

Earls Court Business Forum Steering Group minutes

30th June 2020

In attendance:

- **Earls Court Businesses**
 - o Livvy Perry, Finborough Theatre
 - o Spencer, Hotel Boka
 - o Philip Chambers, KK Hotels (The George)
 - o Caroline Tod, Earls Court Film Festival
- **Apologies:**
 - o Nicole Bernhardt, TLC Estate Agents
 - o Craig Bennett, Hotel Indigo
 - o Peter King, MetroBank
 - o Thomas West, Flora Indica
- **Council**
 - o Ward Cllrs Spalding, Ardourian and Wade
 - o Cllr Catherine Faulks
 - o Albena Karameros, Earls Court Programme Manager, RBKC
 - o Antonia Hollingsworth, Business Initiatives
 - o Graham Hart, Head of Economic Development
- **Delancey, developer of the Earls Court Development Site**
 - o Steve Burgin, Head of Retail and Place
- **The means, Earls Court Business Forum consultants**
 - o Sam Knight (stand-in Chair for the meeting)

1) Minutes and Matters Arising

Matters arising:

- Cllr Spalding raised a question to the Council about the CRP pilot scheme; what was spent and what, if anything, was achieved. The response was that the report is due soon, which will shed more light on this. PC also noted that the projects they were addressing were very complex and require a lot of coordination to work

2) Business response to reopening news

The hotels present were ready to reopen, but haven't had an uptick in bookings.

Feedback from some restaurants not present was heard, that they were not currently reopening because it is not financially feasible with the restrictions.

The Finborough fed back that there hasn't been clear guidance for theatres so they don't have a clear date in mind and, as their plan was always conservative, it hasn't changed.

The Earls Court Film Festival is still going ahead online, hopefully with some live shows in October.

Cllr Spalding asked:

- 1) Is there anything the Forum can do to help with procurement of PPE for smaller hotels and retailers. The response was that a discount code has already been circulated and another joint procurement framework has been received from another supplier that is being explored.
- 2) How can restaurants expand outdoor seating? The response was that the Council has just announced its Summer Trading Policy, and that the government is in the process of passing legislation to make it easier for businesses to apply for and vary licenses. Further conversation about closure of side streets was picked up later in the meeting.

3) Update from the Council

Cllr Faulks noted the bill going through parliament at the moment to relax licensing and that the Council will be more lenient on allowing tables and chairs. Businesses will still have to apply, but as long as the Council are happy that it is safe then for a fee of £100 businesses will be granted tables and chairs licenses. She noted businesses need to be responsible for the rubbish caused and for social distancing. The Council retains the ability to remove the license.

Also noted that all businesses will automatically be able to become off-licenses following new legislation. The impacts of this in terms of behaviour needs to be monitored.

With regards the closure of side roads or removal of parking spaces to allow space for outdoor restaurant seating:

- *Hogarth Road or Kenway Road were suggested as potential new locations for the Farmers Market, that needs to move away from the school because of building works – **POST-MEETING NOTE:** This was explored. However the Farmers Market have been invited to Empress Place by Delancey and will, for the time being, be situated there.*
- *It was suggested that Kenway Road be temporarily pedestrianised in order to allow restaurants to have more seating outside. **POST MEETING NOTE:** Ward Cllrs have subsequently visited local businesses to ask about this, who were positive, and have begun the process of moving this forward.*

4) Towards a business plan and manifesto

The tabled document “towards a business plan and manifesto” was introduced. This is a document outlining what projects the Business Forum should focus on given feedback from businesses.

The summary of the discussion was:

- Cllr Wade was supportive of the ideas but also highlighted the need for financial support for long-term family businesses in Earls Court. Cllr Faulks explained about restrictions on money from central government and highlighted the forum as an opportunity to focus on projects that support the trading environment.
- The street cleanliness project was identified by businesses as a strong priority to move forwards first, particularly given the need to feel clean and orderly post-COVID. It was agreed that this should try to be more than a one-off, and was important to arrange before

large efforts to get people to the area. It may need to involve an ongoing campaign to encourage businesses to look after the streets near them and to discourage people from dropping gum. **AP: SK to organise brief and quotes**

- Marketing campaigns such as Walkable Earls Court, and Welcome Back to Earls Court, were agreed to be useful and important, and that some money should therefore be invested into a brand for Earls Court to support this. With regards Walkable Earls Court, it was suggested the Forum could tie up with Kensington Art Weekend Group who have been doing a series of walks around the borough. There are a wealth of blue plaques in the area to take in.
- But that this would ultimately need to support / be supported by a stronger focus on animation and events to bring footfall and celebrate local Earls Court assets like the Finborough, the Troubadour, the Film Festival. "Something to show we're here rather than just say we are". Specific detail on events needs to be fleshed out, and there are others in the area who should be tied up with. The meanwhile space is a potentially important space for this. **POST-MEETING NOTE: A working group is being assembled of Steering Group and non-Steering Group members to focus specifically on this.**
- It was also agreed Micro-greening was important. One idea suggested was something around Chelsea Fringe, that might cross-over between events and greening. Another suggestion was looking at the space by the station. And another working with Open Squares Weekend. Cllr Spalding also mentioned that he is doing some work around raising money for hanging baskets so the Forum could tie in with this. Also that TfL's work around pavement widening has identified some dead spots on the road that could be planted

AP: Business plan to be reworked, and cleaning and marketing / events to be the first things to be progressed

5) Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference were noted and members were asked to comment by email if they have any further comments. They have been published on the Business Forum website and will be publicised to others for comment

6) Short update from Delancey

Delancey have appointed a master architect, Hawkins Brown and Studio Egret West, who they have worked with before on Here East and the Olympic Park.

Regarding the Meanwhile Space – They are looking at some operators but don't expect much more to happen until the end of August or September.

The Lily is reopening. Noted that they have had 20000 applications for reservations from 4th July in the first 3 days of taking bookings

7) Next meeting

AP: SK to find a date in the next 5-6 weeks

8) AOB:

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An increase in rough sleeping was reported by businesses. SK has asked what role the new RBKC street ambassadors can play in this.

Noted that the group needs to seek out retail and personal services members in particular.