



## ONE NORBITON MASS MEETING – 10<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2012

### NOTES

**CWG:** Dr Mike D'Souza ( **Chair**)      Jill Preston ( **Secretary**)      Doreen Gardiner      Sheila Griffin  
John Hall      Davinder Lail      Clive Clarke      Ed Naylor  
Elaine Kennedy      Peter Morris      Kamala Kugan      Peter Holmes  
Michelle Bacchus      Chris Coke

**RBK/**

**GUESTs** Dean Tyler      Tony Willis      Abdul Hamid (Balsall Heath)

Apologies:      Bruce MacDonald      Meryn Broomhead

### Welcome, introduction and the story so far

Dr Mike D'Souza introduced himself and thanked everyone for coming. He thanked AFC Wimbledon for giving us this excellent venue and explained that he is the elected chair of the One Norbiton Community Working Group whose name is Dr Michael D'Souza and that he had recently retired after working as a GP here for over 36 years. He pointed out that those present could identify all the other members of the Community Working Group by their volunteer labels.

He went on to outline what the One Norbiton project is all this about and why invitations were delivered to all 6000 addresses in Norbiton

The purpose of this first meeting is first to inform all those who live and work in Norbiton that they are now part of a new Cabinet venture to develop urban communities. This is called One Norbiton and those of us who have called this meeting are all volunteers on its Community Working group which has been working NOT on behalf of any political party, religion or business interest but because it wished to enable ordinary people to meet and have a more enjoyable community life as well as have a much more effective say about those issues that are of direct local concern to them.

Already a leaflet has been sent to a representative sample of 300 of you, to begin the task of gathering ideas on how to improve Norbiton and to periodically measure how happy we are all feeling about living and working in Norbiton. If more and more of us get involved, offer opinions and help each other overcome problems the faster we will get improvements. Indeed influencing how well existing bodies like the NHS and Council spend our public money is one really important role that communities like we are creating can play in this time of credit crunch.

Recruiting our Consultant panel to be a collection of voices from the community was just the first step in growing a new form of real democracy. In this, instead of voting for representatives like MPs or Councillors, which we already have, we can now exploit the new age of texting and websites. This facilitates everyone to express their opinion about local matters who want to. Even the shy or the silent majority who find it hard to speak at public meetings can now speak up for themselves on line and participate in the venture by just devoting 5 minutes a week to keeping in touch.

We are hoping that more will want join us on the Working party and to further explain what this is about . Our guest from Balsall Heath needs to leave early so we shall now presentation from Birmingham on how they transformed their neighbourhood by setting up a community Group;

Davinder Lail who has been the excellent Chairman of our public engagement group to speak about his experiences. This will be followed by a brief talk from Dean Tyler from Kingston Council explaining the official

support for this. Dean has just taken over from his colleague Martha Early in acting as midwife in delivering this baby.

Before the break we will throw the floor open for questions and discussion and give you all the opportunity to write down your priorities for improving life in the area and what you can offer to help achieve them. I will then try to sum up before we close.

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### **Abdul Hamid from Balsall Heath**

Abdul Hamid gave a brief presentation which explained the background to why their community project came in to existence over 10 years ago – a run- down neighbourhood that was rife with crime, prostitution and drugs. Finally the community came together to try and make a difference. Despite opposition from their local council, the group started slowly by targeting areas that they wanted to change. As their projects were successful more and more people became involved. They now have funding through Europe and the support of Central Government and have managed to transform their neighbourhood. There were example given of some of the projects that had been successful and an outline of how this had been achieved. To help combat loneliness and isolation they deliver hampers to those who are most isolated. They have organised several ‘clean up ‘ campaigns where the community come together and work to improve an area. The group hold committee meetings regularly and have encouraged several smaller residents groups to form. These dates are planned in advance and once a year a calendar is hand delivered to every household listing meeting details.

In addition there are on-going community projects such as a ‘walking bus’ which run by volunteers to take children to school. Once there it is common for the volunteer to remain and take part in the school assembly. The group have recently saved a local library from closure by arranging for the local children to demonstrate against it. Children are also encouraged to run the anti- graffiti campaign so that they witness first- hand the damage it can do.

At present the group employ somebody to run their group and have received £300,000 in funding for ‘Capacity building’. When asked how his group deal with apathy from residents Abdul stressed that their ethos is that they will happy to help resolve a problem together but they will not just ‘do it for them’.

There were also questions about current relationship with statutory bodies such as the Police. There seems to be a differing relationship at different times and this can be hugely dependent on the officer who is in post at any given time. Some are very keen to improve community relations and can see the benefit of working together, others seem to resent a resident group ‘taking charge’.

Finally, Abdul was asked how a group such as his had succeeded. He advised that it is best to start with a small group and build from there, capacity building as we progress. This can often be disheartening and can involve quite a lot of time chasing people to attend meetings and get involved but it is worth it eventually. His group now has more than 1500 members.

The Chair thanked Mr Hamid for attending and introduced Davinder Lail to speak about his experiences working as part of the Community Engagement Group

### **Davinder Lail – Chair of Community Engagement sub Group**

Davinder opened by saying a few words about what he was hoping One Norbiton can achieve. He moved here couple of years ago after living in Streatham for 16 years and found it much friendlier, with great places near-by, a much better sense of community made him enthusiastic to get involved.

He related how he had first heard about One Norbiton last autumn in either a council newsletter or local paper and started going to Community Working Group (CWG) meetings.

His understanding of what it's about is:

Traditionally council, health service, police etc. have provided services and spent money based on what they think is best for local people – sometimes that's worked, sometimes it hasn't.

Now the plan is to work in partnership with those organisations to identify how we want that money spent and what the services should focus on. This means a much more effective method of improving quality of life because it will be based on our priorities and designed by us.

The sort of things it could cover include:

- Cleaner streets – know dog mess high priority so far and certainly good examples elsewhere in country of how it's been dramatically reduced.
- Better facilities for young people – designed and built by them.
- Anti-social behaviour, safety – community involvement can make a big difference and help police target their resources better.
- Improved housing – things like better soundproofing, damp, heating.
- Helping people improve their income – training and information.

The most important thing so far is that by actively being involved in projects, rather than just leaving it to services, people get much more out of it: get to know neighbours, feel motivated and don't feel helpless – a feeling of 'if we managed to clean up that tatty area ourselves, what else can we do.'

Davinder stated that a top priority of the CWG so far has been to give everyone who lives or works in Norbiton a chance to express their priorities so that we get a truly representative idea of what to focus on. It was for that reason that we set up the community panel and held this meeting.

Now that we're getting those priorities, the next step is to turn them into action and actually change things out there, so we need to form action groups of local people to work with the Council and others on solutions. He believes that we can start right now with some small things such as cleaning up neglected areas, but there is no limit to what's possible if the community work together.

He closed by saying that the important things to remember are to start with some small successes to build motivation; don't lose heart – things won't always go smoothly but stick with it as Norbiton really is a great place to live.

The Chair then introduced **Dean Tyler** currently heading One Norbiton on behalf of Kingston Council to explain where the project came from and how the Council is keen to help us make it a success.

Dean thanked the Community Working Group for inviting him to attend the meeting and allowing him to say a few words. He stated that he was very aware of the fact that this project was to be a whole new way of working because it involved 'bottom up' methods. This meant that residents are not the only people who are having to learn as they go, the system was challenging for everyone on the Strategic Partnership too. He explained that the Strategic Partnership consisted of representatives from RBK, NHS, Police, Kingston University, Job Centre plus, Kingston Voluntary Action and the Chamber of Commerce. Part of their remit is to oversee the project and where possible to do whatever is needed to ensure that the project is a success.

Dean went on to explain that One Norbiton is being run in tandem with another Government initiative called 'Community Budgets'. Norbiton is one of only 10 areas selected to participate in the scheme and the only area who is participating in both projects. These fit very well together as the Community Budgets project requires local budget holders to 'map' community spending for the area in question to establish what is being spent where. This is in preparation for the scheme to 'go live' in April 2013. At this point a proportion of the Norbiton budget will be assigned to the Community Working Group who can make choices on where the funds will be spent in accordance to what priorities have been indicated by local residents. This will not include any of the strategic funds for areas such as housing, police, health services which have to be allocated according to

existing guidelines. However, it is hoped that it will involve enough so that the Norbiton Community can start to see an improvement to their lifestyles.

Questions were then asked about the possibility of re-opening the Surrey Sports Centre . Doreen Gardiner responded with a brief outline of the recent history and what attempts had been made to seek the funds needed to reopen this facility. Concerns were raised about the fact that many of the industrial units in Hampden Road now seem to be empty. Cllr David Ryder Mills offered to discuss this privately during the next part of the meeting.

There then followed an Audience Participation session where, with assistance of Community Working Group members those present were encouraged to fill in the Feedback Forms handed to them upon arrival AND to list on Post-it slips what they considered to be priorities. It was explained that the Post-its should record:

- (1) Any Problems in their area of Norbiton and
- (2) Any personal Assets they could offer to help develop the community.

These post-it's were then stuck on top of their addresses on laminated maps of Norbiton

Following this session Mike introduced Jill Preston to summarise what had been written on the maps

Report of priorities and feedback received is attached as appendix 1

### **Closing remarks and next steps.**

Mike thanked all for their participation and endorsement of the Working Group's efforts on their behalf. He stated that we have just seen we are a community that is rich in skills . However like all citizens in all the cities everywhere in the world we often have difficulties in meeting our neighbours and sharing neighbourhood responsibilities or indeed feeling we have any sort of personal empowerment. Yet during last week's Diamond Jubilee celebrations we saw communities enjoy street parties everywhere in defiance of the rain and it made many of us felt proud of our tolerant and generous British Heritage. We believe we should build on the assets we have. If we can use more of our own local voluntary resources to solve our own problems as well as help achieve a better and more economic direction of public money, our new One Norbiton project will achieve many good things. He emphasised that our Community Working Group is open to be joined by any resident or worker in Norbiton who shares this vision. The group is without any party political, religious or business affiliation and are also independent of the council but simply exist to help all our fellow citizens in Norbiton improve their quality of life in the ways which they themselves identify as important. To organise and get much needed independent funding we are currently developing a suitable constitution for the group which will embed these principles. This will be put on line so that all can comment and contribute to it. Then the whole community will be asked to endorse this later in the year. In the meantime he promised that the existing group will look at the priorities put forward and work with residents to develop solutions. There is a need for more of people to get involved and to continue to feed in views and ideas via the website, e-mail address or text. If everyone gave at least 5 minutes a week to their community doing this it could make a huge difference together.

Mike reported that already interesting solutions to some of the problems raised are arriving. The Credit Union SurreySave has just started operating in Kingston. This offers on the one hand a sensible alternative to Loan Sharks for people in Debt and on the other, a way for those with savings to help their neighbours without losing out. Efforts are being started to get more meaningful and rewarding occupation for our teenagers. Movements like Smart Communities and the Green movement are looking at ways of helping clean the environment while schemes for the joint purchase of energy is being examined as a way of tackling soaring fuel costs.

Speaking with his 'doctor's hat' on Dr Mike said that he was also aware that there are big health gains from reducing community stress. Alcoholism, drug addiction, personality problems, crime and many diseases are all worsened by stress. This all causes homelessness and poor parenting so that stress causes stress. Families, neighbours and friends can all be a major support when we are stressed by things going wrong. However our

cities, where more and more people now live, are all too often lonely and faceless places. People with problems can go unseen or become a major cause of problems for others. If we can build a welcoming and safer community in Norbiton it will improve the health and happiness of everyone and in particular give our children and grandchildren the fairer and richer start in life that they all deserve. And that is our mission. He offered thanks to everyone for attending and urged those present to encourage their neighbours to take part. If everyone could give at least 5 minutes a week to One Norbiton it will make a big difference. Those present were told that the next meeting of the Community Working Group will be on Monday 25 June at 6.45pm at St Peter's church hall. Residents were asked to notify Jill if they wanted to attend. Finally he asked for those people who had received the leaflet inviting them to join the panel but haven't returned it yet, to please do so as we need this panel to test ideas.

There followed a brief Q & A session that was mainly centred on the need for younger people to be encouraged to become involved and help to look at new ways of finding out what their opinions and priorities are.

