

Camden Together

Swiss Cottage Ward Community Strategy Consultation Meeting

Notes of a meeting held on 23 November 2006 at 7.30pm at the Crossfield Centre

Camden Council councillors and officers present:

Cllr Roger Freeman
Cllr Andrew Marshall
Cllr Don Williams (Chair)
Lyn Romeo, Asst Director, Housing and Adult Social Care
Jonathan Brenner, Senior Policy Officer

Members of the public present:

Wael Arab	Resident
Hilary Bach	Elsworthy Residents' Association
Ed de Mesquina	Fairfax Place Residents' Association
Patrick Howard	
Mike Katz	Chair, Winchester Project
Nik Masters	Camden Compact Monitoring Board
Roger Rosswick	St. John's Court Residents
Chris Tarpey	Bray Tenants' Association
Lindy Treasurer	Harben Estate Residents' Association
Ray West	Kilburn Citizens Advice Bureau
Paul Keilthy	Camden New Journal

Introduction

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Councillors and council staff that were present. He explained that the priority for the meeting was to hear the views of residents.

Cllr Williams went on to explain that Camden's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which comprised the representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors, produced a Community Strategy every 5 years. The next strategy, the borough's second, would set out the vision for 2007 to 2012.

There was then a brief presentation from Cllr Williams about the key areas being consulted on. This was followed by a discussion on each of the four topics.

Individual residents raised the following points:

Creating a Borough of Opportunity

- There should be enough places in Camden's primary and secondary schools for all local children.
- Youth activities were valuable as a means of aiding the development and employability of individuals and reducing anti-social behaviour. Organisations that provided youth activities would benefit if there were greater certainty of funding.
- There was a specific call for a local skate park.
- Camden Council should make the processes for renting its commercial space easier and quicker. A discount for residents should be considered, and vacant properties should be advertised, say, on a website.

Balancing Growth with our Environment

- There should be more affordable housing in the borough, both to rent and buy. Initiatives such as shared ownership contributed towards this.
- There should be better recycling facilities, including for waste that could be composted.
- Thorough analysis of the cost-effectiveness of recycling should be undertaken.
- Improving the availability and accessibility of public transport would play a big part in reducing the number of car journeys made.
- In particular passengers on the Silverlink needed to feel safer, and more east-west transport links were desirable.

Building Strong, Healthy and Connected Communities

- If the trial of pollution-reducing paving stones was successful, they should be installed on Finchley Road.
- There should be more public places to smoke.
- Those who used housing and adult social care services suffered from a high rate of council staff turnover and inadequate handover.
- There should be a single point of contact for communities who could deal with the range of issues which residents contacted the Council about. This idea was well received by those present.
- The Council should not require as many processes to be in writing, which disadvantage those with disabilities and those who have difficulty with written English.
- Public sector organisations, including the Council, should not assume computer literacy. Alternatives to websites and email should always be provided.

Ray West, manager of Kilburn Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), spoke about the role CAB played in improving life for poorer people. The work done fitted into many of the themes being discussed, including public health which was linked to poverty and housing.

A Safe and Vibrant Place at the Heart of a World City

- When crime went down locally, it should be communicated to reduce the fear of crime. Good news should get through as well as negative stories.
- The police needed to work to develop a better rapport with young people around the borough. This would produce many different benefits.
- Swiss Cottage Library and Sport Centre were well thought of. There was general agreement on this, although the lack of nearby disabled parking was raised.
- There was concern about the apparent level of crime at the Royal Free Hospital.

Over-arching issues and other contributions

- There was general consensus that the Council should become more customer focussed, with more care taken to deal more fully with enquiries at the first point of contact. Across the council, the tone and attitude of staff dealing with customers needed to improve so that people experience friendly helpful and informative responses.
- The Council should improve its purchasing policies, in particular relating to maintenance work.
- There was praise of the ward meeting process, and requests for similar meetings.

The Councillors thanked everyone for attending. The meeting ended at 9.20pm.