

Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Forum

Annual General Meeting

Sainsbury Wellcome Centre, 09 October 2025 at 6pm

MINUTES

Present: 25 members and a resident of Camden attended. Cllrs Fisher and Lilley were in attendance.

Apologies: Howard Brecker, Ian Johnstone, Chris Shaw

1 Introduction and Welcome

Julia Haythorn (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Sainsbury Wellcome Centre for hosting the meeting and providing refreshments. She explained the purpose of the Forum and said that in 2021 the Council adopted our Neighbourhood Plan as part of the statutory development plan and this had been supported by a local referendum.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last annual general meeting were approved.

3. WCC's Vision for Fitzrovia for 2026:

Patrick Lilley is one of 3 councillors for the West End ward who in the past had lived in Fitzrovia. He said the Forum had achieved a lot but had more to do in future. For example, he quoted the proposed development by the University of Westminster of part of their Cavendish campus. He supported proposals for greening the parklets and street trees in the surrounding area as part of the development.

The dumping of refuse and recycling was a continuing problem. Not everyone put their rubbish out at the right time for collection and left it on the street when not collected. This should be removed and the non-collection should be reported.

CCTV was needed round the outside of Holcroft Court and in other 'hot-spots'.

He liked the Fitzrovia Partnership Festival of Architecture seating in various locations which he said was well used. More seating was needed.

4. **NCIL Projects**

Nick Bailey (Secretary) explained that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is paid by developers when a development begins in order to improve the services and facilities used by the local community. The Forum can recommend and support projects to receive funding, but the final decision is made by WCC. Because we have a Neighbourhood Plan, 25% of CIL generated in our area is available for local projects.

Nick explained that substantial sums had been awarded to the **Soho Poly theatre** in Riding House Street, and to **the Fitzrovia Community Centre** to carry out internal improvements, as well as installing a **defibrillator** outside. The **All Souls' Clubhouse** in Cleveland Street has been awarded S106 funding from WCC and may also add some CIL money towards internal alterations to provide overnight accommodation for homeless people.

Nick reported that the **All Souls' primary school** had received a significant allocation to carry out improvements to its playground but needed a project manager to prepare a specification and finalise the application.

Improvements to **Market Place** had received a CIL allocation but any work in this location had been delayed because of the uncertainty about the Mayoral Development Corporation in the Oxford Street area. At least two vacant restaurants were noted here.

Planters had been CIL funded in Great Titchfield Street and Hanson Street and these were regularly tended by volunteers.

Denise Julien had received funding for planting in Carburton Street and 2 **medallions** and planters in honour of Thomas Holcroft and his daughter, Fanny, on Holcroft Court.

Nick said that the Forum was looking for other projects to improve the area and suggested anyone with ideas should write to info@fitzwest.org

He also reported that WCC is revising and updating the City Plan which covers the whole borough. Any suggestions for planning or transport improvements should be included on a feedback form on the FitzWest Forum website.

5. **Greening on Carburton Street and Holcroft Court Medallions**

Denise explained the development of planting in Carburton street outside Holcroft Court and the very successful medallions and planters next to the entrance on the north side of Holcroft Court. These were unveiled by the Lord Mayor Paul Dimoldenberg on 30th September.

6. Discussion of other possible improvements in Fitzrovia

Cllr Fisher said that he was surprised WCC had agreed to transfer Oxford Street to the Mayor's control and that the pedestrianisation of the western part is likely to be carried out in 2026-27. It is possible the eastern section will not be fully pedestrianised and buses will continue to run on Oxford Street East, although some displacement of traffic into side streets is possible. There will be more detailed plans out for consultation in November.

Marcos Gold (Fitzrovia Partnership) explained the role of Business Improvement Districts and some of FP's recent projects, including the seating in key locations. A Sustainability Leadership Group has been set up of representatives of leading companies in Fitzrovia, chaired by Prof Peter Bonfield, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Westminster. This has a brief for supporting policies towards greater sustainability in company performance and includes the objective of 'sustaining a thriving residential community'.

Other comments from members included concern about two vacant restaurants in Market Place, the expansion of Airbnb lets in the housing stock, the need for hanging baskets with flowers in Great Titchfield Street and the 'borderlands problem' of the divide between Camden and Westminster in Cleveland St.

7. Volunteers for planter watering and maintenance

Gwilym asked for volunteers and he noted the names of those interested in helping.

8. Environmental Report

Yoram reported on a number of recent policy developments:

WCC's licensing policy is likely to be revised

New controls over pedi-cabs will begin on 16 October

There will be further consultation over Oxford St proposals in November

The Crown Commission and WCC are making changes to traffic flows and pedestrianising Lower Regent St and part of Piccadilly. These are likely to direct more traffic through Soho and Fitzrovia.

It was noted that the BT Tower has been sold to MCR Hotels for £275m. Although on the Camden side, it may provide opportunities for improvement to the Cleveland St frontage and more affordable housing.

9. **Revisions to the Constitution**

Gwilym reported that, as part of the redesignation of the Forum by WCC in June this year for a further 5 years, changes were made to the constitution (available on www.fitzwest.org):

These were agreed unanimously by the meeting.

10 **Elections**

It was agreed that the following are elected to the forum executive:

Yoram Blumann and Ian Johnstone were re-elected; The co-option of Fay Sandler and Marcos Gold was confirmed.

11. **Accounts**

These were circulated by Yoram, the Treasurer, and were approved.

12. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next executive meeting is on 5 November. Further information to follow.

Nick Bailey
Secretary