

ONE BOROUGH

Tuesday 14 March 2023

Present: Paul Samuels (Chairman), Councillor Samantha Rayner (Vice-Chairman), Jane Corry, Edward Piekut, Helen Goody, Paul Andreianu, John Diack, Viviana Salmon, Rosie Sansom, Elaine Keating, Caroline Waites, Asma Aziz, Valerie Pike, Laura Daly, Emily Warburton, Peter Haley, Karun Passi, Saghir Ahmed, Jennifer Hardy, Rebecca Mistry, David Bonney, Councillor Helen Price, Ellen McManus-Fry and Mark Beeley

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Karnail Pannu, Philip Reynolds, Tess Scott, Erin Laybourne, Danielle Lane, Anthony Lewis, Councillor Tisi, Steve Sansom, Ila Gangotra, Josephine Crabb, Barbara Grossman, Maria Evans, Alex Tilley and Andrea Jones.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

Minutes

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.

Dialogue - How can the Council and local community groups work better together?

The meeting took place as an in person dialogue. All those in attendance were randomly allocated to a group of around five or six people, with one facilitator assisting each group. The groups had around 30 minutes to discuss ideas for how the council and community groups could work better together, before groups moved round. Each group then shared feedback and ideas with the rest of the meeting.

Jane Corry said that communication between community groups and the council was the main barrier and that this had manifested itself in different ways. There was a need for transparency, clarity and accuracy and an increased understanding of shared goals. A terms of reference for One Borough could be useful as it would allow the council to understand which officers were best to attend the meeting. Fundraising was a key issue and there was an increased importance to provide community groups with the resources to allow them to help the local community. Building a successful community group took a significant amount of time, a lack of funding could stop a project or group overnight.

Edward Piekut said that his group had felt that the question posed as the topic for the dialogue could be rephrased, to consider how the council and community groups could work better to support the residents. There needed to be a build up of trust as there had been previous issues of a lack of funding which had created mistrust between the council and some community groups. A small amount of funding could go a long way for some organisations and it was therefore considered important that the council budget was shared. Information and signposting were also raised, a significant number of residents in the community were not comfortable sourcing information based online. Edward Piekut underlined that funding was key, particularly as the council had decreased funding in some areas to focus on statutory services.

Paul Andreianu suggested that a document detailing contacts for various community groups across the borough could be a useful resource for the council to help provide information to residents. It was felt that funding for community groups was not at the right level. Several community groups were performing a similar role and service to residents, the council could look to bring some of these groups together to provide a greater collective output. Some small groups were involved with some great projects, it had been suggested that there should be a way for best practise to be advertised. Another approach could be to involve local businesses more in the work of community groups and encourage volunteers in the local community.

Ideas from another group considered understanding different organisations and using what was already available to ensure that residents could be signposted effectively, it should also not be difficult for organisations to access funding. Language barriers were seen as a particular problem, which could cause issues when residents who did not speak English well were not aware of the support that was available to them. This could lead to isolation which was not to the benefit of local communities.

David Bonney made the suggestion that community groups could work better together by knowing who everyone was and what groups were already in existence, this could lead to bridges being built between similar organisations. A directory or contact list would be a useful resource to be produced.

Jennifer Hardy suggested that a lack of funding for some community groups could make things difficult. She agreed that language could be a barrier, particularly when acronyms were used which made services and things like referrals difficult to access. A One Borough Group newsletter could be created which highlighted best practise and could be shared amongst members of the group.

In relation to the newsletter suggestion, Asma Aziz said that WAM Get Involved produced a newsletter which was circulated each week. This shared best practise and other useful information for community groups. It was suggested that the One Borough Group could utilise this which already existed.

Edward Piekut said that a shared vision needed to be developed between the council and community groups.

Councillor Rayner commented that some good ideas had been shared by groups and that the format of the meeting had been very productive. Funding has been raised as a key issue by many of the groups, the council had a budget and it had to be careful how money was distributed. Around 75% of the budget was spent on statutory services, with the rest needing to be distributed amongst the other services that the council provided. However, Councillor Rayner said that she would be able to help point community groups in the right direction to find alternative sources of funding. She concluded by confirming that the council wanted to help community groups achieve their goals and provide as much support as was possible.

Concluding the feedback, the Chairman said that the notes would be produced and circulated to the Group after the meeting. The Group could then look to decide what actions could be taken as a result.

Dates of Future Meetings

There was a discussion on whether it would be best to have the next meeting of the One Borough Group virtually or whether it should be held in person again.

Paul Andreianu offered a venue that could be used, the Chairman would explore this option in due course.

The Group thanked Jane Corry and Norden Farm for kindly offering to host the One Borough meeting for free and providing refreshments and snacks for participants.

One Borough Chairman's comment

Thank you very much to everyone who attended the One Borough dialogue.

A number of broad themes emerged from the discussions, which have been described in the minutes. These included:

1. One Borough Shared Vision & Terms of Reference
2. Funding
3. Best practice
4. Communication
5. Directory of community groups with updateable contact details.
6. Partnerships with local businesses
7. Volunteers

If you have any additional themes not covered above please do let Mark know.

The meeting, which began at 11.00 am, finished at 12.45 pm

Chair.....

Date.....