

Minutes of the 7th Annual General Meeting of the Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Forum, held at 12.00 pm on 20th July 2024 at Bow Idea Store, Gladstone Place E3 5GT

Present: : Tim Armstrong, Annie Berkley, Cllr. Nathalie Bienfait (observer), David Burnham, Paul Dixey Sandra Docking, Neel Gahbri, Kate Gould, Jane Hay, Claire Hemmaway, Mo Hussain, Geoffrey Juden, Sheila Kelly, Mike Mitchell (Treasurer), Victoria O’Sullivan, Shafiq Pandor (Committee member), Gordon Parker, Bob Philpotts, Seth Pimlott (Committee member), Meg Mitchell , Dion Smythe, Gail Stevens John White, Norma Worden-Rogers,

1. Welcome and Apologies

Mike welcomed everyone and invited each person to briefly share a little about themselves by way of introduction.

Apologies were received from committee members Paul Ash and Annika Ramos and from Grace Boyle, Osaruchi Faulks, Aniqa Islam, Rev. April Keech, Jonathan Freegard, Dr. Isabel Hodgkinson, Diana Wright

2. Minutes of the AGM held on 15th July 2023

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of business conducted at the AGM.

3. Report on Forum activities over the past year.

A written summary of the Forum’s activities was provided. Mike expressed his gratitude to Alex Holmes, Forum Chair from 2016-2023, who moved out of the borough in 2023 and therefore resigned from the Forum.

Following the expiry of the Forum’s 5-year statutory life in August 2022, the Forum had submitted a new application that month. After a lengthy delay, in June 2023 the Mayor refused the Forum’s application for redesignation, the minute stating that: ‘The Mayor in Cabinet was not assured that the membership of the forum included representatives from different sections of the community in the area and thus refused the application for redesignation.’

Activity to broaden Forum membership

The Forum worked at widening its membership during the year through outreach to local community groups, participation in local initiatives and our online newsletters. We were pleased that Aniqa Islam, a 6th form student at Central Foundation, joined the Forum to help younger residents to have a voice.

Committee members have attended the E3 Breakfast networking meetings of local agencies and supported efforts to bring back into community use the former Growing Concerns site at 2 Wick Lane and the initiative by Geof Juden of the East London Garden Society to develop a waste food project in Bow. We have also supported the new joint NHS/Council programme in Old Ford, Communities Keeping Well.

Developments members of the Forum have commented on during the year.

- Redevelopment of Caxton Hall in Caxton Grove .
- Future of Clare House site owned by Clarion (Hawthorn Avenue)
- Proposed new 6th Form extension for Central Foundation
- Early engagement in review of Local Plan - responses submitted

We also wrote to the Dept. for Levelling Up early in 2024 over our concerns about the way accumulated funds from local developments, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), have been reallocated by the current administration and proposals for future decisions over CIL.

A freedom of information request to the Council had recently been made requesting details of CIL receipts for the past two years, including for the neighbourhood plan area, and information about how contributions have been spent.

Submission of a new application for Council recognition

We submitted a new application for designation on 5th April, ensuring the 21 names on the form were from diverse ethnicities and ages from across the plan area. Three months on and our application had not been published on the Council's website. We wrote an open letter to the Mayor and Cllr. Kabir Ahmed on 18th June, requesting that they follow the neighbourhood planning regulations and honour their manifesto pledges to be a Council which listens and empowers local communities. We sent a copy of our open letter and recent newsletter to the best value inspectors currently working with the administration.

On 17th July a Council spokesperson issued a statement which said: 'We are currently assessing the appropriate time frame for a six-week public consultation on the Forum's redesignation application and how this aligns with our reporting cycle. Planning law requires determination of an application within 13 weeks of commencement of the consultation in public, not from the submission of the designation application.'

4. Financial report

A financial report was presented to the meeting by Mike Mitchell. Small grant applications had been made to Tower Hamlets Council, Action for Bow and Clarion, but all had been turned down. The only income for the year was £80 from a workshop on neighbourhood planning provided for students from the School of Architecture. Given the lack of income for the year, the Forum had no expenditure, with incidental admin expenses being met by the committee. The closing bank balance at 31st March 2024 was £435 (The opening balance of £355 + £80.)

5. Election of Forum Committee

The Forum committee currently meets 6 times a year, alternating between online and in-person meetings. The following were elected to serve on the committee for the year by a show of hands: Paul Ash (Secretary) Mike Mitchell (Treasurer), general members: Shafiq Pandor, Seth Pimlott, Annika Ramos, John White.

6. Any other business

6.1 Prohibition of Mansard roofs in Cardigan Road. Kate Gould raised the anomaly that mansard roofs are currently not permitted in Cardigan Road which is within the Roman Road Conservation Area. She requested that a review of the position be included in the Council workstream that is reviewing mansard roofs in other roads in Bow.

6.2 Roof lines. Whilst recognising the trend toward building higher to meet housing need, Jane Hay expressed her concern about the raising of roof lines and related issues of access to light.

6.3 Sainsbury Local below Gateway building on corner of Mile End Road and Rhondda Grove

John White shared his concern at the lack of consultation over the planning application (approved) for this development, which completely omitted mention of the change of use to a supermarket. Planning permission for the change of use was not needed in law as the new use came under the same Class E for commercial properties.

6.4 Request for messages of support over redesignation Deep concerns was expressed relating to the loss of designation and the fact that the Forum catchment area could lose access to a portion of developer funds because no other group would be monitoring the use of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Mike said the Forum would let people know when the Council undertakes its 6 week consultation over our application so that short emails of support could be sent.