained that the Lambeth Borough Plan aims to achieve 30% subject to viability testing. The reality means that the target is not so far achieved. The Brixton Town Hall Development is aiming for 40% affordable housing and Brixton Green Development hope to exceed 30%, Gresham Road aims for 29%. Lambeth Borough do challenge and try to implement but it is not always possible with developers changing arrangements upon completion. Lambeth has been one of the more successful boroughs in obtaining affordable housing.

The Chair hoped that the new Mayor Sadiq Kahn may boost percentages. BL stated that viability is very difficult to challenge, land is often bought without making allowance for affordable housing provision. It always works in favour of the developers.

DP asked what is “affordable” housing?

DJ replied that typically 70% is social-rented housing, 30% is shared ownership/intermediate rent. He added that the current government is constantly restricting the provision of affordable housing.

JK added that the sale of social housing by councils to feed into developers’ desires is pernicious.

Planning Policies generally:

DJ highlighted the current Government’s trend to deregulation of planning e.g. offices being turned into residential properties (e.g. Piano House) and changes from retail to a wider range of uses. The resulting lack of scrutiny allowed homes to be provided even without windows. There was limited scope to make Article 4 Directions to restrain abuses.

MC noted the Council officers were too receptive to up-market eateries citing Phoenix Café and Dirty Burgers as examples.

DJ stated that he is not against tall buildings when they are considered. DP asked whether future buildings would be beautiful.

DT noted that London overall has the lowest residential density among European cities.

BL raised the subject of Land Assembly, taking a proactive approach rather than just re-acting to developers’ proposals. DJ agreed with more land Assembly but TB said that this would slow down housing provision. AP added that the exchange of land ownership could make the overall development quicker. TB explained that the Canterbury Arms, car park and Popes Road site was a landswap.

MC asked whether the Somerleyton Road developments had a whole site CPO. DJ explained that they are in negotiations to buy the part that is private land. MC enquired why the council didn't do the CPO earlier. DJ and TB explained that the council had to remain independent and wouldn't have been able to buy an industrial site. JK asked whether it would scupper the project, would social housing be undermined? DJ assured the forum that this should not stop it.

TB assured the meeting that that he would email officers with JK question and would return to the forum for the next stage of consultation on the Central Sites Masterplan.

The chair thanked all for their contributions.

Other Business:

- 200th anniversary of Brixton Windmill: As part of the Friends' series of events, there is an open air film show on Saturday 4th June including a new film supported by BNF.
- Brixton Recreation Centre: listing is being sought by Docomomo, a group who aim to save modern buildings. Individuals and groups were urged to write in support (see Brixton Blog).
- Clapham Film Project in collaboration with Lambeth Archives are seeking reminiscences from people living on Somerleyton Rd during 1950s and 60s.
- Ken Floyd asked when the Community Chest would be open for bids. AP said this was awaiting approval of the Forum's budget by the rest of the Lambeth Forum Network, so should be in the next month or two.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Next meeting Thursday **28th July** 2016.