

CENTRAL NORWICH CITIZENS' FORUM

Minutes of a meeting of the Central Norwich Citizens' Forum held at City Hall, Norwich on Tuesday, 5th June 2007.

MINUTES

PRESENT: Dawn Castle-Green, Jim Durrant, Paul Eastaugh, Julian Foster (Chairman and Minute Taker), Carol Hardman, Hazel Harrison, Bridget Quirk, Chris Wilson, A N Other unidentified resident.

APOLOGIES: Pat Daniel, Don Homfray, Vanessa McGregor, Ann Rostron, Sue Skipper.

1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS:

Hazel Harrison asked if the Alibi nightclub in Bethel Street was expected to open again soon. The Chairman reported that a premises licence variation application had been submitted recently which had been reviewed by the Forum's Licensing Committee and had listed a number of serious objections. As a result, he had been advised by the Licensing Officer that the application had been withdrawn.

2. MINUTES:

The minutes of the last meeting held at City Hall on Tuesday 1st May were taken as read. **RESOLVED** that they be signed as a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Property in Upper St Giles Street

Jim Durrant reported that he had investigated the query that had been raised at the last meeting and had ascertained that the planning application relating to these premises had simply been for a change-of-use certificate to be classified in future as A3. His report was **RECEIVED**.

The Chairman further reported that the Broadland House planning application relating to a site in St Benedict's Street that had been the subject of a Forum Planning Committee objection had, as a result, been withdrawn.

3.2 Unitary Status for Norwich

The Chairman reminded the meeting that it had been decided, at the last meeting, that he should invite Laura McGilivray (Chief Executive Officer, Norwich City Council) to attend the next meeting to outline the case being made by the Council to enable it to achieve unitary status. Laura McGilivray had not replied to his invitation and nor had her Deputy, Bridget Buttinger. However it was known that the City Council had decided to meet co-incidentally with the meeting of the Forum and that would obviously take precedence. Chris Wilson proposed that, nonetheless, the Forum should agree to support the City Council's application. The Chairman said he was prepared to accept the proposal providing only that there was a very clear and demonstrable support for it. The proposal was seconded by Dawn Castle-Green. Carol Hardman proposed that the status quo should be supported. There being no seconder, that proposal failed. The proposition was then put to the meeting. Paul Eastaugh and A N Other abstained and, other than

Carol Hardman, all voted to approve the resolution. **RESOLVED** to support the City Council's application to become a unitary authority.

3.3 A Strategy for Sex Workers

The Chairman reported that, in spite of the massive publicity that had been given to the meeting on 23rd May through the Evening News, BBC Radio and TV and Radio Norwich as well as by circular sent to the entire mailing list only three residents had attended, two of whom were Forum Directors. Twenty other representatives of the Police, the City Council, the charities and agencies established to work with prostitutes and drug addiction, the magistracy and the press had been present, enough to obtain a firm agreement to use the meeting to launch a series of further meetings to devise a comprehensive strategy which would enable the problem to be dealt with holistically and sympathetically. The meeting had also concluded that the Forum provided the most appropriate and best vehicle to accommodate this. A N Other said that it was important that a large scale debate should be initiated at the Forum to discuss the philosophical reasons why prostitution was inherent in society and why it existed and how it might best be dealt with. The Chairman reminded members of the Memorandum and Articles of Association which set out the purpose of the Forum and advised that what was proposed was outside its scope. His report was **RECEIVED**.

3.4 Appointment of City Centre Manager

The Job Description and Person Specification (attached to the agenda papers) were **RECEIVED** and it was noted that the reference to the cultural aspects of the job as recommended by the Forum had been accepted and included. The Chairman reported that the job had been advertised, applicants short listed and assessed and the final interviews were to take place shortly. His report was **RECEIVED**.

4. REPORTS

4.1 Wensum River Parkway – New Mills to Whitlingham – Norwich's forgotten asset.

The Chairman pointed out that, apart from the Forum's Directors who had already seen the Norwich Society's proposals, other member had not had time to read and assess what was proposed and he suggested that members might prefer to ask the Planning Committee to assess them and prepare a submission for approval. Chris Wilson proposed that the Forum should accept the proposals immediately but there was general agreement that that would not be appropriate when some members had not had time to read them. **RESOLVED** to refer the proposals to the Planning Committee who would make recommendations to the next Forum meeting in July.

4.2 Northern City Centre Stakeholder Forum – meeting 2

The Report from the Facilitator was **RECEIVED**. The Chairman reminded members that the next meeting was due to take place at 6.30pm on Thursday 7th June at the King of Hearts in Fye Bridge Street.

4.3 Recapturing the Peoples' Living Room

The Chairman reported on his attendance at the Conference at Norwich City Football Club on 16th May and on 17th May at Blackfriars Hall which concluded the Liveable Cities Project and attempted to establish whether the City should again bid to become a European City of Culture and how it might best prepare for that (Jim Durrant had attended the second day and reported that it had been useful and productive). Representatives from partner cities had attended from Lincoln, Gent, Emden, Odense and Trondheim as well as others from Bulgaria,

Switzerland and Ireland. They had provided presentations of the successes achieved during the project and Norwich presented its achievements as being the publication of the Streetscape Design Manual, various schemes that had been undertaken to improve public spaces, particularly those achieved in St Peter's Street and at St Andrew's Plain which had been largely funded by European money made available through the project. He drew attention to the fact that it had not been possible to achieve the desired outcome at St Andrew's Plain which had relied on the contribution of local businesses to provide facilities for the public to enhance the street scene as a place for public use. The City Council had invited adjoining businesses to submit proposals and Delaney's Irish Bar and Espresso had done so by applying for tables and chairs licences to be placed in the newly paved areas. Thirteen objections had been submitted by neighbours on various grounds. The Licensee of Delaney's had modified her application by agreeing to clear chairs and tables at 10.30pm and had agreed to provide CCTV outside the premises and to employ a licensed Door Supervisor to oversee the site. The Committee's officers had recommended approval, the Police raised no objection and the Forum's Licensing Committee had supported it subject to the concession being achieved about when chairs were to be cleared but a number of objectors attended the hearing and were vociferous in their objections. They said that, if granted, the result would cause noise, anti-social behaviour, soiling of the paving and threat to passers which would prevent the safe passage of pedestrians on the public footway. The Regulatory Committee had, because of this, refused the application. Because Espresso's application was conditional upon Delaney's being granted their licence, their application was withdrawn. Thus, a space that had been created by European grant money specifically to attract and encourage public use was frustrated by lack of licences.

Carol Hardman said that the Chairman's report was misleading and that, when the consultation had been undertaken by the City Council concerning the redesign of the area, it had not been made clear that the involvement of private businesses was required to complete it and she had understood that the City Council intended to provide those facilities. She further went on to say that the Evening News had phoned her to say they intended to include her (and her husband's) objection in their report of the matter and that she had been vilified unjustly by the newspaper because of their legitimate objection. Paul Eastaugh asked if the application might be reviewed, but the Chairman pointed out that there was no provision under the Licensing Act to do so by the Licensing Authority though there was provision for it to be reviewed, if a review was sought, in the Magistrates Court. However, it would be possible for a modified application to be made if the applicants felt it worthwhile to do so and the objectors could be persuaded to withdraw their opposition.

The Chairman pointed out that, at the same time as the Forum was meeting, the City Council was sitting to decide what action might be taken to overcome the shortfall in income from St Andrews and Blackfriars Halls caused by the restrictions placed on the licensee by the Magistrates Court as a result of the review of the licence sought by Mr and Mrs Hardman. This had raised serious doubts as to its future viability as had been reported in that day's publication of the Evening News.

Jim Durrant said that it was his understanding that Mr and Mrs Hardman had called a meeting of residents to seek support for their objections to Delaney's application. Carol Hardman denied that was the case and said she and her husband had submitted one single written objection and had not sought support from anyone else. She also wanted it recorded that she strenuously objected to the letter from the Chairman published by the Evening News setting out the reasons why the Forum had supported the application which she felt was grossly misleading.

The Chairman pointed out that, it was going to be impossible to resolve the issue at the meeting, that there was much else to discuss on the agenda and very little time to do so and he insisted that the matter be closed and move be made to the next item. Carol Hardman strongly objected to his ruling.

4.4 Safer Neighbourhoods Strategy and Safer Neighbourhood Action Panel (SNAP)

The Chairman reported on his attendance at several residents' meetings convened by the City Council where the new policy was explained and at the SNAP meeting on 21st May where priorities had been agreed for policing during the following three months. These were to be reviewed by a Statutory Partners' Panel on a fortnightly basis and he had asked that all participants should be kept fully informed so as to maintain their interest and enthusiasm. His report was **RECEIVED**.

4.5 City Centre Management Partnership

The minutes of the meeting of the Partnership held on 19th April were **RECEIVED**.

4.6 Licensing Committee

The minutes of the Forum's Licensing Committee held on 24th April were **RECEIVED**.

4.7 The National Organisation of Residents' Associations (NORA)

The Chairman drew attention to the fact that the Government, and particularly the Department of Communities and Local Government, had recently published a number of consultation papers on matters affecting communities and he was, as Press Officer of NORA, having to prepare responses from residents associations throughout the country for submission by NORA and he asked if the Forum wished to consider these and make recommendations. Because most of the consultations were concerned with planning issues he suggested that the Forum's Planning Committee might wish to have them referred for consideration but Jim Durrant pointed out that his Committee was already committed to responding to City Council consultations and felt that they had insufficient capacity to undertake more work. A N Other proposed that it was very important for people to be active in responding to Government consultations and that there should be public debate about them at the Forum. That was generally agreed to be beyond the capacity of the Forum to undertake.

5. PRESS CUTTINGS

Press cuttings published since the last meeting were **RECEIVED**.

6. LIAISON WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Chairman that no reports were available.

7. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting be held in the Mancroft Room at City Hall, Norwich on Tuesday, 3rd July 2007 commencing at 7pm.