

# Lee Forum

**Annual General Meeting on 30 September 2020, 7.30 - 9.30pm held on Zoom remote attendance**

## **M I N U T E S**

### **1. Welcomes and Apologies**

The Chair of the Lee Forum, Sarah McMichael, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Gill Stoker gave technical guidance on how participants could engage in the Zoom meeting format; speak, vote and submit questions to the chair on the chat link.

Apologies: none submitted.

### **2. Minutes of the 2019 AGM**

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting, a correction to the name of Carole Hicks in place of Carole Destra as a committee member for 2019.

### **3. Election of committee**

The Chair was grateful to all those who were standing for election to the Committee and welcomed Leonard Kelly as a new committee member.

Jan Roy named those standing for election to the Committee and confirmed the meeting was quorate with more than 21 participants. Each candidate's biography can be found on the Lee Forum Website. Leonard introduced himself as a recent resident to the Lee Forum area who had been inspired by the community engagement in the Courtlands Estate during the recent lockdown to get involved with Lee forum and has a particular interest in the Quaggy River Walk project which stands out as a really valuable initiative. All candidates standing for election were voted in by a show of hands over zoom.

The following people were duly elected for the coming year:

Pippa Bampton  
David Brining  
Peter Cleary  
Nicolette Duckham  
David Ford  
Carole Hicks  
Leonard Kelly  
Marcus Mayers  
Sarah McMichael  
Peter Richardson  
Patricia Richardson  
Gill Stoker

The chair thanked Gillian Deal and Rozina Visram who stepped down as committee members for their hard work and contributions to the work of the Forum.

#### 4. Treasurer's report

The Treasurer Marcus Mayer presented the Lee Forum annual accounts to the meeting.

##### Profit & Loss Account:

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2020</u>
<u>Income:</u>		
Grant funding		1285.69
<u>Expenditure:</u>		
Consultancy	1764.00	
Meeting Costs	0.00	
Postage	0.00	
Website/ Admin Costs	70.00	
Stationery	0.00	
Printing	0.00	1834.00
		<u><u>-548.31</u></u>

The accounts show at the last period end a deficit balance. Since then Lee Forum has received a £1k grant. This is the last tranche of grant funding available and his view was that the remaining funds will be sufficient to take the Neighbourhood Plan process to conclusion and adoption.

The Chair explained that the Forum was funded by Central Government grants for the development of a Neighbourhood Plan and that in total £18k of funding had been available. The bulk of funding has been spent on consultancy fees to develop the Lee Neighbourhood Plan and that the Lee Forum had avoided additional significant costs because of the talent and contributions to the Lee Forum's activity from volunteer committee members.

Following a question Marcus confirmed the accounting periods ended on 12 July each year and would amend the accounts to reflect this.

The accounts were approved.

#### 5. Report on Lee Forum's work in the past year, the current position on the neighbourhood plan and work planned for the coming year

##### 5.1 Chair's update

**The Lee Forum Neighbourhood Plan:** Sarah gave a brief overview of the Lee Forum; set up under the localism Act 2011 which allows for the development of a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) which is a legal planning document that allows communities to have an influence on the urban planning in their area. The Neighbourhood Plan must be considered alongside National, London and Local Plans when future development, regeneration and enhancement of the Lee Forum area are being considered. The Lee NP has gone through its Section 14 Statutory consultation. Necessary amendments arising from this have been incorporated and the plan has gone forward for a health check by a professional body. Next follows a section 16 consultation which is undertaken by the Councils, Lewisham and Greenwich and this will not take place before May 2021 because of COVID 19.

Issues which came out of the consultation that are not directly planning related were the River Quaggy trail and the New Tigers Head, both of which the Forum is taking forward with volunteer resources.

- The River Quaggy trail: Meetings with our local councillors, amenity groups and businesses have taken place. Lee Forum are seeking funding for a feasibility study. Undertaking such a study is a key first step for the project. It is hoped this will be part of a wider project that joins Grove Park to Lee by foot, largely along the river course.
- New Tigers Head: Interesting ideas for its use as a community asset were outlined by Ann and Rachael at last year's AGM. Engagement with the owner is ongoing to encourage maintenance of the building fabric. Greenwich Council are engaging with the owner to make improvements to the flats due to the damp and other problems reported within the building. A Compulsory Purchase Order is an option, but difficult and costly. The new Director of The Victorian society will be contacted about the building.

**5.2** Fly tipping in the area continues to be a problem. The Chair advised everyone to get and use the 'Fix my street' app or website with which you can send a photo and address of the problem to the relevant council to get it fixed.

**5.3** A local listing application for The Dirty South (formerly The Rose of Lee) pub has been submitted. Local listing allows community groups to have a first option to purchase on any sale.

**5.4** A draft Conservation Area application is almost ready to be submitted for Lee High Road to Lewisham Council, which will conduct a consultation on the proposed area.

**5.5** Combined pressure with other local amenity groups has led to enforcement action by councils on neglected buildings, The New Tigers Head and 45 Longhurst Road are current buildings of concern.

**5.6** Lee Forum and other local amenity groups are keeping under review the changes temporarily brought in because of COVID by Lewisham Council to its statement of community involvement.

**5.7** Lee Forum is also watching the planned changes to national planning guidance whose consultation ends October 2020. It isn't yet clear how these may impact policies in the NP.

**5.8** Because the neighbourhood plan does not yet have statutory status (until the NP is adopted) it has adopted a cautious approach to commenting on local planning applications, but two applications have been commented upon, one on Eastdown Park and another on Manor Park with a focus on planning codes, and build and design quality.

**5.9** The Lee Green Low Traffic Neighbourhood Scheme currently being trialled has created heated debate and strong views on both sides. Lee Forum is working with local councils to ensure proper monitoring and open communication.

## **6. Guest speakers**

### **6.1 Catherine Ashcroft: Greening SEL**

Catherine's presentation updated the Forum on the re-wilding of the water meadow on Weigall Road.

Catherine, a local resident, set up greening SEL and had a proposal accepted by the Environment Agency (EA) which owns and operates the Weigall Road flood defence for the River Quaggy to re-wild the space and develop a meadow on the flood plain. It is a tucked away space and not open to the public. Working with the EA, Catherine has had stopped the monthly mowing by contractors and that on its own bought wild flowers and nature back to the space over the summer to the delight of local residents. She has also with her volunteers installed nesting boxes and planted hedgerow saplings donated by the Woodland Trust. Setbacks came with the dry summer and a fire set by vandals. COVID has restricted access which meant no watering with resulting loss of many of the hedgerow saplings. The contractors re-started mowing. She now has agreement that named individuals can be given access when EA staff are also on site, which although not ideal does mean activity can resume. But planned open days are on hold. She is growing on some saplings so they will be more robust after planting and has stopped the contractors mowing again; one bird box is now occupied.

Greening SEL is also starting on a new project. After being approached by residents along Mottingham Lane she is looking to re-wild sections alongside the River Quaggy. Here the river runs in a straight line and flows too fast. The EA are installing baffles to slow and create meanders in the river. These will help wildlife and alongside these measures a wild flower meadow will be sown and a hedgerow planted alongside the railings on the river bank. Six orchard trees will also be planted.

Although this location is outside the Lee Forum area it will be part of the River Quaggy wider route from Lee Green to Chinbrook Meadows.

Green SEL is also working with Thomas Tallis School on rewilding.

### **6.2 Ralph White: Lee Manor Society**

Ralph gave an overview of the building of the Lee Manor area back in the 1800's where it was designed as a purpose built suburb containing all facilities; shops, church school and meeting house (on the site of the current Travis Perkins). The conservation area was established in 1976 when interest in preserving the built environment was growing, its catalyst being plans to demolish homes in Micheldever Road to make way for blocks of flats.

The conservation area sits in the middle of the Lee Forum area and both organisations complement each other by adding their voices together to enhance the local environment for residents. The conservation area has grown in size from its inception most notably including the tree avenue both sides of Burnt Ash Road, both sides of Manor Lane and the area including Lampmead, Hedgley and Brightside roads after residents asked to be included.

In 2007 an article 4 direction strengthened protections effectively stopping back land developments. This article 4 has been hugely beneficial in preserving the cohesion and look of the built environment in the conservation area.

For the future the Society is looking to extend the avenue of trees further up Burnt Ash Road.

### **6.3 Hugh Ridsdill-Smith, Leegate traders**

Hugh updated the forum on how the traders in Leegate Centre are faring and with their communications with landlords St Modwen.

A WhatsApp group with 35 members has been an effective communication tool between the traders, services and faith groups that are tenants in the Leegate Centre. The group has established positive working relations with St Modwen, their main link being with the asset team. Christmas lights and trees were a success for the traders of last year and it is hoped to repeat this. They are still pressing for improved signage.

COVID restrictions have meant testing times, in particular for services and faith groups in the Centre. The group has provided much needed mutual support during this COVID period and has helped facilitate rent relief discussions with St Modwen for individual traders. Shopping local is helping. The Low Traffic Scheme brings challenges. The security problems with the car park zone have been resolved. The community is asked to report any antisocial behaviours they see so that the Centre doesn't suffer damage to its reputation. The central spiral staircase collapsed and is now closed off and they are trying to get something done about this by St Modwen.

In answer to a question about deep hole boring at the Centre and whether this signified anything about new development plans Hugh felt this was merely normal practice to understand the underlying geology. Apparently there is a limestone basin beneath. There appears to be no immediate development plans on the table and in the meantime the traders group wants to see the Centre re-energised and has made a video which it will share to market the Centre and encourage visits. Although Tenancy at Will has been suggested to

St Modwen they have declined to use such tenancies to fill empty units, So Pop Up shops aren't appearing despite quite a few enquiries about them.

Overall the community is thriving despite the challenges. Lee Forum agreed as a group that there is a desire to see better use of Leegate by organisations that would make the space more welcoming. This will be discussed at the next Committee meeting for a communication to the traders group for their next meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> November to pass to St Modwen.

## **7. Close**

Sarah warmly thanked all the guest speakers for their presentations and congratulated them on their successes. Thanks also to all the participants for attending on Zoom. The idea of new mid-year talks was agreed as one to take forward.