

INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE MARYLEBONE FORUM

Around 200 local residents and business representatives including many who have already joined the organisation, attended the inaugural meeting of the Marylebone Forum at International Students house on the 25th February.

The meeting was chaired by Kevin Coyne in his position as acting Chair of the Marylebone Forum.

KC opened the meeting with a summary of the purpose of the Forum and thanked everyone for attending

He then introduced the Members of the Forum panel..

Presentations from six members of the Forum Panel covered

-PROGRESS TO DATE IN ESTABLISHING THE FORUM _AND THE NEXT STEPS

Michael Bolt, Chair Marylebone Association

Area has been designated and formal application for establishment (Designation) of the Forum has been submitted to Westminster City Council.We would hope to have agreement within the next two to three months –Although the coming election could lead to some delay.

Following designation an AGM will be held for all members (Business and Residential) to elect a full representative committee-Membership to be split 50/50 between Residents and “Business” which includes professional and educational organisations

-REASONS FOR SUPPORTING THE FORUM

Mike Wood–Chair Marylebone Society

The Rev.Stephen Evans –Rector Marylebone Parish Church

-Simon Loomes-Development Director , Portman Estate

A variety of reasons for supporting the Forum were presented , notably

-While amenity societies have essentially been reactive, commenting on policies and plans developed by others, the Forum will be able to proactively develop planning policies for the neighbourhood.

-With surrounding areas creating Forums – , it was highly desirable that Marylebone should have its own voice .Furthermore , establishment of the Forum would allow it to influence the use of the CIL(Community Infrastructure Levy) which could provide significant sums for the improvement of the Marylebone area.

-The Forum was seen as a mechanism for allowing consideration of future development between all interested parties in Marylebone –Even where there might be considerable conflict with differing views and objectives

-Any organisation which developed a greater sense of unity and community between Residents , Businesses , Faith Groups and other interest groups in the area would be beneficial to the Community as a whole.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Richard Lovell-Chair Communications and PR sub committee

A key element in ensuring the credibility of the Forum and any subsequent Neighbourhood Plan is the **EVIDENCE BASE**

This relies on two factors

-Wide and comprehensive representation of ALL interested parties in Marylebone .

With this in mind recruitment of additional membership –both residential and Small/large business, Professional organisations, Faith Groups, Educational Organisations and other representative Groups , would continue.

-Evidence that the plan reflected the interests and concerns of the local community(Within the powers of the Forum)

Collection of information/evidence in this area would start shortly

-Communication and Consultation

This would be through

-Email

-Forum Website

-Hard copy where electronic methods were inappropriate

Regular meetings (and possibly focus groups) to ensure full consultation as the plan develops

There followed a lively discussion focussing on some “Frequently asked questions “which had already been identified and questions from the floor

Key point made were

-Election to the Forum committee(the Representatives)would be carried out at the Forum’sfirst AGM Membership would be 50% residents and 50%individuals representing business and other organisations-selected from nominated Forum membersas set out under the constitution.

-There is no cost of membership . All of the work so far had been carried out by volunteers freely giving of their own time, assisted by small grants to help with website formation, newsletters, meetings etc.

Some future funding is to come from Govt. sources-This has been guaranteed for the next three years

The Forum would not replace the Amenity Societies but was seen as complementary to them and embracing all interested parties in the Community.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN

1)Further education/clarification is necessary to assist members in fully understanding the current plans affecting the area and more important , the powers and limitations of powers inherent in the Neighbourhood plan.-We will look at organising seminars on Neighbourhood Planning for Forum members to enable better understanding of the process

2)To arrange a meeting of local residents to define and refine residents concerns on local issues prior to the AGM

3)To look at finding ways of achieving greater publicity in the area-within the constraints of a very limited budget.

There appeared to be strong support for the Forum at this meeting and all attendees were asked to join –If not already members , -and to actively recruit additional members over the next few months

The Forum is actively seeking members who wish to play a more active role in the Organisation either by putting forward their name for nomination as a Representative, or to help work in one of the Forum's sub-committees.

Contact can be made through the website(<http://marylebone forum.org>)