

MINUTES

The Marylebone Forum committee meeting

Wednesday 28 April 2021, 9.00 – 10.00

Via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

1. Penny Alexander (PA)
2. Guy Austin (GA)
3. Alan Bristow (AB)
4. Sarah Buttleman (SB)
5. Kay Buxton (KB)
6. Hanna Corney (HC)
7. Sheila D'Souza (SD)
8. Canon Stephen Evans (SE)
9. Mark Gazaleh (MG)
10. Ann-Marie Johnson (AM)
11. Christian Lock-Necrews (CL)
12. Simon Loomes (SL)
13. Ian Macpherson (IM)
14. Andrea Merrington (AM)
15. Yael Saunders (Chair) (YS)

Apologies

1. Michael Bolt
2. Amanda Feeny
3. Rosa Han
4. Steve Wong

MINUTES:

1. Welcome

YS welcomed all to the meeting and announced apologies.

2. Minutes of 21 January 2021

IM noted the following amendments:

- Section 3 second paragraph – misspelling of ‘principal’
- Section 4 first paragraph – replace ‘searching’ with ‘search’ for projects
- Top of p3 – replace ‘fayres’ with ‘fairs’
- Section 5 replace ‘consistencies’ with ‘Inconsistencies’

YS – welcomed any further amendments to be sent in via email once members have had a chance to read through. IM – requested minutes be circulated within two weeks of the meeting taking place.

ACTION

- KR to arrange the circulation of minutes.
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3. Proposed dates for next meetings

The group decided that Tuesdays would work better for the majority. The following dates were confirmed for the next committee meetings:

- Tuesday 25 May 8.30
- Tuesday 13 July 8.30

Depending on covid restrictions, it may be possible to resume in-person meetings in September, potentially with a hybrid set up for those that would prefer to join remotely. SB, AM and CLN may be able to host, depending on restrictions at the time.

ACTION

- KR to circulate meeting invitations.
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4. Accounts update (Ian Macpherson)

IM confirmed that £933 remains in the account. The deadline for accounts to be finalised up to August 2020 is approaching - Sunday 30th May. The accountant is ready to go ahead with this and has agreed the cost of £300 as in previous years. Is the committee happy to proceed? KB declared an interest that the accountant is also the FCO of Marble Arch BID and stepped out of voting.

Members agreed to proceed with the accountant.

Members discussed the need for an AGM to approve the accounts. As 28 days’ notice is required for an AGM, this won’t be possible prior to the accounts deadline. KB suggested that an EGM could be organised to approve the accounts. It is a statutory requirement and is especially important given

the recent re-designation approval by the council. SB asked if the EGM could be added to the committee meeting on 25th May.

ACTION:

- YS/KR – to explore dates and circulate.

5. CIL update (applications submitted and approved)

Two applications to the neighbourhood CIL fund have been submitted and approved:

- St Marylebone CE School applied for funds to refurbish science labs
- St Marylebone Church applied for funding to replace roof tiles

YS commented that there had been some confusion with the school's application as they had assumed that the Forum would be submitting it on their behalf. WCC has confirmed that the Forum is responsible for this. KB directed YS to the Hyde Park Paddington neighbourhood forum website that features the application process. YS suggested that an agreed process is needed outlining responsibilities.

ACTION

- Forum to agree process for submitting applications.

6. WCC City Plan adopted: next step for neighbourhood plan

YS confirmed that WCC have adopted the City Plan, opening the door to the development of the Marylebone neighbourhood plan. In the last meeting, there was a proposal to acquire advice from Gerald Eve on the relevance of the seven draft plan policies in relation to the City Plan.

SL confirmed that this is possible once a final draft of these policies has been completed. KB highlighted that detail on the Edgware Road policy has not yet been included. SL asked if this could be separated off for the time being while consultation on the draft insights study takes place.

AM suggested that a review of the policy document take place given the time that has passed since it was last looked at. There may be updates and needs to check the policies are still relevant from Howard de Walden's perspective. AM confirmed support for Gerald Eve's assistance once this has taken place.

KB asked the committee about the shisha policy included in the final City Plan. It appeared scaled back on what had been previously discussed and expected. SL suggested asking Gerald Eve about this with regard to recommendations for licensing and planning.

AB asked if there was any mention of the government's white paper on planning in the final City Plan. AM confirmed that there isn't – final details of the white paper are yet to be finalised so will be some time before any national changes are proposed.

ACTION

- AM to review the draft plan policies.
- SL to send final draft to Gerald Eve

7. Edgware Road Insights feedback (Kay Buxton)

KB gave an update on the Edgware Road Insights Study, a draft of which was circulated last week with a request for comments by Friday 30 April.

The Study, funded by a successful CIL application, was carried out by Pragma and Gerald Eve with the purpose of examining the current commercial character of the area in order to identify challenges and opportunities, and recommend planning policies that can be included in neighbourhood plans. It looked at addressable audience and spend, footfall trends and existing commercial units (their uses, ownership, lease length etc). Ground floor units are dominated by independent businesses, with a strong F&B offering alongside functional retail – chemists, banks and supermarkets. This has meant that the area has fared well during the covid restrictions as essential retail and food takeaways remained open. There is also a strong night-time economy.

The Study sets out recommendations for planning and licensing policy and actions for BIDs including continued landlord collaboration with more detailed initiatives divided into short, medium and long term.

SE – what is the next step? What is the purpose? KB responded that the Study will create the foundations of an overall vision for the area, helping to get neighbourhood plan policies and a planning policy framework right for long term development. SL added that it is important to see this as a long-term vision. It will take years of strategy and investment to achieve.

SE asked if this sort of Insight Study could be used in other areas? Given the challenges that neighbourhoods are facing post-covid, could this be a useful model for the Forum to adopt? KB responded that WCC do carry out area health checks but these have been less rigorous in recent years so this sort of research is of great benefit. The Portman Estate are looking at using a similar model to look for opportunities and to check that some planned developments fit in with the area's wider strategy. PA added that lots of data exists from research carried out fairly recently but the context has changed so quickly due to covid, much of it is now out of date. Studies like these are definitely needed once the situation settles down and it would be positive for the Forum to take on this type of project. SE agreed and added that it would be good to get discussions underway between AM SL PA on the data needs post-covid. KB expressed concern that WCC are considering removing the type of insight study from the scope of neighbourhood forums.

CLN – confirmed that comments on the Study have been submitted, adding that the findings are fascinating and will help to provide a useful roadmap to policy. (CLN then left the meeting)

KB confirmed that the draft has been circulated to both local Forums. If possible, a collective response from members would be preferred. YS to recirculate to committee members.

ACTION

- Members to submit comments by Friday 30 April.

8. Website draft text

YS circulated drafts of new webpages to the group prior to the meeting. The aim of the website refresh is to create a more engaging frontage to the Forum, to clearly set out its purpose and its priorities and bring together neighbourhood plan policies with CIL funding.

SE commented that the new designs were refreshing and more engaging. Will email further comments.

AM agreed that the designs were good. Suggested reducing the amount of text.

AB suggested that the challenge will be how to get people to look at the website once it has been revamped.

KB particularly likes the CIL funding application section as it appears more human and interactive. When will newsletter start going out? YS responded that this will happen once the website has been updated.

ACTION

- KR to amend draft website text according to comments.

9. Seymour Leisure Centre & Marylebone Library (Sarah Buttleman)

SB attended the consultation on 16th March, also attended by Councillors and WCC's development team, and it was confirmed that the redevelopment of the leisure centre and library is going ahead. £25m has been ringfenced for the project. The current timeframe sees plans being released in May, consultation in July and planning permission granted by December. There was a strong community presence at the consultation event, particularly those with small children. SB encourages others to get involved in consultation in July to ensure that the voice of all residents and stakeholders are represented in the plans.

SD commented that it was good to see the commitment from the council but was disappointed that a follow up stakeholder meeting was then cancelled.

SL added that WCC are reviewing their consultation protocols with an intention to ensure that consultation with stakeholders begins earlier in the process. SE added that this would be a positive move as often consultation takes place too late in the process to feed into planning.

10. Consultations on local developments

YS confirmed that invitations had also been received for the consultation on the following developments:

- Garfield House (Edgware Road)
- Marks and Spencers (Oxford Street)
- Debenhams (Oxford Street)

YS asked that if any members were interested in attending these consultations, let her know.

11. SEN School project (Mark Gazaleh)

MG began by announcing that 25th May will see the 976th tree being planted in the area. All are invited to attend.

MG has spent several years campaigning for more support for those with special education needs in the local area. There is a significant gap in SEN service provision outside of what is available in mainstream schools and children, young people and their families are therefore missing out on access to vital therapies, particularly for those with sensory, speech and language needs, dyslexia and dyspraxia. MG successfully set up a hub offering support for SEN children aged from 5 through to 19, however this currently relies on rented space at Fourth Feathers Youth Centre. Working with Abingdon House School, there is now an opportunity to develop a more permanent hub and MG is looking to submit a CIL application, including a match funding model, to support these plans.

YS commented that the Forum would hope to be able to support through CIL funding, as well as use its lobbying role to raise awareness of this project with WCC.

SE commented that he would be happy to offer advice having set up a special school in the last 6 years.

MG clarified that this would be an independent private school, with many children attending with state funding.

12. Any Other Business

SL updated on projects currently in progress at The Portman Estate:

- A taskforce has been established working with WCC on Marble Arch developments to ensure that these proceed alongside Oxford Street works.
- Regent House on Edgware Road is soon to be completed. SL is happy to arrange a tour if this would be of interest.
- Discussions are continuing regarding Garfield House on Edgware Road.
- 28 new trees have been planted in partnership with WCC. This is out of the 140 that have been planned.
- Seven new restaurateurs have launched in the area over last year – a positive sign given the challenges facing businesses post Covid.
- Would it be possible for the CIL sub group to circulate an up to date status on CIL applications? YS agreed to arrange.

ACTION

- CIL sub group to circulate update to committee

Date of next meeting

Tuesday 25th May

8.30 – 9.30

Microsoft Teams