



To provide a voice for local businesses within the wider community and to make South Woodford an even better place to work.

To improve communication between businesses; to provide support and to establish a business network.

NOTES OF MEETING THURSDAY 27th April 2023

Present: Lee Marquis (South Woodford Village Gazette), Cllr Rosa Gomez (Councillor Churchfields Ward), Helen Butler (PA to Cllr Gomez), Cllr Joe Hehir (Councillor South Woodford Ward), Rajesh Suri (owner Grand Trunk Road), Fiona Flaherty (Public Health Nurse Consultant), Rena Pathak (SWBF co-ordinator), Elaine Atkins (SWBF co-ordinator).

Apologies: Sarah Mulligan (Crescendo), Maria Gerring, Amit Nischal (Bayfields Opticians), Dominic Natoli, Neil King (Neil King Estate Agents).

Welcome by Elaine Atkins

- Minutes and notes from last meeting were approved.
- Elaine thanked Huggins & Lewis Foskett for hosting the meeting in their board room.

Introduction by attendees about their business and what they do:

Lee Marquis: Lee owns and runs the South Woodford Village Gazette, a bi-monthly magazine with 12k copies, and the Wanstead Directory, a monthly magazine with 7k copies. Both magazines focus on local news, local events and community initiatives as well as advertising local businesses. Lee also runs a utility company 'Utility Warehouse' which specialises in reducing energy bills.

Rena Pathak: Vice Chair of South Woodford Society and South Woodford Business Forum co-ordinator with Elaine Atkins. Manages a private Oncology practice and soon to qualify as an integrative energy practitioner.

Fiona Flaherty: Public Health Nurse Practitioner, specialises in health screening, blood tests and nutrition. Also works as a nutritional specialist & has a focus on men's health and cholesterol management. She has rooms in Lily House, George Lane.

Cllr Rosa Gomez: Cllr Gomez is the elected Councillor for Churchfields Ward. She is keen to promote local businesses and has worked closely with the South Woodford Society, helping with applications to the Council and community events.

Rajesh Suri: Owner of Grant Trunk Road, Micheline Star restaurant in South Woodford. Rajesh has a background in fine dining and was CEO of a chain of restaurants in Mayfair. He branched out and has run The Grand Trunk Road restaurant for the last six years. He has introduced a number of fine dining offers in the restaurant and has been entered in the Micheline Fine Dining guide again this year.

Cllr Joe Hehir: Local Councillor for South Woodford Ward. He works for the Charities Aid Foundation as his day job but has been liaising with the Society to help on local issues as well as lobbying to re-establish the Post Office in South Woodford.

Elaine Atkins: Secretary of the South Woodford Society; co-ordinator of South Woodford Business Forum; Chair of Churchfield Ward Panel. Semi-retired Physiotherapist (Ex 'Elaine Atkins Physiotherapy') still with the Society of Musculoskeletal Medicine.

Actions from previous meeting:

Galleria Update:

Cllr Saiqa Qayum was going to work on resolving the issue of the build-up of rubbish behind the Galleria. There is an article about the Galleria in the South Woodford Gazette and the plans the landlady has to create access via the rear of the Galleria and the Sainsbury's car park. This will really increase the sense of flow, accessibility and foot fall in the Galleria which has a range of interesting shops.

Action: Cllr Hehir will ask Cllr Qayam for an update on this.

Crime:

Elaine talked about the Metropolitan Police 'Turnaround Plan – 2023-2025' and will send a pdf copy of this to the Business Forum members.

Action: Elaine to circulate 'Turnaround Plan – 2023 – 2025'.

Summer Market

Building on the success of last year's events Elaine gave an update on the planning of our Summer Market on 18 June 2023 and asked businesses to consider how they wish to participate or contribute towards the event. We have applied for a road closure again this year but there is no funding available. We have applied to Redbridge and hope to get permission and quotes to be able to close the road soon. If businesses want to participate or sponsor an aspect of the event, then these ideas would be warmly welcomed.

Christmas Market and Christmas Tree Switch on events:

Elaine has been liaising with Redbridge to improve the lighting scheme in South Woodford, especially around the central reserve in George Lane and main tree on the roundabout. The last couple of Christmas switch on events have been very successful but the actual turning on of the lights has been a let-down. We are looking to have lights so that all festivals can be marked.

Action: Elaine & Rena are meeting with an Officer from Redbridge soon.

Post Office and banking :

Cllr Hehir could not give specific details, but progress is being made in this regard. However, there are still checks and steps that need to be made in this process before any definitive outcome can be communicated.

Notice Boards:

There is still no progress on the cleaning and re-vamping of the community boards in South Woodford. Unlike the Notice Boards in Wanstead, ours look tired and tatty. Cllr Hehir said there is no budget but it was noted that if we get a quote for the cleaning this could perhaps fundraise to pay for this ourselves.

Cllr Hehir also suggested there may be a pause on this as the Council are talking about introducing digital notice boards. A concern was raised by Rena that a digital notice board

may be used for external advertisements and not the community-based events. Rajesh Suri said that he would be happy to pay for local advertising but currently local businesses do not have any access to advertising locally.

Action: Cllr Hehir to get an update on cleaning quote and digital boards. Also to ask how local advertising can be integrated into the BT board outside International Supermarket.

Strategy for Supporting South Woodford Business District.

Rena asked if there is a plan from Redbridge to help shape and support the high street in the future, in light of the changing landscape on the high street and the increasing amount of empty shops. There may be a challenge here as, while the policy proposals for supporting business are being written as part of the South Woodford Neighbourhood Plan, Redbridge may not wish to engage fully with any vision or strategy support for South Woodford. However, we don't want to miss out on any potential support.

Rajesh noted that the businesses on the High Road feel isolated with irregular footfall and suggested a networking event initially focusing on businesses on the High Road to network. He was happy to host this.

Action: Rena and Lee to create invitation and liaise with Rajesh.

AOB:

Networking Event for Health Care Professionals.

Fiona would also like to create a network for referrals and support amongst health care professionals working locally. We discussed the idea of also organising a networking event for health care professionals.

Action: Rena to look into this.

Date of Next Meeting:

Meeting and networking event **Thursday, 13 July 2023, at 12 noon**. More details to follow.