

Forest Hill Society General Meeting

Minutes of Meeting

Thursday 7th May, 19.30

The Hob

Chair's Welcome

1.1 Vice Chair, Michael Abrahams, began by apologising for chairing the meeting since he had stepped down from the role at the last General Meeting. He explained that our new Chairman, Peter Irby, has had surgery and his recovery is slow thus preventing him from attending meetings at the moment. Everyone joined with Michael in wishing Peter a speedy recovery.

Transport – Tony Petim, chairman of Forest Hill Society Transport Committee

2.1 Tony explained that Forest Hill Station would be transferred to Transport for London's control in October, or thereabouts. This should mean there will be new money for station improvements.

2.2 The gates on to Perry Vale do now seem to be open. We have, once again, received assurances from Southern Rail that they will remain open during hours of operation.

2.3 Work will start soon on a new footbridge at FH station with lifts which will make the platforms much more accessible to people with mobility problems, buggies and heavy luggage.

2.3 The Transport Committee has been campaigning to have the Sainsbury car park offer free parking for up to 2 hours, instead of the current 30 minutes. Tony said this may have a positive effect in revitalising the High Street.

2.4 The Society has been asked for its views on the Sydenham Road Master Plan. Our response has been fairly neutral, as we wish to make sure that no adverse impact is experienced by increased traffic in Forest Hill.

2.5 Plans for the next 6 weeks:- to foster good relations with TfL pending its takeover of our local station, the ensure the footbridge works go ahead on schedule.

2.6 Question from the floor:- Any disabled parking in Forest Hill town centre? Other members present knew of various parking places eg in front of the station, at the bottom of Taymount Rise, Sainsburys car park. Tony pointed out that it would be tricky to get more disabled parking on the main roads because they are red routes but he would make enquiries.

Leisure and Environment – James Marmion, chairman of Leisure and Environment Committee

3.1 James told members that the priority for his newly-established Committee was to organise some good days out in SE23. In recent months, his Committee has organised two successful, well-attended events. The first was at the Dacres Road Nature Reserve where natural and local history were combined. The next step there is to set up a Kids' Club similar to the one at the Devonshire Road Nature Reserve. Anyone interested was urged to get in touch with James. The second event was a tidy-up and picnic at the Albion Millennium Gardens on May Day. A great deal of bulky waste was disposed of and after the picnic there was a game of boules.

3.2 The news that the Rockbourne Triangle had been chosen by Lewisham Council for an ecological project had been welcomed last year but James explained that there was now some dissatisfaction with the level of council input. However, the community itself is pressing ahead organising events at the triangle's centrepiece, the Stanstead Community Gardens. A Summer Fayre is planned.

3.3 Future plans:- get more planters on London Road, set up a local Cinema Club, devise a local walk that could be put on a website to encourage people to visit and explore our area.

Horniman Gardens

4.1 Michael Abrahams informed members that the Horniman Museum had been successful in getting an initial grant to start plans on redeveloping the gardens. This is the first tranche of a much larger sum that will be needed to complete the ambitious plans which include a new education centre, water feature and improvements to the animal enclosure.

Horniman Triangle

5.1 Michael welcomed the new addition to our area – Forest Hill Beach, otherwise known as the new children's sandpit in the Horniman Triangle opposite the museum. He acknowledged, however, that there were problems with it, principle among them the lack of any toilets.

5.2 Point from the floor – isn't it dangerous to have a children's play facility in a former plague pit? Other members said that the popular story that that field had been used once as a plague pit was no more than a local urban myth and our local historian, Steve Grindlay, says there is absolutely no documentation to support the story.

5.3 Marion Wood, a local resident close to the Triangle, addressed the meeting. Her main concerns are Council proposals to create a third entrance into the play area from London Road which she says would be dangerous and unnecessary, the lack of toilet facilities, the botanical richness of the area which needs to be cared for and road safety. The success of the refurbishments has led to an increased volume of traffic. Sadly, there has already been one fatality there in recent weeks. Marion said the Horniman must do more to discourage visitors from coming by car.

5.4 Point from the floor – the hawthorn hedge along the London Road side of the play area is the oldest in the ancient borough of Camberwell and should be properly looked after.

5.5 There was a great deal of concern from the floor about the lack of toilet facilities at the Horniman Triangle. Cllr Alex Feakes said the Council position was that a new toilet block would be built near the café "once funds became available." But, he said, the Council had run out of money for the toilets and the sorely-missed swings in the play park. The existing toilet block was beyond repair, he added.

5.6 Tony Petim suggested that the local community could come together to raise funds for a new toilet block and he could provide the labour to build it.

Development – Michael Abrahams, chair of Forest Hill Society Development Committee

6.1 The big success story has been persuading the Planning Committee at Lewisham Council to go against the recommendation of its own planning officers and unanimously reject Loromah Estates proposal to build 74 flats in land to the rear of Tyson Road and the Christian Fellowship Centre on Honor Oak Road. It is highly unusual for Councillors on the Planning Committee to do this and the

victory was down to the efforts of local residents supported by Forest Hill Society and local Councillors.

6.2 There are now daily bin collections from shops in Dartmouth Road and London Road.

6.3 Lewisham Council is rolling out a new project across the borough to place large posters on derelict shop fronts to make them appear brighter and more pleasant.

6.4 Lewisham is taking part in London's Capital Clean-Up Campaign. Residents and organisations are urged to get involved. For our area, these will be held on Friday 29 May: London Road footpath (opposite Sainsbury store) and Wednesday 3 June: Perry Vale car park, Forest Hill, SE23.

6.5 Michael asked for suggestions from the floor for improving our town centre. One suggestion was for an Arts Centre in the now listed Louise House between the pools and the library.

Penelope Jarrett – member of pools consultation stakeholder group on behalf of Forest Hill Society

7.1 Penelope gave a brief summary of the current position regarding Forest Hill Pools and explained why the Society thinks the consultation exercise currently being conducted by Lewisham Council is misleading.

7.2 Penelope explained why attending the stakeholder group meetings was becoming more and more frustrating and now seemed to be a waste of time. She said that, contrary to expectations, it was not a forum for discussion. Rather, it was a forum for council officers to tell people what had already been decided. As a consequence, it was felt that Forest Hill Society should withdraw its two members from the stakeholder group for the next meeting.

7.3 There was some concern from the floor that this would reduce our influence still further.

7.4 Michael stated that the Society would only withdraw from the stakeholders group temporarily and hoped to re-engage with the council in the future.

7.5 Michael Abrahams explained that it was important not to allow the Council to use the existence of the stakeholders group as a way of claiming to be consulting the community properly. He said other members of the stakeholder group were also planning to temporarily withdraw.

Liz Hannaford – Communications Officer and chair of Communications and Events Committee

8.1 Liz explained her principle role of putting together the quarterly Newsletter and the monthly eNewsletter which she hoped everyone was receiving. Members were urged to get in touch if they weren't receiving these.

8.2 The big success over the last year has been the 23 Club which has really taken off. It is well attended, people seem to enjoy the opportunity to meet other local people who are

passionate about the area and it helps local businesses generate good business on otherwise quiet days of the week.

8.3 Following the success of the May Day picnic, we shall be having a picnic in Horniman Gardens on Sunday 7th June.

Any Other Business

9.1 There was concern about plans for a plot of land on Perry Vale. How can we keep track of development plans?

9.2 Concerns about the work done to the road layout at Perry Vale with fears that it may lead to a serious accident.

Michael called the meeting to a close by thanking all those who had attended and thanking The Hob for, once again, providing a very pleasant and convenient venue.