



Hanover & Elm Grove Communities Forum

8th February 2024 – 6.30pm
Phoenix Community Centre (and online)

*Meeting chaired by Sarah McCarthy
Minutes taken by Jerome Cox-Strong*

In Attendance (online attendees are indicated by an asterisk*)

Sarah McCarthy (HEG Chair, Phoenix Residents' Association, Phoenix Food Shop), **Jerome Cox-Strong** (HEG Secretary, Pankhurst Area Community Association, Pankhurst Pantry), **Simon Bannister** (BHCC Community Engagement), **Simon Bowers** (Phoenix Food Shop), **Alexia Lazou** (Hanover Community Association), **David Gibson** (HEG Deputy Chair, Hanover Action), **Dinah Clarke** (HEG Co-Treasurer, Hanover Action), **Elsbeth Inglis** (Phoenix Food Shop), **Ceza Da Luz*** (TDC), **PCSO Chris Browning*** (Sussex Police).

Apologies

Vanessa Cox Pendray (HEG Co-Treasurer, Lower North East Hanover Residents), **Chris Bratt** (HEG Committee Member, Lower North East Hanover Residents), **Fiona Wright** (HEG Forum Committee Member), **Wai Lee** (Friends of William Clarke Park), **Cllr Tim Rowkins** (Lab), **Cllr Maureen Winder** (Lab), **Cllr Ty Galvin** (Lab), **Chloe Hoare** (Phoenix Art Space), **Lucy Day** (Phoenix Art Space), **Cal Chester** (TDC), **Nick Wells** (Local Resident), **Ian McIntyre** (Local Resident), **PCSO Bonnie Scovell** (Sussex Police).

Summary

Police

Interventions previously discussed seem to be having impact. Issues with Phoenix area outdoor gym to be discussed with Hyde as limited scope for police involvement in current circumstances. Chris raises London Road as another area of interest for police; low-level operations to try and increase control of area due to ASB. Sarah highlights local residents in Phoenix area are uncomfortable with change to London Road over past decades.

Groups

Hanover E-Cargo Bike Hire Scheme continuing to develop. Hanover Action acquifer/water action meeting went well; hoping to continue organising meetings and hold people to account. No changes in Pankhurst. Phoenix have now successfully become a CIC; fundraiser quiz on Valentines Day; Food Shop Film being screened at Komedia on 28th Mar (see below).

Council Issues

Ceza highlights issues facing non-profits and TDC specifically. Discussion at meeting recognises strong feeling on two key issues: budget cuts and use of toxic pesticides. (See below for full discussion). Resolution at meeting to treat 7th March meeting of HEG Forum as 'special meeting' on pesticide opt-out issue – Jerome to promote accordingly. Petition to be developed ahead of meeting to raise issue further.

Next meeting: 7th Mar.

For full minutes, see below.

Full Minutes

1 - Police Update

- Sarah: Since intervention on Level by Police, appears to be a reduction in larger gang activity (but this could be seasonal rather than correlated to action). New outdoor gym on Phoenix gym has been taken over as a dog park. This has also been used late at night by younger groups. Asks if Police CCTV can be installed to monitor this area.
- Chris: Not enough action for police to intervene with CCTV, however as a Hyde property, suggests that this may be something Hyde may be willing to engage with. Questions if formal launch has taken place yet.
- Sarah confirms formal launch has not taken place (landscaping ongoing) but as equipment is now installed, use has commenced anyway; community reports to Sarah about dog usage/drinking etc. (unconfirmed, people may be exaggerating when reporting). Says she will continue to ask residents to use 101 and report ASB to Hyde. Sarah has asked for signage for no dog walking, no drinking – want this to be safe, family-friendly space. Meeting planned with Hyde, but issue has been raised.
- Chris: Stop and searches around Phoenix Estate have been effective; other operations regarding cuckoo addresses near Hartington also successful, no reports around Patch since then. Also increased police presence on London Road to try and improve control of area against ASB. Notes significant changes to area over past decades.
- Sarah: Notes that some Phoenix residents have issues with changes to London Road.

2 - Group Updates

- BrightStart: no parent/rep present, but recognition by attendees regarding ongoing situation faced by nursery – no changes known currently.

Hanover Community Association

- Bike scheme continuing to development, otherwise no major changes.

Hanover Action

- Hoping to organise some public meetings – trying to draw members/engagement in.
- Intending to develop platform to hold prospective MPs to account
- Climate action/sustainable water meeting went well – Acquiifer partnership rep attended.
- Ian McIntyre may have further details on meeting.

Pankhurst Area

- Outreach meetings over last month; Citizens Advice, Fuel Poverty and ESFR all have drop-in services scheduled to run alongside Pankhurst Pantry in rotation. Also met with Brighton & Hove Albion Foundation to discuss potential connections/activities in area.
- No changes otherwise – engagement ongoing according to previous updates.

Phoenix Food Shop

- Finalised becoming a CIC, four local directors; this was a requirement from Hyde.

- Citizens Advice running surgeries from 29th Feb, 9:30 three 90-minute slots for discussions.
- Discussions with Hyde to develop a Café. Planning to start small (tea, coffee, toast) - will operate on Friday mornings, may run in conjunction with other activities in the Phoenix Centre. May not be up-and-running until new Financial Year; idea is to mirror Bristol Estate model. Hyde have suggested industrial kitchen, coffee machine will be provided, but primary intent is just to provide a meeting space - hoped this will encourage discussions, common interests.
- Ongoing questions of threat to food projects regarding HSF withdrawals. Phoenix Food Shop Pub Quiz on Valentine's Day, 7pm at the Napier (Quiz starts at 7:30).
- Phoenix Film being shown at Komedia on 28th March alongside other short films (50% takings going to Phoenix). Alexia highlights possible opportunities to promote screening as well as other social action films that could be screened alongside Phoenix film.

3 - Council Issues (Budget & Pesticides)

- Ceza: TDC operates in 20 areas with high IMD scores (indices of multiple deprivation). Charity funded by local authority as well as NHS, statutory bodies and national funders. Focused on community development, as well as CYP, training, inequalities, research.
- Ceza is based in a more localised 'central' area than council - Phoenix, Tarner, Pankhurst, pockets of Kemp Town. Ethos of ABCD (asset-based community development) rather than needs-based - engages with community voices.
- Cuts will have significant impact from April onwards, similarly to other non-profit orgs - TDC faced by cuts to funding from both local govt and NHS, est. £400,000 cuts to TDC which will lead to projects being scaled down/cut, redundancies. TDC is generally robust financially in terms of reserves, but naturally a more scary climate to be operating in.
- Dinah: asks for clarification on age range of youth work. Ceza: Youth work and youth workers take on range of roles and range of ages (approx. 11-25) including attached work, outreach work (Youth Bus and on the street etc.).
- David: Wanted to be able to discuss council budget issues with councillors at meeting, but unable to due to absence. Reflects on own personal role within Financial team in informing frustrations with current admin approach. 282 deleted posts (**check**). Feels best approach would have been to save as many and jobs and projects as possible. Feels there is a disparity between current administrations approach and approach taken by some previous administrations (Nancy Platt Lab, Green) with return to more aggressive cuts. Feels that approx. 17% to community-sector orgs with no notice likely to have a worrying impact on smaller/medium-scale orgs.
- Sarah: Highlights Possability People are likely to be in serious trouble; service at threat. Also highlights knock-on effect; even if certain services can survive unto themselves, they will be affected by rising demand as more people are affected and as other projects fold.
- David: Community groups grant has suffered 100% cut, which will again have a very significant impact.
- Jerome: Raises question of whether Forum should schedule an Extraordinary/Special Meeting on issue to ensure Councillors and other key parties can attend (IE schedule around availability)

- Sarah: Suggests emphasis should be on making sure invite to next meeting is clear, rather than scheduling an additional meeting – thinks it is clear from minutes that there is strong frustration both at issue and at inability to discuss with Councillors.
- Alexia and Jerome: Issue with long-term councillor availability; Cllr Maureen Winder appears to have become most regular attendee, but where she can't make it question is whether other Councillors can be available to make sure there is always some representation.
- David: Highlights additional issue of clarifying mechanism for CIL funding delivery – Hopes that it would be fairly seamless if CIL funding is treated like previous available discretionary budget. Process is new, but funding is definitely available so can be discussed with Councillors when possible.
- Sarah: returns to pesticides issue. Simon Bannister raises Weedy Wednesday – worry is that a consultation occurs that takes into account local feeling, but that contractors then ignore views and proceed according to overall plan instead.
- David: Lots of bad feeling about proposals. City-wide petition signed by 6000 people so clearly strong issues. Chemicals have been linked to health concerns (inc. cancer risk). Wants to raise question of an opt-out; feels it's a big ask for communities to say they will clear their own weeds. Suggests an alternative proposal whereby weeds identified as posing a health-and-safety risk would be handled by residents, with other weeds left as is – this would additionally save money versus a blanket approach that could then be distributed to community groups. Realises this is a remote possibility but thinks it key to present a proposal nonetheless.
- Sarah is concerned that there are large numbers of people whose health will be impacted by use of chemicals but lack the means to maintain weeds themselves.
- Simon: Interested in distinction between housefront plants and street plants (pavements, gutters) in terms of council responsibility; doesn't want to give permission for the council to spray the walls/against the walls of houses such as his own. Also highlights anti-pesticide activism projects have demonstrated alternative trials that have not taken place here.
- David: If opt-out has been promised, will this be honoured; EG if Hanover and Elm Grove has been suggested to not have a major issue. Suggestion is this would be blanket to an area rather than case-by-case.
- David: Suggests a local, ward-level petition to support an opt-out be put together. General agreement with idea by attendees.
- Jerome: Agrees petition is a good plan, sees three key issues for meeting to decide on: A – content/wording of petition: should we simply ask for an opt-out with no additional stipulations for what should be done instead, or should we propose idea raised by David about community taking care of health-and-safety-risk weeds; B – timing: what is the optimum time to have time to get the petition sorted and released without being too late to have an impact?; C – assent by community: might need to go back to member groups of Forum to agree.
- David: Suggests way to speedily solve agreement issue could be to phrase as 'Started by X, will you sign it?' rather than formally register as a 'Forum petition'?
- David, Jerome, Sarah et al to discuss content further by email ASAP.

- General agreement by meeting of plan of action: petition to be developed ASAP using David proposal; petition to form part of promotion for next HEG Forum meeting to act as the special meeting on this issue.
- Next HEG meeting agreed for 7th March to allow for key attendees – Jerome to try to invite Pesticide Action Network invite, Councillors, Caroline Lucas, Sian Berry and Tom Gray, Steve Jelliot.
- Simon: Suggests this should fit within council budget timelines.

4 - AOB

- Good Gym: David spoken to Wai, hoping to get things going again, but no more updates for now.