

BRIXTON

Neighbourhood Forum

Minutes of General Meeting on March 31st 2016

Held at the Vida Walsh Centre, Saltoun Road, from 7pm.

Present: Tina Jennings (TJ), Rob Goacher (RG), Tom Bridgman (TB), Ken Floyde (KF), Abidha Ahmed (AAh), Mathew Clarke (MC), Devon Thomas (DT), Alan Piper (AP), Nick Weedon (NW), Marilyn Rogers (MR), Bill Linskey (BL), Jean Kerrigan (JK), Caroline Funnell (CF), Yvonne Stewart-Williams (YSW), Annick Alet (AA), Manuel Santos (MS), Rebecca Trevalyan (RT), Jedidah Onchere (JO), June Armstrong (JA), Selwin Guiala (SG), Cl Roy Smith (RS), Maria Thacker (MT).

Apologies for absence: Charlotte Knowles, Michael Smith, Victoria Sherwin, Gerry Evans, Margot (Pivot), Ken Dark, Grace Gbadamosi, Brixton Pound, Stuart Horwood, Michael Groce.

Welcome from the Chair: Devon Thomas opened the meeting at 7-20 pm.

Matters Arising from Minutes:

Minutes of the meeting on 28 January had already been circulated by e-mail.

Taking the Pee Out of Brixton: Rob Goacher reported the good news that he has gained access to the public toilets on Windrush Square following a meeting with the council. A partnership with Lambeth Council and the Premier Inn discussed a £67,000.00 fund that should insure the toilets are open by Summer 2016. RG also met with Transport for London to discuss use of arches for essential public conveniences.

Lambeth Council lead on Investment and Growth: Tom Bridgman.

Tom gave a presentation on projects under the Future Brixton umbrella, in particular the "New Town Hall" sites, Somerleyton Road and Central Brixton. TB affirmed that each site would include 40% affordable housing and would create more employment.

Electric Avenue is currently undergoing refurbishment. Market improvements, repaving and new gateway features are being supported by the Mayor of London's High Street Fund £869,000, matched by £500,000 from Lambeth Council.

This is supplemented by a £2.6 million Heritage fund for restoring shopfronts and facades to the original styles. So far, planning applications accepted for 27 Electric Ave with a grant offered. Planning granted for landmark corner of 45 Electric Avenue. At 6 Electric Avenue, planning application is in progress.

In addition, Popes Rd public conveniences have been refurbished, Impact Hub Brixton is to expand, Brixton Pound will have their own cash machine and free wi-fi is to be available in the town centre. Brixton Works is a feasibility study with £200k to invest in affordable work space, with the Council acting as landlord.

Canterbury Square is being laid out in front of the Police Station.

At Pop Brixton, construction is complete. 75% of tenants are Lambeth locals who commit one hour of volunteer time per week as community investment clause. The entertainment space and the Greenhouse are available for hire at 50% discount for local people.

The vacant site of the Canterbury Arms adjacent will become a temporary sports project for the summer with large screen in public space.

At Loughborough junction, the Loughborough Farm has been awarded £1.6 million, with the planting project at the front, other workspace to the rear, and better access to the station from Styles Gardens.

A study is underway to see if Brixton East railway station can be brought back into operation as the best solution to providing access to London Overground rail-links while avoiding the curve in the rail tracks around Brixton Station.

Around the existing station, Network Rail is pursuing refurbishment of the railway arches in one operation - planning permission would be decided in May.

Forum members felt this would have an adverse impact on Brixton shopping as a whole. and appeared to conflict with the SPD and Borough Plan policies. Stepped rent increases may allow some existing tenants to return but long-term viability of the business would be at risk.

A discussion followed about high-rise developments and transport. Jean Kerrigan highlighted the imbalance of increasing density of population and the limited capacity of present transport links. She also queried the type of employment that may emerge from such developments. Would the employment created be temporary building contracts, or would any meaningful long-term jobs emerge from the strategy? Would the forecast 1000 jobs be for the people of Brixton?

Tom Bridgman replied that the future employment openings created would be office – based jobs.

Mathew Clarke and Bill Linskey highlighted the Spirit of Brixton included in the SPD. MC called for an independent audit of the One Planet Living principles included in the original planning document.

The Chair DT invited Tom Bridgman to return to answer the wider questions and report progress at future meetings.

Policing in Brixton:

Chief Inspector Roy Smith introduced himself as a passionate community policeman, a Londoner and challenged by the constraints of his role and his experience as a citizen. He expressed great understanding of the role and emphasized the challenging nature of a reduced public service.

He explained that 600 London officers were now committed to a specialist Armed Police Command, and this had reduced the number of officers on the street. Lambeth is experiencing an unprecedented cut in services, noting that reductions in health services have added to police workload. He highlighted the fact that police training does not include social service or mental health training.

The Community Safety Unit has been cut drastically. Marcia Rigg was referred to as an extraordinary critical friend to the police on the subject of mental health. Street teams were also mentioned as paramount for 3am call outs concerning social and mental health services.

The reduced amount of officers available are kept busy by the night time economy, in particular licenced premises in Vauxhall and Clapham High Street. The organisation is actively exploring borough mergers, in particular Southwark and Lambeth police may be combined.

Stop and Search is an imperfect solution to a problem but the level of weaponry available on the street is truly frightening. Combat Knives are common and loaded sub-machine guns have also been seized. Knife crime continues and hospital surgeons have become experts in the field of repair from such wounds.

CIRS reminded the Forum that the Police remain a Public Service and mentioned the importance of engagement and transparency.

CIRS explained that the demand for Policing remains heightened. There is still a Sergeant and two ward officers for each ward. The Business BID funds two police officers. There are three priorities:-

- 1) to be visible, for which a new uniform has been designed.
- 2) to be Relentless by intimidating criminals off the streets.
- 3) To retain Pride in the job.

A member of Vassal/Coldharbour Forum highlighted that young people want money. Annik Alet noted that young people needed help to realise their ideas. The Digital Divide could be reduced by encouraging younger people to engage with older people.

MC was reminded of the social conflict of the 1980's, of Thatcher and the Police. Marilyn Rogers invited CIRS to Saturday's Community Day on Windrush Square.

CIRS understood the need for impartiality in cases of Social Unrest. He explained that these days police wages are relatively low, so that officers may come from outside of London and be less likely to look like or represent the community that they serve. He invited the forum to a Community Day in North Brixton on the 19th April 2016.

The Chair DT reminded the forum of the value of building up relationships between the police and local groups, despite reduced resources.

DT explained that this forum works as a collection of groups, providing channels for access to smaller groups and to the wider community.

Lambeth Forum Network Away Day:

The Secretary Alan Piper reported on the recent Away-day findings. Overall priorities for the year ahead had been identified; Cllr Edbrooke has assured the forum network of continued funding and support.

BL explained the Forum's potential role in the distribution of Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 contributions from local developments.

TB explained that Brixton CIL spend would be pooled with Herne Hill and Loughborough Junction.

BL expressed grave doubts about politicians trying to keep public monies and emphasized the need for clear boundaries to prevent any blurring of where public monies should go.

JK highlighted the work that had already been put into setting up the Forum and defining its boundaries and requested a Special Meeting on this subject. The Council's own budgets for Libraries, parks and ground maintenance teams are being

reduced. We do not want parks to be like they were in the 1980's because the area is unable to get access to the available funding.

MC said that LJAG have the same issue.

BL reiterated that **no neighbourhood plan is needed** in order to be a recognised forum or to spend CIL.

AP invited feedback from members on suitable boundaries – our original maps were out of date due to the emergence of other forums, notably Tulse Hill.

Any Other Business:

MC reported that Clapham Film Unit is collecting reminiscences about Carlton Mansions and Somerleyton Road.

Manuel Santos has been engaged by Brixton Neighbourhood Forum to update and expand its digitization. MR expressed how lovely it would be for all member groups to be linked to this facility.

Upcoming Events

Saturday 2nd April 2016, Community Day, Windrush Square.

Tuesday 12th April 2016 35th Anniversary of 1981 riots, Black Cultural Archives

Shoots and Leaves Filming.

Monday 2nd May 2016: Celebrating 200 years of the Windmill and launch of Brixton Flour @ the Windmill, Blenheim Gardens SW2.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Next meeting Thursday 26th May 2016, 7pm @ Vida Walsh Centre.