

SOHO NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM – Forum Steering Group Notes
22nd March 2023

Present:

Lucy Haine resident
Neil Drinkwater resident
Rupert Power Sophie's/Soho Business Alliance
Manuela Cambell House of St Barnabas
Blythe Dunk Jones Laing LaSalle
Matt Smith Shaftesbury Capital
Peter Parker resident
Max Turner Soho Estates
Tim Lord resident/chair of Soho Society
Matthew Bennett resident

In attendance Cllr Patrick Lilley

Apologies:

Joan Moynihan NimaxTheatres
Farida Dungawlla resident
Dee Corsey NWECC
Jamie Poulton Randall and Aubin

1. Lucy started the meeting by paying tribute to Leslie Hardcastle OBE aged 96 who was President of the Soho Society and member of the FSG and strong supporter of the neighbourhood plan. Lucy will send condolences to his wife Wendy.
2. Matters Arising from the previous notes. The WCC Sustainability bond had got off to a good start raising half a million in the first days of its launch. It was noted by Rupert Power that there are still staff shortages and that young people applying needed a great deal of training but he had not noticed within the SBA more older people applying for hospitality jobs. Accommodation in the West End for employees is an important need as they have to commute long distances.
3. Tim Lord reported on the recent WASF meeting where it was announced that any group could in future apply for CIL funding but that the Forum would be notified of such applications and could comment on them. Also Cllr Barraclough would authorise projects with a value up to £250k with larger projects going to committee. Of the neighbourhood portion of CIL across the city there is £17m and £12m remains unspent and the Council are keen to see more projects approved. There may be an opportunity in areas without a forum for those funds to be used by a nearby forum. St James's was given as an example.
4. There is £406k in the Soho CIL pot and £1,500 in our administrative bank account and further Ward Budget funds due. Each ward has its own Annual £46k budget for the 3 ward councillors to agree and a large proportion is spent in Soho. There is also a budget of £2.5k for community events and SBA, SS and SNF are thinking of holding a joint event.
5. Lucy reported that the new website is up and asked members to look at it and give comments to her for improvements. The personal Bios for FSG members are based on their register of interest's declarations so let her know if anyone needs to change what the Bios say.
6. It was agreed that the next CIL sub committee would be held on 4th April and thereafter every first Tuesday of each month. Tim lord will also confirm the next deadline for the submission of CIL bids. He also reported on the existing CIL projects we have in hand. First that WCC had taken on the funding of the Soho waste enforcement officer and that it was

hope the officer would be in post from 1st April. Jason reported that there would soon be a second electric mechanical road sweeper machine for Soho. Matthew suggested that we ask the Council to have an audit of the on street litter bins. Their positioning, their condition and need for repairs and replacements plus additions in streets where there are no litter bins. Second, in the absence of John Wallace we did not know the exact position with repairs to the school gates but this is still being processed and there may be new CIL project requests coming from the school. Third that WCC are now prepared to take on the funding of the greening of Golden Square and that our CIL contribution is likely to be for children's play equipment. Peter is getting suitable price quotes. Links with neighbouring businesses such as Hamleys was discussed. Cllr Lilley felt that extensive community consultation would be needed to evolve the right scheme for the square. Fourth it was agreed that we should press ahead with the public toilet provision study proposed to us by Orbitl and Crystal Associates. We had tried to get other quotes but none forthcoming, so will lobby Cllr Barraclough to authorise this single bid because of the importance of the issue.

7. There was discussion of the proposal and search for an alcohol free community centre open for all communities that had been proposed by the LGBTQ sector and Age Concern. It was agreed to circulate the outline paper for comment and Cllr Lilley urged that there should be real clarity about the need for and purpose of such a centre if the Council's help is needed to ensure that there is no duplication. Another new CIL project suggestion was to help fund a lift from street level to make St Anne's Garden more accessible.
8. Cllr Lilley updated the meeting about the proposals to measure and monitor noise levels, air quality and traffic flow across Soho at 40 locations over a minimum 12 month period. The tender document had been discussed with a small advisory group of businesses and residents that he had set up and it was felt that the tendering process would start soon. He also mentioned the recent use of anti-pee paint and the geofencing of central Soho against the parking up on pavements of Lime bikes.
9. The subject of two serious crime incidents in Greek Street and the fact that Crime in Soho had risen by 35% over the previous year was discussed with agreement that the problem was a very late night 3am dispersal and the interaction of those customers with gangs preying on them. A number of members felt that WCC's licensing policy on very late hours and cumulative impact needed substantially strengthening. It was recognised that there are insufficient police resources to solve the issue. The possibility of a CCTV scheme with CIL money was raised for further discussion.
10. Matt Smith agreed to circulate an email for comment on what Soho wide greening measures might be supported by a CIL sustainability project.

Next meeting 21st June at 5.30. venue provisionally Jones Laing LaSalle in Warwick Street.