

BRIXTON

Neighbourhood Forum

Minutes of Forum Meeting (via Zoom) on Monday 2nd November 2020

Present:

Alan Piper, Forum Secretary,
 Nicholas Weedon, Forum Treasurer,
 Maria Thacker, Forum Administrator,
 Dorothy Bell, Moorlands CDP,
 Marilyn Rogers, Fr of Tate Library,
 Jean Kerrigan, Fr of Windmill Gardens,
 Danai Nardi, Save Nour Campaign,
 Jessica Pigg, Hondo Tower petition.

Ken Floyde, Forum Chair,
 Gerry Evans, LFN/ Lambeth CBO,
 Bill Linskey, Brixton Society,
 Charlie Waterhouse, Brixton Project,
 Sarah Henderson, Brixton Project,
 Lara Samuels, Rapport Festival,
 Amanda Carter, BRUG,

Apologies for absence from:

Julie Fawcett, Stockwell Park Com. Trust,
 Max Boucher, Community Support,

Karin Chritiansen, Sleepless Brixton.

Community Needs:

Alan Piper opened the meeting. He asked what members wanted from their Forum.

Dorothy Bell suggested the Forum should provide a mentoring scheme for young people, though it would need a building to operate from.

Alan advised that the Forum had the use of space in International House, but the “hot desk” facility was suspended during the lockdown. Charlie reported that the building was continuing to operate.

Amanda said community groups struggled to obtain information, support, and space for their activities. The Forum was useful for signposting people to these.

Gerry Evans suggested a Virtual Brainstorming Space.

Charlie highlighted that representatives are needed for various community partnerships.

Maria stressed that the Forum needed to be seen and heard, which would raise its profile and encourage membership. The muddle over the railway arches and platform repairs on Atlantic Rd was an example of community views being ignored.

Planning:

Amanda raised the issue of the Hondo Tower proposal, which had attracted a lot of objections. Big regeneration projects too often cut across community needs. The whole field of Planning needs to be kept relevant and intelligible.

Bill Linskey explained that ‘Planning’ is a simple term describing ‘layers of legislation, secondary legislation and regularly changing details’ that make community participation difficult. He cited the George IV pub on Brixton Hill as an example from a few years earlier. The community signed a large petition against its change to a supermarket, but were left disappointed at the outcome. Lambeth did not have powers to prevent that particular change, and often the planning system is weighted in favour of Developers.

Lara Samuels stated that she had not been alerted about the Hondo Tower plans.

Charlie suggested we need to network more widely and ensure more people know about emerging proposals. He pointed out that the Brixton Project had been enlisted at a late stage and on a tight timescale to consult and report on the community space within the development. He explained that the Project had developed from the organising team for the Brixton Design Trail.

Danai reported that there is a continuing campaign to stop the Hondo Tower, subject of criticism on the Brixton Buzz website. Jean suggested the protesters join the Forum. We also need to keep in touch with what is happening in the street market and arcades generally.

Bill asked members to bear in mind that most local groups ran on a largely voluntary basis, and it is an extra admin burden if groups are duplicating others' work. He felt it should not be left to community organisations to publicise planning applications, but Lambeth Council had cut back on this. Much planning business is mundane, so we would need to focus on those which were critical or controversial.

Alan suggested that the Forum could share more planning information if members would find it helpful.

Lara felt we should be consulted on planning proposals at the outset, rather than at the last moment, so it would be good for the Forum to alert people to other planning cases in future.

ACTION: Brixton Neighbourhood Forum to share planning information more widely and promote consultation with a wider range of groups.

Support for Community Organisations:

Marilyn felt it was positive to have a Neighbourhood Forum, but we need to use all our links. It would be good to have more guest presentations if we are continuing on-line. She also suggested regular stalls in places like Windrush Square to help make local initiatives more widely known among the community.

Lara suggested google docs as a way of sharing information, and offered help with this. Sarah added that it would be good to share lockdown tips and recommendations for local enterprises or groups to support.

Groups around the borough are being encouraged to sign up to the Integrate Directory, <http://integrateagency.co.uk/voice/#integrate.lambeth> which also helps groups with a common interest to find each other.

Jean reported that FoWG are organising a Christmas Fair around Brixton's windmill on Sunday 13 December, restrictions permitting. They had a good response to their AGM, with a mix of actual and on-line attendance.

They also hosted a successful training event for young people over the half term, for 15 students.

She also noted that there is increased availability of volunteers since the Pandemic. Gerry is now in charge of the Council staff volunteer brokering scheme. Gerry asked Maria to attend LFN meetings.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING set for 23 November, on Zoom at 7pm.

Nick appealed for more people to take an active role with the Forum.

Alan suggested the Forum needs an active core of 12 members to be more effective, rather than just a few elected officers.

Meeting closed at 8-12 pm, with thanks to Bill Linskey for hosting via Zoom.