



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 19th January 2023

Present: Sara Mulligan (Crescendo), Lee Marquis (South Woodford Village Gazette), Cllr Jo Hehir (Councillor South Woodford ward), Cllr Lloyd Duddridge (Councillor Churchfields ward), Leoter Denis ('Belle One', Marlborough Business Centre), Mehvish Khan (Heron's Nest Cakes), Dharshan (Director/Owner, Atkins Physiotherapy Consultants) Elaine Atkins (SWBF co-ordinator), Rena Pathak (SWBF co-ordinator),

Apologies: Maria Gerring (Redbridge Enterprise Team), Krisztina Vamos (Redbridge Community Engagement Officer), Abi Todd (Vicar at Holy Trinity), Cllr Beverley Brewer, Cllr Rosa Gomez, Neil King.

Introduction by Elaine Atkins

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

Actions from previous meeting:

Galleria Update:

Elaine and Rena will be meeting with the owner of the Galleria in the next few days. Since our last meeting the owner has changed the managing agents and Mehvish confirmed that, although the complaints about the Galleria are ongoing, representatives from the new agents have been to introduce themselves and seemed engaged to make improvements to the Galleria including new signage at the front, signage for each shop, a new façade, updating the toilets and jet washing the floor. The bins that had been removed are back and a new pile of rubbish has appeared on or near the Sainsbury's site at the end:

Action: Cllr Saika Qayum to speak to the manager at Sainsbury's to discuss the issue and to speak to the manager at Noir, as the rubbish may be coming from that business.

Crime:

Cllr Joe Hehir confirmed that Cllr Khayer Chowdhury is the Cabinet Member for Crime, Safety and Community Cohesion.

Christmas Lights Switch on Event:

Elaine fed back that the second Christmas Light switch on event was a great success with a great turn out and the presence of Santa was a big hit. An issue was that when it became dark Santa was in the dark and the actual lights themselves were as lacklustre as last year.

We would like to think about our own fundraising better lighting in the central reservation as well as the tree on the roundabout. This is something that, when costed, we could approach local businesses to help with the fund raising for this:

Action: Elaine and Rena to try and get costing estimate for lighting with a view to create a fundraising campaign for this.

Business Forum Roundup

Sara noted that business is quiet as to be expected in January. A general discussion was had regarding **ways in which businesses can promote themselves more** in the area.

Leoter suggested having a large **Business Forum event** where businesses could promote their goods/services. We discussed the potential to attach this to events we already run eg the Summer Market, but it would be up to local businesses to organise and we, as the South Woodford Society, would help and support this.

Lee discussed that he is a long standing member of a Business group in Wanstead. This is a group, similar to BMI which promotes referrals between members of the group with “lock outs” so only one type of business can be a member. We know a local Accountant was trying to establish a Chapter of BMI for South Woodford, but support was limited and it has not been established as yet.

Cllr Duddridge informed the group that there is a specific Business event organised by Woodford Football Club on the **27th January at 6pm**. The event will be a networking opportunity for local businesses as well as an opportunity to support the local club. MP Wes Streeting (Ilford North) will be attending.

Dharshan mentioned that he was experiencing that with the pressures on the health service, as physiotherapists, it was noticeable that they were becoming more recognised as first contact practitioners. People had been used to paying for dental and opticians services for many years and physiotherapy services were becoming more aligned to that model. Cllr Duddridge thought that this would be an interesting topic to discuss with Wes Streeting at the upcoming event, as the Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Another idea suggested for promoting South Woodford was for it to have a single, very active Facebook page. Currently there are three Facebook pages serving the area but these are not as active or have the numbers compared to the Wanstead group, as it can be confusing. With the Wanstead Facebook page, businesses are allowed to promote their business on one day of every month.

Creating a dedicated website for local businesses or to enhance the Business Forum Page on the South Woodford Society page are all ideas, but the issue is one of manpower and who will take the lead on organising these?

Cllr Duddridge mentioned that some initiatives are being looked at by Redbridge and are at an early stage, for example the introduction of a 'Redbridge pound' that could be issued to residents to encourage people to shop local.

Dharshan had attended several business networking groups in the past but had not necessarily found them helpful. He supported the model of the Business Forum in covering community topics and would be open to ideas for how the practice can be more active in the community.

It was discussed that there could be a melt of the current business forum and networking models and it was suggested that there was time for each business attending the Business Forum to give a short 'elevator pitch' about their business and to promote any special offers they might have etc.

Action: Elaine and Rena to introduce this into the Agenda at the next meeting.

Cllr Hehir had been pursuing the bringing back of the Post Office to South Woodford but hadn't gained much support from the Post Office head office. There are a couple of possibilities being looked at. The meeting expressed its regret that 'Sid & Evie's' will be closing soon, but it was suggested that that would be an ideal site for a Post Office. Cllr Hehir will look into it by approaching the landlords as a first step.

Action: Cllr Hehir

Cllr Hehir had also established that there is no money available for refurbishing the notice boards and Elaine said that it would be helpful if the Council could at least help with costings, so that we could establish what would be involved.

Action: Cllr Hehir

Date of next South Woodford Business Forum:

Thursday, 27th April at 1pm, at Huggins Lewis Foskett Solicitors, The Shrubberies, George Lane E18 1BG.

We're looking into it being a hybrid meeting of face -to-face and Zoom. More details to follow.