

Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Forum

EXECUTIVE MEETING THURSDAY 21ST JANUARY 2021 BY ZOOM

MINUTES

Present: Nick Bailey, Sharon Banoff, Yoram Blumann, Gwilym Harbottle, Julia Haythorn (Chair), Ian Johnstone, Edward Kellow (Notetaker), Jace Tyrrell, Pancho Lewis (Ward Councillor), Mark Dillon.

1. **Apologies:** Barbara Corr, Tim Barnes (Ward Councillor)

2. **Minutes of the last meeting** (available on FitzWest website)
These were approved.

3. **Greening Ideas** - Scott Marshall from The Crown Estate to share experience of Regent Street greening. Scott was unable to attend and it was agreed he would be invited to another meeting.

4. **Tesco Greening Project - update - Gwilym**

Gwilym and Barbara have been exploring if it is possible to switch the greening money from Tesco to Riding House Street (as the Great Titchfield St/Clipstone Street application has ground to a halt.) He reported that they made contact with Westminster highway officers but waiting for a response.

Various issues around planters, the concrete barrier and emergency access were discussed and it was agreed that we would need to get the expert input from Westminster Council. JH - the planters should be fixed (not moveable). Edward K agreed because the planters are likely to be heavy. In practice it would be difficult to move them.

Nick pointed out that the current concrete barrier at the Cleveland Street end of Riding House street is not moveable. Access to this part of Riding House Street is from the other end at the junction with Nassau Street.

Learning from planters in Regent Street?

What could we learn from the experience of installing new planters on Regent Street? Jace confirmed risk assessments had been done for emergency access in Regent Street.

Pancho said he would chase the matter with Jerry Warner at the WCC. (NB since the Executive, Pancho has organised a meeting with Jerry to discuss using the Tesco money on Riding House Street.)

Gwilym thanked Pancho for his help

We have not been in touch with Tesco until we have some agreement in principle from Highway Officers.

We still need to consult Riding Street residents

5. CIL - Community Infrastructure Levy - update on ideas:

Electric bike racks – JH has not found out anything further about this. Tim Barnes had mentioned them before and JH will contact him again to see what he knows. Pancho will liaise with JH. **Action – JH to contact Tim Barnes**

Great Titchfield/Foley Street greening

We had a general discussion about this. It was agreed we need to consult with residents and businesses and get suggestions of possible greening locations. And this is not confined to these 2 streets. This was discussed further in AOB.

Greening and Rubbish

PL reported that there are ongoing concerns about inconsiderate rubbish dumping in the streets. How could we encourage people to put rubbish out at correct times? And not to dump rubbish.

Suggested – how about identifying the rubbish dumping areas and then applying for CIL funding to green in those areas.

JH – we already have identified rubbish dumping hot spots in a consultation last year. PL said we could consult further and identify the best locations.

Action: Julia to send newsletter with map to the membership to get suggestions of rubbish hot spots/possible greening.

Then can apply for CIL at end of Feb.

JT has template, page or two, been doing this in Soho (JT has shared these since meeting)

Oxford Street District Meeting

The newly appointed director of the OSD is Elad Eisenstein. The latest release is at www.westminster.gov.uk/OSD and a revised strategy is shortly to be announced. NB had been informed that plans for a 'zero emissions demonstrator project' for FitzWest might be included. So NB said we should wait before exploring the air quality survey until we hear from that.

Action: NB and YB will report back from the meeting

6. AOB

Danger of Falling masonry in Oxford Street / Spalling

Jace said desperate to avoid 'Regent's disease' in Oxford Street. This a condition caused by water getting between stone and metal creating a risk that large pieces of masonry will fall on to pavement. Specifically, Top Shop at Oxford Circus has been cordoned off because bits are falling off this building.

Jace T said that 90 businesses are leaving Oxford Street. Might take 3 years to return to pre-Covid levels of footfall.

Converting businesses to residential

NB said there is another paper going around with a proposal to permit the conversion of any business into residential accommodation, without the need for planning permission.

PL said also may reduce consultation period from 21 to 14 days

CIL

Yoram: Another deadline for CIL – we can't do much because funds frozen by council. (But see earlier notes and plans for greening)

Julia H: Where are we with Riding House Street Cil? 85% belongs to council, went to consultation, closed beginning 2020, not heard anything since.

NB: Improvements to Market Place frozen. Jace interested, various organisations committed funds, including Gt Portland Estate JT: We can still do surveying and pre-work can't we?

YB: Cllr Kaplan said project supposed to go ahead – we should hear on Monday? Jace wants to know because wants to put budget behind the project.

EK mentions sunken greening plots in Marylebone – YB said Howard de W supported these plots

Covid vaccinations

Bell and Croyden pharmacy is administering the Covid vaccines for the NHS.

Anti-social behaviour

JC I haven't noticed, more people around, not noticed anti-social behaviour

NB Observed phone snatch in Gr Portland Street

YB – criminal activities – more time for break ins because no people around
Langham have increased patrols

Neighbourhood plan news

NB reported that the Examiner has sent a draft copy of her report on the neighbourhood plan for 'fact checking' by us and WCC planners (this draft had been previously circulated to exec members by NB). When complete she will issue a final report which will include some recommendations on changes to the wording. We will then need to produce a final draft for the referendum and we will need to agree a date for the referendum with the Council. The Examiner was very positive about the plan and congratulated the Forum on putting it together.

Hyde Park Low Traffic Network/how to introduce LTN in Fitzrovia

PL: Hyde Park LTN was the perfect place to do one. However the council has pulled the plug on it because of resistance from some residents.

NB Said gradual implementation more likely to succeed. Do it slowly.

Yoram suggested we should do more pre-engagement to get a positive result.

Jace: We want everything to be electric in 5 years, Zero emissions zone is a perhaps a better way to approach it

YB: FYI Camden implementing traffic changes very soon. Still trying to fix problems with junction by American Church.

EK 7 February 2021

