



## SOHO FORUM STEERING GROUP

### AGENDA

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023 5-6.30pm

Venue: JLL, Warwick Street

Minutes: 19.09.23 Farida D.

Apologies from:

Jason FJ

Patrick Franko - Resigned

Matt Smith

Missing:-

Manuella

John Wallace

1. Comments on the minutes, none from me
2. Matters arising – point about the account
  - Mail Chimp account
  - Fee about GDPR
  - £1500 in the account so can we bolster it if we can
  - £500 Donation from NWECC and Shaftesbury Capital – Farida to invoice

Matthew suggested that the group re read the plan and a potential sub-committee to look at the plan. Matthew is happy to contribute to that. Formation of a CIL sub-committee, Rupert and Blythe would like to join and does anyone have any thoughts on updating the plan. Westminster interchanges so, we have talked about the bio diversity statute which is coming out in November and short term lets. Jamie was asking about security, there have been discussions but as Matthew says it is not something that fits our remit.

#### **Revisiting the plan after the AGM**

CIL

#### **Toilet Research project – CIL received.**

We have had the first kick off meeting and press release is ready and the website, from the neighbourhood forum but will refer to support from the Soho Society. The toilet project is similar to the waste project and needs support from both Soho Society and SBA, documents will be sent to Rupert for the SBA logo to be added to it if all in agreement. It is a consultancy project where talking to residents, visitors and users to talk to them about their experience about the availability of toilets. Market research. Will end in a public document which will go to the council and will go into detail if there is demand for facilities where they should be placed and who would design them. Inviting the council to invest and potentially others. That started last week. There was a further call this morning and they will set up a response form which will go into the first iteration of the press release. They plan on engaging with the mayors office, the GLA and the council, and any or all business in Soho that have a point of view they would like to express.

Blythe – Last year there was a deterrent suggested by the council, across Westminster they are investing more money into public toilets and have promised to re open Carnaby Street. It could be that this is not enough and the temporary festival type of toilets is an acceptable solution in the long term. The council has agreed to the CIL funding despite that the outcome will probably be that they have to spend more money in Soho. Investigate if the anti pee paint is working. Press release will be in conjunction with everything.

#### **St Anne's Gardens**

We would commit £50k not the whole £100k of CIL to this project with the expectation that other organisations in Soho and WCC add to this project. Likely costs £150k.

### **Electricity for Flower Stall £13K**

Leanne flowers would like to put forward an application for electricity for the stall. Westminster suggested that this sum came from the neighbourhood forum. Welcome to Leanne and introduction of the committee members. Leanne's stall will be outside the new hotel and it is not officially part of the Berwick Street market pitch. They did write to see if she would like to stay in the position, what they didn't realise at the time was that it would be isolated. Still thought that being classes as Berwick Street market, really hard apart from a generator. Over the years one of the offices helped out and got different cables so that it was secure which was done for a few years. Bumped along with it and once it gets dark there is no lighting only and the street lighting is not good enough. It would be nice after 28 years to have some electric. There is no actual column at the moment. It would be there for everyone's use. Leanne went to another supply they do all the underground work but they don't install the post. Conway are the single supplier for Westminster. Can the Westminster car charging team take a look at it. Tim suggested that we ask the council to help us get a credible quotation. Matthew says that we should write a coherent email as Tim has suggested to Patrick Lilly for his help in sorting it out and setting out the road blocks that there have been today as this seems like a disproportionate cost to secure a 13amp socket on a lamppost. He should be the correct route to identify the particular officer that can help with this. Tim has emailed Patrick.

### **Bahar and Heritage Study**

The last time we met we asked for Bahar and Publica to put together a submission, they are now working together to put a united bid which will be £25k plus VAT. That submission will go through for 2<sup>nd</sup> October.

### **School Gates**

The gates have been repaired for £6k releasing the rest of the money for other projects.

### **St Annes Gardens**

A lot of work has been done by the church prior to Covid, Tim has not received any of the documentation yet from Simon so is unsure if it can go through by the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October. The last conversation that it was approx.. £120k and we were discussing paying half of it.

### **Community Space**

Café to be opened in a public site and it has been suggested that they might apply for CIL funding.

### **Playground**

Still waiting to hear from Amanda at the council, it looked hopeful and now is not hearing anything. He thinks that they will come back to him at some stage. They are waiting for the council to come back with their designs and so far have had nothing.

NB CIL pot has gone up to £538K

### **Peter Parker**

We have had 6 complaints to Lucy on the Steering Group, about Peter Parker and his position as a member of the FSG board. They have been sent to Lucy directly and one address to the board. The complaints have been copied into Nicky Aiken and we are genuinely sorry to have to discuss it in the forum but feel it is necessary unless someone else disagrees.

Peter's view is that the matter relates to his private life and therefore should not be discussed. The complainants have questioned whether the FSG is vetting members of the group on Social Media and if we are aware of the posts. The posts themselves were in the public domain, therefore we are not bringing something that was in a private domain or commenting on them. Joan clarifies her position as Lucy being a Steering Group colleague and they are not friends outside of the forum.

The complaints are clearly addressed to Lucy in her role as the chair of the committee.

A main point of discussing the issue raised is that Peter's Plan for soho email address has been used for personal business. This has resulted in Peter's Plan for Soho email address has been suspended.

An AGM can be called to deal with this matter in line with the constitution.

Peter responds

Finds it strange that allegations made on social media in public should be forwarded to a public body three years after the facts. Within a 5 day period 'randomly' scouring through social media posts that he has made three years ago. Something strange is happening and the only possible explanation that he can find is this is by malicious allegations that have been made by his neighbours that became his landlords in Soho. A few years ago these guys started an Air BnB business in his HMO building in Old Compton Street. They organised a fake fire inspection and asked if they could check his room and found that he was in the middle of a fire inspection. They went away and got a letter to say that the Soho residents that he needs to remove everything from his room and replace the furniture otherwise they would take steps against him. He was able to make a representation to the council about their Air BnB hotel in the HMO which they had shut down their business which was worth £3k a week to them. The council then said that he could carry on living as he was.

Then in 2016 his neighbour came and said that he was having trouble with the same people and had a letter under his door and they are doubling his rent and he has rent arrears. He went to Patrick and went to get assistance for Antonio, unfortunately the wheels moved to slowly and he got scared and paid the higher rent. They have now turned their attentions to him and he has been in the building since 2009. They then doubled the rent and gave him a Section 13. He started to get phone calls from various people and would have to defend himself on the phone, this kicked off on the 9<sup>th</sup> May on the same day they lodged a deposit in his name with the DPS in order that they could fulfil their obligations on section 13 to evict him. They are now being investigated by the DPS and the money laundering team. He can only assume that this is coming from them or their friends. They are called Eat Tokyo and their business name is Tokyo at Café Del Limited. Ironically they were going to be evicted and then became the landlord representative. Since then they have had a free run and did the Air BnB hotel. He has been going to the surgeries every two weeks to see what his rights are.

Matthew – Is saying that he should not be using the Plan for Soho email for private views.

Peter – This was an accident as on his phone he has a few email addresses and it could have sent from the wrong address without meaning to.

Joan – Unfortunately for the steering group we have to stick to the problem that we are have. The complaints from their knowledge is not from Westminster or any landlords. Whatever has motivated it people are entitled to say what they have said. We have to decide how we will respond to people and how we will action it. Unfortunately we cannot get into unrelated matters. As Matthew says you are entitled to hold views but your views were not private but in the public domain.

Matthew – As we understand that even in the private posts Peter has mentioned that he is a member of the Steering Group and the CIL committee. It is the muddling up of your private views which in many people's minds are quite contentious with your position on the committee. There was no need to approach Lucy in the way you did or to attack Joan. This calls me to question your judgment, these things can be explained with an apology but instead of saying that you sent round emails about your human rights.

Joan – It would be possible to form a view that the use of the plan for soho email potentially brings the forum into disrepute. Separately from that there is a google response from Peter that can be found looking for a new home for his business and using the address. The accounts have only be set up for the use of dealing with the CIL money. It is compounded by the fact that you are looking for space for the business. It is perfectly reasonable that people would. Joan reads out Lucys email after Peter says that Lucy should not have contacted him on his phone.

Lucy – explained why she then had to contact Peter by email and ask for his resignation.

The group then agreed to look into holding an EGM or AGM and to see legal advice on the issue. Lucy confirmed she would also contact Westminster City Council to see advice on FSG board members and strengthening the constitution to protect the forum going forward.

Patrick Franco resignation as he had not been to any meetings, he has resigned as he has taken over chair of the Nottinghill Housing Trust. He has sent his best wishes and said to keep going and do a good job. Go out to the members to see if anyone would like to stand.