

## **Camden Together**

### **Holborn-Covent Garden Ward Community Strategy Consultation Meeting**

#### **Notes of a meeting held on 13 November 2006 at 7.00pm at Holborn Library**

##### **Camden Council councillors and officers present:**

Cllr Julian Fulbrook  
Cllr Sue Vincent  
Cllr Brian Woodrow,  
Michael Scorer, Deputy Director of Housing and Adult Social Care  
Ruth Playle, Research and Policy Officer

##### **Members of the public present:**

**Attendees:** In total there were 27 attendees, excluding a CNJ Reporter, Councillors and Council officers.

Attendees who signed the attendance list were:

Steven Allin  
Bankole Payne  
Rosnja Mortuza  
Joilka Miah  
Emma Jones  
Hakim Yasin  
Christopher Morgan  
Peter Wright  
Jo Kibble  
Vanessa Swan  
Robert Smith  
Chris Auty  
Toma Dim  
Tony Mc Lean  
Helen McMurray  
Peter Storer  
John Howse  
Jane Richardson  
Micahel Pountney  
Shaku Woodrow,  
Beryl Nash  
Gloria Jeffers  
Maria Sehiavi  
Charles Watkins.

Cllr Fulbrook introduced the meeting and Cllr Vincent gave a presentation on the Camden Together document.

The Councillors then asked the attendees if they would prefer to stay as one group and work through each theme or to split up into smaller groups to cover one of the four themes each. The preference was to stay as one group.

### **Part 1: Creating a borough of opportunity**

- Secondary Schools and youth centres need to be used more, specifically to teach more life study information.
- There should be more encouragement to get businesses to take on local people and let residents and businesses know the facility is available.
- Small businesses can't operate because they can't afford the rent, this needs to be addressed.
- If Holborn Job Centre has gone how does the Council expect local people to find local jobs?

### **Part 2: Balancing growth with our environment**

- Need to deal with noise pollution eg car alarms going off the entire weekend.
- Transport needs to be a priority. If you want to encourage people to cycle it has to be safer and you need to deal with the fast deterioration of road quality.
- Cycling is not easy – you have to avoid potholes as well as bendy buses.
- There should be a cross-river tram.
- There should be encouragement to stop people from concreting over their gardens so there is more sustainability.
- There is a long row of concrete at the back of our houses it should be dug up and a garden put in, then people can grow vegetables etc.
- There needs to be a balance between businesses and residents. For example do billboards really need to be as big as they are, they ruin the view from my window.
- There should be schemes to make the borough look better.
- There needs to be an enquiry into how parks are being designed out of being parks. They're just clear views of the pavement, it can't be environmentally sound to cut down trees? It needs to be an enclosure to

get away from the hustle and bustle, not lots of bark, it needs sustainability to encourage wildlife.

### **Part 3: Building strong, healthy and connected communities**

- There needs to be more health/leisure facilities... while there are places to swim they seem to be aimed at business people. They are too expensive and you can't just have a swimming membership you have to sign up for gym use as well as a swim. The pass has even gone up at Swiss Cottage.
- Schools are the centre of the community. Before I had my son my husband and myself were not really a part of the community but once we started taking our son to nursery school and primary school we started to meet and know more people as well as get involved in events etc. However this network will collapse when he moves to secondary school as all the children and families will be split across this borough and other boroughs. You can't have a strong, connected community without there being secondary schools that the primary network can feed into.
- Not having enough good secondary schools is embarrassing for Camden.
- Need to build a school so there are after school activities for children to keep them out of trouble.
- Schools are a community resource – not just for children but adults too.
- There is an informal network that gets created by a school.
- Secondary schools could be 24 hours for community work, after school activities and advice.
- I live in Great Ormond Street and there is a huge sense of community, I used to live in Hackney so have a comparison. However I was shocked to discover the issue of secondary schools in Camden. Would hate to have to leave Camden because of the school issue.
- The Council also needs to deal with Culturally divided gangs
- Holborn and Covent Garden have a particular difficulty as the borough has conflicting issues – it has lots of commercial activity – it is a truly metropolitan area however it is also very residential at the same time. People don't expect to find these two themes in the same area and so there is no format in existence to follow to answer some of the issues and challenges that this situation creates.

### **Part 4: A safe and vibrant place at the heart of a world city**

- I work evening shifts and when I come home at 1:30 there are children hiding – smoking, drinking, with knives, making noise. The Council needs to deal with this. I do not feel safe.

- There needs to be activities for children and young people... keep people occupied.
- Cycling is important but we are losing resident parking spaces to cycle lanes, should be more compensatory measures in place to cope with this loss of car parking.
- Resident parking should be 24 hours – we lose our spaces to those going out at night eg clubbers.
- We also lose parking to blue badge holders as we live in the centre of five hospitals, so we can't get our spaces during the day either! The scheme seems to be kindness going too far.
- I work in Covent Garden, where we have recessed doors. Dealers know that if they stand in this area they won't be caught on camera. We have had to make sure that it's one of the girls who call the police when it happens as they never send anyone over if a man calls, sometimes they don't send anyone around if it's a girl who phones either.
- I live in Badminton Court – police just walk by the dealers/young people being anti social and don't see them or just ignore it. When I phone the police about antisocial behaviour by the time they turn up the people have already gone and I just live round the corner from the station!
- The begging and drug-dealing is ruining tourism in the area.
- A vote was held in the meeting asking "who didn't feel safe all the time". All but two attendees agreed with the statement
- There was praise for the Community Support Officers who were thought to have been "clearly helpful".
- The problem with young people being anti-social is that they move around/come in waves so there's no one around (community support officers or police) at the time they are needed.
- There needs to be something to control children/young people when they are out of hand.
- There needs to be facilities in place for children at the times they go out at night and make mischief.
- The Council also needs to deal with Culturally divided gangs
- As there's no secondary school network in the area parents don't know each other to discuss the issues.

- A lot of all the issues laid out in this document would be solved by a secondary school.
- There was another vote asking who agreed that a secondary school in the area was the priority. 17 agreed that it was.
- Of those who did not agree they raised the following as their priorities:
  - Maintaining the facilities already available – it will take a while to build/set up a new school.
  - Addressing the yearly grant system organisations have to go through. Organisations spend the whole year fighting for next years grant and don't get the time to actually do the work needed. There needs to be a long-term commitment such as three or five years.

**Councillor Woodrow summarised the preceding topics of discussion drawing out the main concerns such as the lack of a secondary school and crime and ensured that all attendees had had a chance to speak before the meeting was closed.**