

**THE SOHO NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM**  
**FSG MINUTES 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

**ATTENDEES:**

Lucy Haine (LH)  
Joan Moynihan (JM)  
Rupert Power (RP)  
Matthew Bennett (MB)  
Jason Fisher-Jones (JFJ)  
Tim Lord (TL)  
Max Turner (MT)  
Dee Corsi (DC)  
Farida Dungarwalla (FD)  
Neil Drinkwater (NW)  
Blythe Dunk (BD)  
Peter Parker (PP)

**Apologies:**

*John Wallace*  
*Matt Smith*  
*Robin Smith*  
*Jamie Poulton*  
*Manuela Campbell*  
*Jessica Stewart*

*PP arrived a little later following the constitution discussion.*

Constitutional matter

- LH stated that she had met with a solicitor suggested by DC regarding the *into disrepute* events that had arisen, and also regarding the Forum's constitution. It was determined that rather than seek a special Extraordinary General Meeting to propose adapting the constitution, it would be preferable to leave it to the January 2024 AGM, and propose a vote on the constitution terms as a general agenda item. LH noted that the complainant had written to Westminster City Council, and that LH had also spoken with WCC officers.
- LH & JM had met Ezra Wallace and asked for support and advice on this matter. JM had proposed wording for the constitution amendment proposal and she was of the opinion that the constitution needed updating in any case, to be in line with other neighbourhood forums'. LH had then reviewed some. The AGM resolution would be in two parts (as noted in more detail on the meeting agenda) seeking (i) an immediate amendment to the constitution giving the FSG the power to remove or suspend any member considered to have breached the constitution; brought the Forum into disrepute or refused to engage in allegations relating to the same; and (ii) authority for the FSG to review, propose and adopt amendments to the constitution generally subject to ratification at the next AGM. It was proposed that if the first part of the resolution was passed at the AGM, PP would be asked to resign.
- MB suggested the JM draft wording be slightly adapted to make clear it would be a FSG majority needed to remove a member of the FSG outside of an AGM/EGM. LH agreed and this was passed.
- There was a discussion as to whether PP could stand at the AGM as he had advised he would soon no longer be resident in the relevant Soho area.
- The FSG took a unanimous vote on proposing the draft constitution amendment wording to the AGM, and if passed at the AGM, PP would be given 48 hours to resign and thereafter asked to stand down from the forum. The vote passed 11-0. (This was then relayed to PP who arrived later in the meeting.)

## CIL Projects

- TL noted that following the FSG's waste work, WCC has appointed an additional inspector with Soho in mind for regulating waste collections – the officer is a former Soho resident.
- There was a discussion around the merits of using Veolia versus First Mile. It was suggested that the membership group of the Forum be contacted asking them not to use First Mile due to their poor behaviour. DC suggested if doing so, make clear the options and that their poor behaviour is called out for all to see.
- TL noted that John Wallace was not present but that he wasn't aware the funding had been released yet for the primary school gates project.
- TL advised that he had been part of a group that had met with WCC regarding their environmental traffic and noise monitoring proposals. He said that he had been underwhelmed and that feedback had been given to WCC on this basis. He and others had expected up to circa 4 monitors to be installed across Soho but that only 5 were proposed for noise and 2 for traffic. These would be installed for a 24 period in February 2024, with the noise ones installed for a year. There would be a mix of electronic fixed and hand held, including for air quality monitoring.
- MB felt that the seasonality of the traffic issue was a point lost here, as February was not an appropriate month. He suggested this be taken up with ward councillors to try and nudge WCC's plans.
- TL stated that the traffic cameras would be battery powered and not a linked system through lamp-post electricity as the sub-committee of the FSG had thought, and that they would not be permanent nor multi-use. There was a general discussion about the type of camera systems that would be appropriate for Soho, including for crime and anti-social behavioural issues to assist the Police.
- The FSG identified other sources of data that WCC could take advantage of in building a more cohesive system.
- MB proposed that the FSG pass a *no confidence* vote in the monitoring plans and ask the ward councillors to intervene on the WCC brief before it became a fait accompli. The vote was passed with no objections.
- RP reiterated that the ward councillors be informed the FSG is keen to have crime addressed in the system/monitoring brief. DC noted that there is a nascent project looking into this on Berkeley Square, an suggested that CIL monies be offered towards a Soho system. It had been understood that WCC had handed over monies and responsibility for CCTV to the Police, but that nothing had ever come of it, and the old, retired system was analogue and no longer suitable.
- DC did however think that something might come forward between the Police and WCC in the future.
- On greening, it was noted that the Head of Parks at WCC had not yet engaged with LH.
- Regarding the heritage project, the application for the funding was with WCC.
- Regarding St Anne's accessibility, an application for monies was with WCC and the FSG agreed to cap a FSG contribution at £50,000.
- On a community space, it was noted that nothing would be forthcoming on Broadwick Street, but that the church was opening a café on Dean Street.
- It was noted that the flower stall on Broadwick Street had been connected to electricity by WCC.
- LH noted that there was over £500,000 in the CIL pot remaining.
  
- Alistair from the Soho public toilets project then presented his team's progress to date. They were approaching the end of phase 1, had undertaken circa 30 interviews including with councillors, GLA members, the Night Czar, 2 BIDs, 2 manufacturers, special interest groups: Age UK, IBS Network, Simon Buckley etc. They had arranged focus groups across sectors and that surveys would go out in the following week plus an online visitor survey. Footfall data would soon be available.
- MB suggested they also speak with the WCC street cleaning depot team on Dufour's Place.
- It was noted that the temporary portaloos company WCC used had so far been unavailable.
- They noted they were prepared to deliver their report in time for the 10<sup>th</sup> January AGM.

- MB asked for the report to include a costs summary of individual items/facilities; he was also interested in the equalities angle the team had taken.
  - LH suggested that there was a planning requirement for major planning applications of a certain type to consider the issue.
  - There was a discussion as to the minimum provision that the FSG would want to see across Soho, and where.
  - LH asked for a headline summary for the AGM as the appropriate output for that.
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- LH noted that FSG members would need to propose standing at the AGM and asked who would be. John Wallace had separately confirmed that he would stand. Matt Smith of Shaftesbury Capital would have to stand down.
  - LH agreed to stand as chair for a final year.
  - LH noted that PP can still run the playground CIL project as a CIL volunteer if he is not on the FSG.
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- LH noted that WCC had asked for a list of forum priorities, and that MB and TL had completed the complicated form.
  - WCC's purpose in this is to gather all the Forums' priorities so that when it next formally reviews its CIL schedule the right needs are priced in.
  - JM noted that WCC had been told that there needs to be more support from WCC to the Forums in general and for common questions arising, and a pot of money to assist basic activities (such as AGMs).
  - MB suggested WCC be asked to agree up to 5% of the Soho CIL monies be used for administration etc and for this to be taken up with Ezra Wallace. *[Ezra Wallace has subsequently written to LH and JM confirming that CIL cannot be used to support forums with administrative tasks but that WCC would like to put together a package of governance support for the forums.]*
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- There was a discussion on the various commercial markets, including that retail spending has increased in the West End, that Soho Estates was undertaking some refurbishment projects, that the Manette Street public realm works ought to be complete by 15.12.23, that the property industry was waiting on the M&S Oxford Street decision as a retrofit watershed, that the Hines/7 Soho Square planning decision had been very badly received/widely misunderstood.
  - The WCC City Plan review was noted and the national legal change from CIL to IL and loosening of the requirements.
  - It was noted that there are problems with finding electric charging points for vehicles in parking zone G.
  - It was noted that bicycle hire parking bays had been introduced but were often overwhelmed.
  - It was noted that policing presence was patchy.
  - JM noted that theatres were doing well in the run-up to Christmas.