

MINUTES

The Marylebone Forum committee meeting

8 October 2020

Via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

1. Michael Bolt (MB)
2. Sarah Buttleman (SB)
3. Kay Buxton (KB)
4. Tim Carnegie (TC)
5. Sheila D'Souza (SD)
6. Rosa Han (RH)
7. Ann-Marie Johnson (AM)
8. Simon Loomes (SL)
9. Ian Macpherson (IM)
10. Andrea Merrington (AM)
11. Yael Saunders (Chair) (YS)
12. Steve Wong (SW)

Apologies

1. Penny Alexander
2. Alan Bristow
3. Kevin Coyne
4. Canon Stephen Evans
5. Isabelle Faulkner

MINUTES

YS welcomed everyone to the meeting and announced apologies.

1. Redesignation

YS informs the committee that the designation has lapsed. SB has kindly looked at the form and will be submitting it with no major changes - the map and constitution are in place. There is a requirement that 21 people support the application so will assume that all committee members are happy to have their names included. If anyone would prefer not to be included, please get in touch. There are 18 on the committee so the rest will be made up of other neighbours and supporters. YS will send it out formally. Any questions or comments?

IM comments that the Knightsbridge application is available online if it would be useful to follow as an example. Theirs doesn't list the 21 names – just the chair. YS agrees – the 21 names aren't visible in the public domain but are required as evidence as part of the submission to Westminster to confirm legitimacy of the campaign.

AM asks when the deadline is for submission. Not intended to put pressure on SB but for the committee to understand dates. YS replies the plan was to submit around the time of the AGM in May, however AGM had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions. YS emailed Sean Walsh at Westminster to ask for forbearance under the circumstances. As it has lapsed, it ought to be done as soon as possible.

MB was under the impression that the requirement was six months prior to five year anniversary. YS confirms that the anniversary was in September so this has now lapsed. SB confirms that she will submit the application once she has returned from leave next week. YS thanks SB.

ACTIONS

- **SB to submit the redesignation**
-

2. Date for AGM

YS explains that a date needs to be arranged for the overdue AGM. This will need to take place virtually. 30 days' notice is required for the invitation so early to middle of November would work. Does anyone have any strong preference for dates? KB agrees that November is a good month if that can be done. Is the process now in place to enable members to be emailed? Is mailchimp set up? YS confirms that this is now possible. KB responds that as long as this is used to notify members of the date and the official notice and papers are then made available on the website then this should be fine for November. TC confirms he is happy to put information on the website and has set up an email address for the remote PA to use to send the invitation out.

YS states that the only date to avoid in November is Remembrance Day so would suggest maybe 17/18 November?

AM concerned that we don't have correct email addresses for members and also that if the correct Zoom details aren't communicated effectively, the meeting won't be a proper AGM. YS responds that the email addresses were cleaned up last year.

YS asks how many are required for a quorum? MB believes it is 30 but will check. YS suggests that more people are familiar with Zoom so this should be the system used, unless anyone has any other suggestions. YS will circulate a suggested date to the whole committee (including those not in attendance) prior to confirming. A committee meeting will also need to take place prior to the AGM to discuss the agenda.

ACTIONS

- **YS to circulate proposed AGM date to committee members to check availability.**
- **YS to set a committee meeting date prior to AGM.**

3. Plan and proposed policies

YS explains that the Forum need to get their draft policies into shape. KB has suggested getting a consultant to help with the themes, to stress-test and health check the policy chapters against the current City Plan to see if they remain valid. This is necessary as it has been two years since they were drafted and there is a need for evidence to demonstrate that they are relevant and should be included and, where this evidence is missing, where it can be sourced. KB proposes an hour per policy with a policy consultant. YS agrees that some guidance on what is workable would be useful as this expertise is lacking.

MB asks what policies currently remain in draft. YS confirms that the policies were agreed as follows:

1. Open space and tree-planting
2. Basements
3. Car parking
4. Small business use
5. Small retail space
6. Edgeware Road
7. Environmental policies

MB questions whether car parking is still included. YS confirms that it is and that a consultant would be useful to provide expertise to understand if the topic is viable and what is possible.

SL suggests that, given we are in the middle of the EIP at the moment, the best approach might be to approach Gerald Eves, who are heavily involved in the EIP process, to comment on whether the outcomes of this and the inspector's decision on the draft City Plan will impact on any of these policies. It would be worth understanding what the potential impacts may be before moving forward and awaiting the detail included in the inspector's draft report. SL confirms that The Portman Estate would pick up the cost of Gerald Eves for this activity. AM suggests this be broadened to use a Gerald Eves consultant to look at the viability of the policies as a whole. SL agrees and suggests drafting an email to Gerald Eves and circulate to the committee for transparency given that Gerald Eves work with The Portman Estate. YS highlights that the policies are currently in a very rough draft. Would this be sufficient to send to a consultant? SL confirms that this will be fine. They are drafted to a point that now requires more expertise.

TC asks if the plan is to employ a consultant, should a clear scope be drafted and should there be a more rigorous procurement process given that it will need to be paid for? YS responds that there are two steps. Step 1: The Portman Estate has offered to pay for the initial consultation with Gerald Eves on how the EIP and the inspector's draft report on the City Plan may impact draft policies. Step 2:

enlisting a consultant to look at the viability of the draft policies. KB agrees that this had been discussed at a previous meeting to make small applications for CIL funding up to £5k to aid the process of creating a Neighbourhood Plan. Committee agreed that this would be a good plan of action.

ACTIONS

- **YS to send SL the latest draft policy document.**
- **SL to draft email to Gerald Eve to request that they review and highlight policies that may be seen as premature given discussions taking place on the EIP and the draft City Plan.**
- **AM will submit an application for £5k neighbourhood CIL funding (dependent on feedback from Gerald Eves, if policies are deemed to be unaffected by the EIP and the City Plan)**

4. White paper discussion

YS explains that MB has drafted a response to the recently released white paper setting out changes to the planning process with a direct impact on the neighbourhood plan system. YS is interested to hear the committees views, particularly those representing the business community, that can be incorporated into this response.

SL questions the likelihood of the white paper becoming reality and if so, under what timescales. Believes that the paper contains major changes that are unlikely to be finalised. He understands concerns and the impact that the changes would have but is unsure if the committees efforts are well placed in pulling together an objection to submit if the likelihood of it landing is low. Is happy to go with the majority if they believe that representation is needed. MB responds highlighting that it is a white paper and not a green paper and these tend to, traditionally, become law. Shouldn't be dismissed as unlikely to happen given the damage that it could potentially do to the concept of neighbourhood planning. Particularly focussing on the link with planning and development, the impact of the paper, should it be approved, will result in a loss of appetite for the neighbourhood planning process because of the amount of work needed for limited results. WCC have encouraged the submission of responses from local groups and forums to aid their case against the changes.

KB comments that following the Amenity Societies meeting, it appears that the neighbourhood planning is being side-lined, but so much is missing and unclear in the paper that it is not possible to form a clear view of where they stand on it. It is disappointing and the impact on issues such as affordable housing is frustrating. TC commented that it tends to be the case that national policy changes tend to not work for London and vice-versa. There is a challenge for these policies to address the requirements for all areas of the country.

MB are businesses happy with the proposals relating to conservation/protected areas? Should the Forum lobby to be in a protected area? SL supports conservation areas becoming protected areas but that isn't what current conservation areas were originally created for and they would need redrawing on that basis. If conservation areas in Marylebone were to become protected then there would not be support for this to include buildings on Oxford Street for example, as this would conflict with many other policies so would not be sensible. SL is happy with 80% of the existing conservation areas as they currently stand but has issues with certain areas and certain buildings in the area becoming protected. MB agrees and comments that there is talk of creating sub-zones within zones which could get round these issues. It makes sense for certain areas, such as Oxford Street, to be excluded from being protected and this could be achieved either by creating sub-zones

(such as designated growth zones) within protected areas or by redrawing the conservation area boundaries.

TC added that, where there are buildings within protected areas that are highlighted as being unsightly or not in keeping with the surroundings, there wouldn't be a restriction on their redevelopment – there would just be more hoops to jump through when going through the planning process, rather than being allowed through under permitted development. MB agrees. The protected areas will enable the forum to have a say on planning applications. SL agrees. The Portman Estate are just as keen to for controlled development by others in the area and would like to see regulations in place where appropriate.

IM commented that he doesn't see that permitted development rights are going to alter under these new proposals. They appear under a different strand of government policy. MB responded that the white paper mentions that there will be further expansion of permitted development via renewal areas.

IM suggests that, in order to make the process more manageable, the response to the white paper should be confined to its impact on The Marylebone Forum's own work in Marylebone, rather than looking at how it will apply across the country. MB agrees that Point 2 is focussed more nationwide. Point 9 also refers to Renewal Areas which might not be relevant if the area is protected. The rest have an impact on local activities. TC responded that there are areas within Forum's boundary that aren't protected by being in a conservation area and these parts would therefore become renewal zones under these proposed plans. Reading the London Forum's response to the white paper, they have expressed objection to the affordable housing targets that, in Westminster, increase annual requirement of new affordable housing from 900 units to >5,000. This would mean that much of the available space in these unprotected areas would need to be used for this purpose and would change the landscape of the area significantly. The existing system for allocating housing need is working and shouldn't be altered as suggested in the white paper. Although this doesn't obviously impact the Marylebone area it should be considered as part of our response as this may become an issue in future. IM is concerned that this is not part of the specific white paper that is requiring response. It falls under other government policy. TC and MB disagree. The issue of affordable housing is one of the principle thrusts of this white paper.

SL would be interested to understand from Westminster, given that the white paper is nationwide, whether they intend for the whole of their area to come under protected area classification or if they intend for it to be decided on a sub-district scale. MB doesn't think they could apply the classification for the whole of the Westminster area. Would be looking at a sub-district level based on existing conservation areas and would seek to protect other areas while allocating others to renewal. MB added that the Local Plan is in process of being implemented which will have greater impact in the short term with the results of this white paper coming further down the line.

[KB left the meeting.]

IM thinks that the response should be from the perspective of The Marylebone Forum, which is in the process of creating a neighbourhood plan and not as an amenity society. It requires a different emphasis and approach. Thinks the response should be rewritten. MB suggests that IM draft additional points that are Marylebone Forum orientated to be incorporated into the response

SB asked if other forums in Westminster are reacting to the white paper? MB confirmed that Fitz West, Mayfair and Soho are submitting responses. TC confirms that Knightsbridge are also responding.

[SL left the meeting.]

TC suggests point to be included in the response. Could there be a suggestion that compensation is offered to those residents that are impacted by the noise and disruption caused by construction works? The visual impact on the area is often the only aspect that is assessed in the planning process. YS suggests that this isn't included in the response.

YS asks the committee if they are broadly supportive of the response to the white paper, aside from the couple of points for review. No response from the rest of the committee so assumed that there is support. YS invites committee members to submit any feedback after the meeting.

ACTIONS

- **Forum members to submit opinions and comments by close of play Monday 12th October.**

5. AOB

IM confirms that the bank balance is currently £1,314.

YS confirms that the St Marylebone High School application for CIL funding for air filtration was successful.

MB there remains £2-3k of grant funding available if required. There are other sources of funding around as well.

SD highlighted that Baker Street Quarter's recent newsletter announced the publication of the air quality report following the completion of the Baker Street Two Way project last year. Results are showing that there has been a significant improvement and a reduction of nitrogen dioxide in the area. This is in line with the findings from data sets at the monitoring stations, being published later this month in a report by the St Marylebone Society. It shows that ULEZ has greatly impacted on the area's air quality with drivers avoiding central London – a very positive result with even Marylebone Road seeing a 25% decrease in nitrogen dioxide. MB and TC suggest that, once stripping out the impact of ULEZ, the Baker Street Two Way project hasn't benefitted the area's air quality. Sheila agrees but highlights that the overall figures for the area are looking much better than in 2017, with a range of schemes contributing towards this shift including greener buses and taxis and Westminster's extra charges for diesel vehicles.

End of the meeting. YS thanks all for attending.

Summary of actions:

ACTION	WHO
SB to submit the redesignation application	SB
YS to circulate AGM date to committee members to check availability.	YS

YS to set a committee meeting date prior to AGM.	YS
YS to send SL the latest draft policy document.	YS
SL to draft email to Gerald Eve to request that they review and highlight policies that may be seen as premature given discussions taking place on the EIP and the draft City Plan.	SL
AM to submit an application for £5k neighbourhood CIL funding (dependent on feedback from Gerald Eve, if policies are deemed to be unaffected by the EIP and the City Plan)	AM
IM to draft additional thoughts to be added to MB's response to white paper, coming from the Marylebone Forum's perspective.	IM
Forum members to submit opinions and comments on white paper response by close of play Monday 12 th October.	ALL