

St James Area Community Zoom- Meeting notes

Wednesday April 22nd 6.30pm

Present: Simon Bannister – BHCC Communities Team, Marek – Health Promotion at THT, Gaza – St James Street resident, Cllr Amanda Evans, Karl Boardman – resident, Sarah Randall – resident, Cal Chester – Trust for Developing Communities, LGTB Switchboard, David Allen, Peter – resident, Cllr Clare Rainey

Apologies: Sussex Police, Cllr Nick Childs

1 Welcome and introductions – Simon B opened the meeting with the broad aims of offering a space for residents and community members to share issues and concerns, to enable the community conversation around a Neighbourhood Action Plan for the area to continue and to help identify actions needed to support the community and to help residents avoid hardship as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Simon also introduced the Brighton Central Community Support Team which also includes Hannah Barker (BHCC) Cal Chester (TDC), Amy Alison (TDC) and Emma Reeves (TDC).

2 Round Robin: Issues, updates and information sharing from the floor

Marek – Health Promotion coordinator at the Terrence Higgins Trust on Ship Street. THT are offering free condoms by post to BN1 2 3 areas. To see the criteria for this service and for more info see THT website <https://www.tht.org.uk/centres-and-services/brighton> They are also offering free HIV self testing kits (usually £15). THT are worried by the high level of people presenting with Gonorrhoea, which indicates that these people have not been effectively self-isolating

Hannah – BHCC Communities. A community support newsletter for the area is being put together and will be delivered to each address in the ward. It includes essential support resources, contacts and information and is particularly aimed toward those not accessing online resources. We are looking for volunteers to help deliver copies to their street or building – anyone able to help with this should contact Hannah.

Hannah.barker@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Switchboard – the meeting was attended by the new Trans & Non-binary Link worker. The service has been reopened and relaunched for referrals and is remote working to offer online support and help link trans and non-binary people with other services

Food Hub – Cal Chester shared information about the food hub work undertaken by TDC workers Amy and Emma. Emma is the contact for the Phoenix food hub and Amy is contact for the Pankhurst food hub. They can be contacted by email: amyallison@trustdevcom.org.uk and emmareeves@trustdevcom.org.uk

3 Police update

The local team sent their apologies and will try to attend any future meetup. They continue to patrol St James area, although as licensed premises and airB&B's have largely ceased trading the area is quieter. The police are aware of a squatted property along the street and have concerns around drug activity which may be related to this property.

Police are keen to receive community information and can be contacted by dialling 101 or emailing 101@sussex.pnn.police.uk

Social distancing is mixed around the area, with people feeling that the removal of motor traffic from Madeira Drive has been helpful, although the area west of the pier remains too crowded for many. Residents are aware of the police presence on the seafront, but feel that more could be done to manage social distancing on St James Street – which is viewed as a problem up to Dorset Gardens and particularly around

Morrisons. Also night noise and rowdy behaviour remains a feature of the street, as well as daytime street drinking, drug use and aggressive begging and residents would like to see more done to tackle this.

Cllr Evans pointed out that all homeless people in the city have access to accommodation at the moment, regardless of their Covid-19 status.

4 Councillor updates and questions:

Cllr Evans has been unwell and so has a limited update, but is well now and very happy to take questions and enquiries and respond to concerns. Worried that people are being pushed into hardship and concerned about the pockets of poverty within the Queens Park ward, but impressed by the measures taken by the community to support each other

With the council looking to resume its business as far as possible, **Cllr Childs** is attending a virtual Housing Committee meeting this evening and unable to be with us, but hopes to attend any future meetups of this kind.

Cllr Rainey Has been supporting people wanting to volunteer and assist others and has been very impressed by the community response. An issue is residents without internet access and the newsletter produced by the Communities Team is very valuable. Aware that for people already experiencing hardship, this crisis has made this much worse.

Q: The Neighbourhood Action Plan work has been put on hold, although there are lots of good ideas on the website – where are we with that?

A: The Neighbourhood Action Plan process was going really well and had produced a wide range of proposals which can be seen on the website. The next stage was to have been holding one or more public events where residents could chose which ideas should be taken forward and how to make them happen, and some funding had been identified for this. Although put on hold for now, this is something which is being looked at again and will be taken forward.

We are also keen on expanding the process – which has so far focussed on St James Street – to cover the whole ward.

Our council, like those across the country, are facing additional challenges around future finance as the cost of responding to the Covid-19 crisis becomes clearer, and although this will impact on resources available, it also will make the sort of collaborative action plan approach more important.

Other council services: although there was some disruption to refuse and recycling services, this is working OK at the moment with no particular issues.

Website and newsletter – Any volunteers to help with the newsletter, contact Hannah – hannah.barker@brighton-hove.gov.uk and for suggestions to add to the website contact simon.bannister@brighton-hove.gov.uk

5 Next steps

It was agreed to hold a second meeting in two weeks time, but expanded to cover the whole ward rather than just St James Street.

6. AOB

Crime – have there been any increases in break ins or other types of crime? Could police attend next time? Could someone from St Mungo's be invited to the next meeting?

Notes will be circulated and put on the website and a second meeting arranged for Wednesday May 6th 6.30pm