

# MINUTES OF THE SYDENHAM ASSEMBLY

Saturday, 8 September 2012 at 11.00 am

PRESENT: Councillors Chris Best, Liam Curran and Marion Nisbet

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Crada Onuegbu

## 1. Introduction and welcome

**Cllr Chris Best** welcomed everyone to the Sydenham Assembly

## 2. Report back on High Street and Station Approach

Cllr Best told the Assembly that works are programmed to commence on site the week commencing the 17th September 2012 for 52 weeks. The main contractor appointed for this project is J B Riney & Co Ltd. Riney are very keen to work with the community and they will have a pop-up on Sydenham Road with a full-time person available to answer any enquiries. Work before Christmas will include a temporary roundabout at Cobbs Corner and crossing preparation. Work will start to be minimised from November to avoid Christmas disruption. After Christmas work will start on the pavement and curbs with the roadway last. A set of plans detailing the works were available for the Assembly to look at.

**Station Approach** – The Council is still negotiating with Network Rail over ownership. Once the work on Station Approach is complete we have plans for a street market.

There is also money set aside from the Local Improvement Plan to cover high street improvements from Mayow Road to Kent House Road, there will be a consultation about this and there is separate money for the Bell Green gyratory. Cllr Best told the assembly that by the end of 2013 Sydenham Road will be looking very smart.

## 3. The New Generation Youth Centre

Gerry Devine and Jayne Tarone from Lewisham Youth Support Services provided the Assembly with the enclosed presentation on the development of the TNG Youth and Community Centre at Wells Park. This incorporated the background to the centre, the vision and experiences and opportunities that will be available for all. Two young people Tilly Seaward and Dami Benbow spoke passionately about what the centre will mean to the young people of Sydenham and Lewisham in general. The centre is due to open around the end of February 2013 and will be one of the top 100 centres in Europe. Young people have been at the forefront of development. The partners include Millwall Community scheme, Lewisham Police and Lewisham Primary Care Trust. Once the centre is open it will not just be for young people with plenty of opportunities for other uses during the day.

Q How much will it cost to use?

A The Youth Service is looking at this, at present it could be a registration fee or a fee across the service, maybe 50p per session or £5 membership per year.

Memberships will sent to home addresses rather than collected on site for added security.

Q What about safety and the maintenance of safety, can we see a copy of the traffic survey and road safety plan, there have been lots of crashes on Wells Park Road. Can you also tell me whether the volunteers will be trained and are staffing levels sufficient?

A All the road safety information is on the planning application and a traffic audit will take place. This is a world class facility and we will not be employing staff that are unqualified or have no experience.

Cllr Onuegubu – I live on Wells Park Road and the road narrowing and traffic calming measures have made a huge difference.

#### 4. **Portas Pilot Bid**

Cllr Best told the assembly that Sydenham, Forest Hill and Kirkdale are one of 27 areas that will become Portas Pilots There were 400 applications for this funding so this is a wonderful achievement. We will be receiving £80,000, but this will be match-funded from the council meaning that there will around £200,000 for the area and we want you to be part of it.

**Community Hubs** - Louise Brooks told the Assembly that the two community hubs are the brainchild of Ed Holloway Jack & Jill is the name we have given to two community hubs; one in Sydenham and the other in Forest Hill. We are looking for two high street shops which we can renovate and use for several months under a meanwhile lease. This will enable the landlord to keep looking for a tenant while we use the space.

Jack & Jill will be used to engage the community through exhibitions by local artists, showcasing local products and short term 'pop-up' events. They will also be used as a base for the Town Team who will run business workshops aimed at helping existing traders to improve their skills.

**Shop Revolution** - The Shop Revolution aims to facilitate meanwhile use for empty shops, develop pop up shop opportunities and act as a springboard for new businesses looking to trial their business idea on a high street. We are currently focussing on Forest Hill, Kirkdale Village and Sydenham.

The aim is to renovate up to 12 empty shops for a pop up project which will generate a buzz in each of the town centres, and stimulate long term demand for retail properties. At the moment our town centres suffer from a perceived lack of destinations. This pop up project will give people a reason to visit the high streets and give existing traders a chance to advertise their offerings to a new audience. There will be a calendar of events to support the aim which is to layer what is happening in the shops for example arts workshops.

**Market Makers** – Richard Hibbert told the Assembly that this will build on the lessons from Forest Hill Food Fair and the pilot community car boot sale in Girton Road car park to rotate an offer of similar markets between the three areas and encourage greater use of the public and private space. By running markets in each of the town centres, we will be able to test the needs of each community and provide entrepreneurs the opportunity to test demand for their offering and develop their business plan before committing to a long term lease as part of The Shop Revolution. Existing traders will be encouraged to benefit from the increased footfall of a successful market and to run special offers on Market Day. The

markets will increase football and create some vibrancy. At present we are looking for stall holders, business mentors, market operators and publicity.

Q Many of these empty shops are being replaced by charity shops, wouldn't this mean more?

A Not at all, there are lots of people with a business idea that need help, the idea is that we get a good mix in the high street.

Q What is the timescale for this?

A A year's timescale from funding. We will shortly be advertising for 4 paid posts, Town Team Coordinator, Creative Engagement Worker, Market Support Officer and someone to coordinate Shop Revolution.

Q Can a shop be used for training purposes?

A There will be training facilities, we are currently talking to Sydenham and Forest Hill Youth Forum about a scheme to run a pop-up and market involvement.

Q Why are there so many empty shops?

A Lots of reasons, the power of the Supermarkets and of course the recession, but the Sydenham vacancy rate is less than 10% with many shops under offer. There is also the issue of rent levels with many landlords keeping the levels the same such as at 60 Sydenham Road.

Q Is there any veto regarding the type of shop that can open?

A There will be an application process and this will be developed, we want to be as transparent as possible.

Q Will all this affect Bell Green?

A Up to you, it is you who decides where to shop ie small independents or the big shops.

Q How much does it cost to run a market stall?

A At the Forest Hill Food fair it is £35 or £40 if you don't have a stall as we will supply a table and gazebo.

Q How will the works in Sydenham Road affect this?

A This is a pilot, we will look at all the projects after the pilot, but this will raise our profile and help us to bid for more funds.

Q How can I open an interesting shop that is not high profit with such high rents?

A Maybe through layering

## 5. Forest Hill Pools and Louise House

**Forest Hill Pools** – Cllr Best told the Assembly that the official opening for the Pools is Saturday 22 September. There will be a whole programme of events taking place on the day including Portas. Fusion is now managing the Pools and they are now finishing off fitting the building out. 'Be active' is being launched with free under 16 and over 60 swimming.

**Louise House** - Brigid Howarth, Creative Industries Officer at the Council, provided a printed Bulletin on Louise House in Forest Hill. She gave a presentation on the process of finding a suitable organisation(s) for the building and the vision for Louise House. Contact details of the marketing consultant who is the main contact for interested parties were provided and she

clarified the position on consortia bids and the suitability of the building for different uses. The deadline for EOs is 21 September and it is hoped to find a new tenant by early 2013.

Q Do you have a model in mind?

A No, but it needs to have a commercial arm, there are some examples in the bulletin.

Q Can it be a single bid or a consortium?

A Either

Q Will there be open day where we can view the site?

A Yes, we will be sorting out a date

## 6. Sydenham Assembly Coordinating Group

Cllr Best told the Assembly that we are looking to recruit some more volunteers to join the Assembly Coordinating Group. The Coordinating Group helps to plan the Assembly meetings and also carries out key tasks such as ensuring that funding bids are value for money and meet the Assembly priorities.

## 7. Information, Open Questions and Answers

**The Greyhound** – The Council is pursuing a criminal investigation against Purelake as the basement of this building was demolished without consent. A revised application from Purelake included two new self contained flats on the first floor was submitted, however, this application has now been withdrawn.

The deadline for submissions for the wall art to go on the rear wall of the Greyhound is 8 October, we are keen to see anything Sydenham related.

**Responsible Retailers Agreement** - As part of the Problem Solving Plan in Sydenham set up to tackle anti social behaviour, involving multi-agency partners, an agreement was drawn up and agreed by the Neighbourhood Community Safety Service (NCSS), Sydenham Safer Neighbourhoods Team (SNT), Lewisham Borough Business Against Crime (LBBAC), the Licensing Department and the Local Assemblies Team to help retailers in their awareness of rights as well as responsibilities in trading. Officers have visited all the off licences in Sydenham and traders have signed up to the Agreement. This is now being monitored.

**Lewisham borough wide Parking Review** – The Council is currently reviewing all parking within the borough. There is a survey available online at [www.lewisham.gov.uk/parking](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/parking) until 28 September and there are some forms at the meeting. It is really important that people complete this as the new contract will soon be ready to go out.

Q How long is the contract for?

A Not sure, but certainly for a while

**Community car boot sale** – This will be taking place on the 2nd Sunday of the month and the next one is tomorrow from 10am – 1pm. It costs £6 for a seller and there is a 20p entrance fee for the public. This is run by Sydenham Community Radio.

Cllr Best told the Assembly that Streatham Farmers Market want to visit and asked for a show of hands to support this – the Assembly agreed.

**Sydenham Arts Festival** - Jonathan Kaufman told the Assembly that this year was the 4<sup>th</sup> Sydenham Arts Festival and it has been the best one ever with

excellent attendances. We are now planning next year's festival and we are looking for people to join our creative team. On the 19 September we have an exhibition at Kirkdale Bookshop.

**Sydenham Community Library** – Ilse told the Assembly that on the 15th September there is a Edible Gardens Open Day at Home Park. The library itself is now open longer hours and there are lots of new books and there is free IT training for over 60s.

**Sydenhamtowncentre.com** – Pen Else told the assembly that this new website for Sydenham is growing. It features news about local events, promotions, vacant units and even job vacancies.

All businesses based in SE26 can have a free alphabetic listing, but for just £20 per year they can advertise your business and be part of the traders forum.

Q Can you please tell us what is happening with the Miriam Lodge planning application?

A This is actually in Forest Hill, but is very close to Sydenham ward, it will be a hostel for the homeless. You need to challenge this and go to the local meeting

Q What about the St Clements Heights application

A I objected to this as it does not meet the percentage of affordable housing. There is also very short notice for the meeting

## **8. Date for the next Assembly meetings**

Councillor Best then thanked every one for coming to the Assembly and told them that the next Assembly meeting will be on **Thursday 29 November from 7 – 9 pm Sydenham Library**

## **9. Close**