

Soho Neighbourhood Forum Steering Group Minutes

Meeting no. 008
Date 27 April 2016
Time 5.30pm
Location Soho Housing, 120 Charing Cross Rd, WC2H 0JR



Present

Matthew Bennett **(MB)** – Chair, Anna Boyle **(AB)**, Michael Case **(MC)**, Mike Fauconnier-Bank **(MF-B)**, Lucy Haine **(LuH)**, Leslie Hardcastle **(LeH)**, David Morrow **(DM)**, Joan Moynihan **(JM)**, Andrew Murray **(AM)**, Jamie Poulton **(JP)**, Robin Smith **(RS)**, Jace Tyrell **(JT)** and Ken White **(KW)**.

1.	<p>Welcome and apologies</p> <p>MB welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from John James (JJ), Rob Kirk (RK), Clare Lynch (CL), Sandra Schembri (SS) and Jessica Stewart (JS).</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of the last meeting</p> <p>Meeting notes from the last meeting held on 23 March 2016 were agreed.</p>	
3.	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>Website: AM reported that the new website was in operation, with a Forum calendar. SS had arranged for Derek Baker at the House of St Barnabas to give advice about any improvements. This would include the best way for WGs to store their own information for easy access. FSG members should ensure that minutes of their meetings are sent to AM to be published on the website, and should check calendar details for their WG. AM would encourage WGs to contribute content to the site.</p> <p>Finance: MF-B introduced the financial report. It was clear we needed to apply funding by bidding for grants to support the WGs in what they needed to do. It was agreed MF-B should draw up a general application to cover the next stage of our work. MB underlined the need for the Forum to step up its activity, working at a faster pace, with definite actions arising from discussions. FSG members should take more ownership of issues and encourage one another to achieve outcomes. Some admin support would be helpful with this, so we also needed to look for further donations as this could not be funded from grants.</p>	
4.	<p>Reports from working groups</p> <p>All WGs have identified their key issues for the proposed survey of public opinion. RS felt that the Working in Soho WG needed involvement from</p>	

	<p>a wider range of workers. Businesses represented on the FSG had access to a large number of workers and should use this access to generate interest. LH agreed that there were people who could be involved with the WGs that we had missed.</p> <p>Public engagement: MB’s notes about the proposed questionnaire were discussed. MB agreed to produce a list of the key issues that had been identified by the WGs. MC agreed to draft a questionnaire in conjunction with MB, to be considered at the next FSG.</p> <p>JM stressed that in order to generate new interest, including participation in WGs, both the questions and the methods of gathering the answers needed to grab people’s attention. It was agreed that on-street activity – such as a pop-up stall on Berwick Street Market - was important, alongside offering online access to the survey. It was also agreed that we should aim to reach a wide cross-section of specific groups within the Soho community (young people, the elderly, night time workers). Various other ideas were suggested. JT agreed to draft an initial plan for publicity and distribution of the questionnaire. It was decided not to rush the process by trying to gather information before the AGM. Instead, the questionnaire would be launched at the AGM and the survey carried out during July and August.</p>	
5.	<p>Annual General Meeting</p> <p>In line with the discussion about the questionnaire, JM said that the AGM needed to be an effective but lively meeting that generated enthusiasm from members. MB underlined that follow-up was crucial, to build on members’ support. AM agreed to organise a comms group, supplemented by SS and JM along with anyone else interested, to come up with proposals for the format of the meeting and also the publicity for it. It was agreed that last year’s successful approach should be used as a basis for this.</p> <p>It was agreed that the AGM should take place on the evening of Wednesday 6 July. MB will check to see if the conference room at the Health Clinic was available, as this venue had been successful last year. Soho Parish School was suggested as a possible alternative.</p> <p>Alongside launching the questionnaire, the business section of the meeting would include a report by MB, as chair, on the work of the FSG during the year, and elections to the FSG. MB also proposed that we should outline a program for our activity in 2016-17, so that members could see that purposeful momentum was building. JS had prepared a draft which could be developed for this.</p> <p>In connection with this, MB proposed that there should be a weekly drop-in meeting for FSG members, with the main aim of keeping the process moving by reviewing progress and focusing on specific areas to move the plan forward. This would supplement the monthly FSG meetings, and fill a gap in its effectiveness that currently exists. This was generally agreed.</p>	

6.	<p>Election of Steering Group</p> <p>MB suggested that nominations should close on 22 June, in time for the last FSG meeting before the AGM. AM preferred a day earlier, to give a little extra time in case of issues arising as with the initial election. He agreed to circulate a document outlining the election arrangements for the next FSG to approve.</p> <p>MB reported that almost all FSG members were intending to stand for re-election. As this includes the 2 co-opted members, he expected there to be at least as many candidates as places. It was agreed that the formal notice of the election should include this information.</p>	
7.	<p>Discussion of officer posts and forum leadership</p> <p>JM raised the idea of a Forum Champion, not necessarily a member of FSG but someone with public profile to promote the work of the Forum. Several names were suggested, as was the possibility of having several champions who could reach different sections of the community. It was agreed that this idea should be pursued. AB suggested organising a youth event to engage with this particular group within the community.</p> <p>MB expressed a desire to step back from chairing the Forum, partly as it might be better for the Forum to be represented by someone younger, but he was keen to continue making his contribution and very willing to support a new chair. Various FSG members expressed a strong preference for MB to continue as chair, if possible, as they regarded his particular personal contribution in this role as playing a vital part in the success of the Forum. Part of MB's concerns could be met by developing a clearer leadership team for the Forum. AM reported that SS was analysing the structure of the Forum in connection with our communications and that this work would link with these issues.</p>	
8.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>None.</p>	
9.	<p>The next meeting will be held on 25 May 2016 at 5.30pm again at Soho Housing.</p> <p>The meeting on 22 June 2016 will be held at the House of St Barnabas.</p>	