

BRIXTON

Neighbourhood Forum

Minutes of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Thursday 28 July 2016 at Pop Box

Present: Devon Thomas, Alan Piper, Nick Weedon, Tina Jennings, Jason Gibilaro, Michael Groce, Maria Thacker, Manuel Santos, Sean Freckleton, Rashid Nix, Philippe Castaing, Annette Dhain, Daniel Solomon, Nadia Johnson, Bill Linskey, Sheeba Levi-Stewart, Tony Cealy, Gerry Evans, Jane Campbell, Cholic Page, Duke Frankhuilen, Stella Headley, Gabre Wold, Iyanna Headley, Leo Mills, Helen MacDonald, Dr Eve Howard, Rob Goacher, Silvia Paulo, Annick Alet, Locs Akee (community support), June Armstrong, Victoria Sherwin, Cllr Martin Tiederman, Helen Hayes MP, Andy Simm, Askale Selassie, Jean Kerrigan, Marilyn Rodgers, Julia Forson, Hannah James, Charlotte Knowles, Linda Quinn, Barbara Pattinson, Binki Taylor, Max Boucher, Claire Moore, Peter Shorinwa, Brad Carrol, Tom Dobson, Lezelle Souse, F Corrieia-Sefzik, J Seitzel, Alan Stiagsly, S Wright, Michael Smith, Commander R Wood (Met Police), Elkin Atwell, Stafford Geohagen, Luke (LJAG)

Apologies for absence: Juneary Raymond, Cllr Jack Hopkins, Tom Bridgman (Lambeth Regeneration), Cllr. Jackie Dyer, Cllr. Mary Atkins, Anthea Massey (LJAG), Michelle Killington, Lana (Tulse Hill Forum), Rebecca Trevelyan (Impact Hub), Fred Taggart, Stuart Horwood, Stuart Everitt.

The Annual General Meeting of Brixton Neighbourhood Forum was opened by Tony the drummer with poetry from Michael Groce.

Welcome and Introductions

The Chair, Devon Thomas, explained the role of Brixton Neighbourhood Forum, a forum of groups. He has been keeping in touch with local activities and concerns, including attending meetings of adjacent forums, and helping local enterprises to develop key skills.

He explained that Brixton Neighbourhood Forum continues to build capacity and is updating its website and membership list in order to share information better. He hoped that this virtual approach will help to engage younger members and improve networking.

DT introduced Michael Smith (Brixton BID), Phillipe Castaing (Brixton Green), Commander Richard Wood and MP Helen Hayes who would form the panel for the Question Time when members and attendees would be invited to ask questions.

DT affirmed that Brixton Neighbourhood Forum exists to give a neighbourhood voice to a collection of groups such as Brixton Windmill, Windrush Square, Brixton Green, to name just a few, in order to secure a future for all of our Grandchildren.

DT introduced

- Alan Piper, Forum Secretary, responsible for the most informative Forum Bulletins and also active in the Brixton Society who organise guided walks of local interest.

- Nick Weedon, Forum Treasurer, responsible for the accounts and active member of the Friends of Windmill Gardens, where the 200th anniversary of Brixton Windmill is being marked with special events and open days.
- Jason Gibilaro a community artist who created the decoration of the railway bridge over Brixton Rd with local school children in 2004. This installation was supposed to be for five years and has lasted to date. As part of Brixton Design Trail he will redesign the bridge decoration and is committed to the Creative Forum.
- Bill Linskey chairs the Brixton Society and the Lambeth Local History Forum, who are promoting a Heritage Festival through the month of September.
- Manuel Santos and Fernanda Coreira-Sefzikk representing 2Qubits, a local organisation concerned with recycling computers by clearing data, refurbishing and ensuring community groups have equipment at affordable rates. Supports local communities in their development of digital and technical skills. Accessible IT skills for all, local groups, social enterprises, charities and individuals.
- Michael Groce of the Green Man Skills Zone.
- Sean Freckleton was in attendance to promote Affinity Legacy Planning, stating that the government is projected to take 4.6 billion in inheritance tax because of lack of information within the community.
- Victoria Sherwin represents Vassal and Coldharbour Forum 16 organisations that have come together over the last year as a voice for their area.
- Brad Carol of Brixton Green, who over the past 8 years have persuaded Lambeth Council to grant planning permission and fund a housing scheme on SomerLeyton Rd. They now have 1200 members and have won the New London Award.
- Michael Smith who is the CEO of Brixton BID. The BID has 650 members who pay an extra 1.5% levy on their business rates to support its activities, though most are smaller enterprises with a rateable value of around £5,000 each. Market traders and others below the minimum size threshold can be involved as associate members.

This collection of people and organisations provide examples of links made and ongoing capacity building in the local community.

Question Time

There was a slight change to the composition of the panel due to timing and the panel appeared as follows:

Phillipe Castaing (PoP Brixton), Helen Hayes (MP for Dulwich and West Norwood), Richard Wood (Borough Commander Met Police), Rashid Nix (Green Party).

Tina Jennings took the floor with the first question from members; she introduced Rob Goacher of 'Take the Pee out of Brixton' and reminded members of his campaign. The campaign is about the lack of public conveniences available in Brixton. She highlighted the fact that no local Lambeth councillors had attended this meeting, though Cllr Jenny Braithwaite is fully informed of the concerns and of the campaign. Only two months ago Lambeth Council had been on the point of handing over the keys of the Public toilets on Windrush Square to Rob Goacher.

An agreement had been made to reopen them but now mysteriously a 'For Rent' sign has appeared on them. It appears that there is still no money from the council for public toilets, It was noted that 27,000 people come to Brixton of a weekend.

Transport for London have put a sign outside the tube station directing the public to Tunstall Rd where there are no public conveniences.

Commdr Richard Wood agreed that from the police perspective, urination and defecation in public realm definitely falls into category of anti social behaviour. MP Helen Hayes agreed to raise this conversation with council colleagues and stated that Councillors Matt Parr and Rachael Haywood had raised the issue.

Tina Jennings explained that the Windrush Square facilities have been closed for 30 years. She continued that this problem has existed for years although the Night Time Economy generates much money.

Annick Alet of Friends of Windrush Square affirmed that the problem of urination in the public square is constant and relentless. Regular citizens are often 'caught short' and Lambeth Council seem unconcerned. She explained that the 30 year closure was originally because of security issues relating to cottaging, substance misuse etc. but the Council always claim was a Police recommendation. She asked the question 'is this civilized in the 21st Century?'

Commdr Richard Wood agreed to address this and explore options, noting that policing relies on new methods that may be appropriate in this instance. The Council and the Police had agreed to meet about policing anti social behaviour.

Michael Smith of Brixton BID has put in proposals suggesting partnership with the Council and the Police about public conveniences and it was noted that POP Brixton has installed 17 WCs within their site. He explained that Brixton BID is about additionality. Two extra police are sponsored by the BID for town Centre policing. The BID has also added to past council provision with regard to cleanliness, security, training, promoting Brixton businesses, and reducing business costs.

Adoption of Annual Report and Accounts

These were unanimously agreed.

Elections: There was unanimous support of the existing Forum committee members. Tina Jennings, Rob Goacher, Fernanda Coriera-Sefzik and Michael Groce were voted in as additional members of the Forums' executive committee.

Treasurers Report: Nick Weedon explained that all accounts were included in the pack of documents provided at the AGM. The small grant from Lambeth Council has helped to improve the Forum's IT and get an up to date website. It has also enabled the Forum to have a Community Chest where local groups can apply for small funds to help their organisations. He explained that the membership fee exists to help pay for the hire of venues, so that in the event that Lambeth should withdraw funds, the Forum would still be able to meet.

DT added that the Forum and the Brixton Pound have joined forces for the next year to expand the Community Chest.

Thanks were given to BNF from Jean Kerrigan of Friends of Windmill Gardens and Annick Alet of Friends of Windrush Square who had both received support from the Community Chest. Thanks were also given to Tina Jennings of Street Concepts and to the Brixton Society.

Nick Weedon added that 'the little money we do have does big things'.

Bill Linskey highlighted the vigour of the borough-wide forums for Parks and for Libraries. He stated that the common concern within all such forums is that the Councillors do not listen to their recommendations. He noted that 'this is the fault of the public and our inaction. We keep electing the same people but should request more Independents. Show that we can elect our own people, until this is addressed there will be no change in the councillors' attitudes and hare-brained schemes'.

Rashid Nix agreed with Bill Linskey and had campaigned on behalf of the Green Party with Cllr. Scott Ainsley. He highlighted the difference between career politicians and those who campaign for people. He advised that waiting for the Council was no longer an option. He cited the salary of Sue Foster as £170,000 per year against the claims of austerity and no available money. He recommended that 'Take the Pee out of Brixton' hire a mobile public convenience and send the bill to the council. Also, to embarrass the council by creating a report for televisions' London Tonight.

A request was made that all Forums come together as a Lambeth Voice. Gerry Evans stated that she is aware of the stress across the borough.

Tina Jennings asked that the issue of Public Conveniences remain a priority so that we can bring an end to the problem. She asked for the support of the Forum. DT added that the BNF has supported this issue and it appeared until recently that action was happening. **Helen Hayes said she is very happy to talk about this and Annick Alet agreed to copy Helen Hayes into the lengthy correspondence to councillors that exists on this subject.**

Victoria Sherwin highlighted that Lambeth's plans across Cultural Services were a mess and failing to save money as claimed. The closure of Minet and Carnegie libraries is impacting on the Brixton Tate Library. Even if these re-opened eventually, the library facilities would be limited and inferior.

Jean Kerrigan found it extraordinary that in her past ten years experience of Lambeth Parks, the Council's left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. Officers continue to sell off sites and estates, politicians should listen and take responsibility.

Devon Thomas offered a short summary to the AGM highlighting the importance of 'being heard'. He stated that people power is not enough, Community Cohesion and infrastructure are paramount. Councils come up with ideas but do not have the necessary conversations - they have the resources but do not listen.

Tina Jennings added that the Co-Operative Council has only fragmented the constituents, we should build up numbers and lobby for change. Forums are meant to bring us together, not compete.

Helen MacDonald closed the evening with two a cappella songs.