



Minutes of the Public Meeting held on Tuesday 28th March 2023

Charles Runcie (CR) in the chair.

CR welcomed all, including those joining via Zoom, to the SGRA hybrid public meeting. He introduced guest speakers Lorinda Freint, Juanita Samuel-Taitte and Andrew MacMillan.

Apologies for absence:

Cllr Kim Caddy, Cllr Guy Humphreys, Lee Roberts, Amelia Obertelli-Moriarty

1. Minutes + matters arising from the Public meeting on 31st January and the Executive meeting on 28th February 2023; these can be seen at: <https://www.southfieldsgrid.org.uk/meeting-minutes/>.

Public meeting:

- None which weren't to be covered in this agenda

Executive Meeting:

- CR has contacted Sidonie Forrest-Brown requesting an update on the outstanding public realm actions. These can be seen here: <https://bit.ly/SGRAQandAs28-03-23>
- There has been a proposal to create a 2024 SGRA calendar; Chris Puleston is looking into this
- Southfields Harvest: this will be going ahead in September

2. Special Guests: Lorinda Freint, Head of High Streets and Local Growth in the Council's Economic Development Team and Juanita Stanuel-Taitte, Wandsworth High Street Team: the challenges facing local shopping areas like Southfields

Lorinda leads on a number of issues and projects for Wandsworth Council, including regeneration programmes and businesses on high streets. She has recently finished the night-time strategy for Wandsworth which went live today (28-03-23). She asked residents to look at this and comment: [Have Your Say Today - Have Your Say: Night Time Strategy Wandsworth - Commonplace](#)

Lorinda addressed the floor, making the following key points:

- During Covid-19 some areas benefited from people being at home, but this was not so in Southfields which relies particularly on heavy footfall (commuting) to the tube. This has not returned to pre pandemic levels and may never do so. Other areas such as Balham and Tooting do not appear to have suffered to such an extent
- However, recently there has been more interest in the vacant properties and a number are under negotiation. For example, Lark (gift shops in Garrett Lane and Balham) has a poster up in the old Starbucks. The nursery extension in the old Costa Coffee is up and running
- Homeworking has increased and workspaces such as Homework Workspace on Wimbledon Park Road are flourishing. Lorinda will be looking to see if there is further demand for workspaces

Discussion:

- A question was about whether 'greedy landlords' were 'fact or fiction' in relation to the number of empty units in Southfields. Lorinda responded that some are very kind to tenants who are struggling, but others are largely absent, pension fund owners or registered overseas and only communicate through agents so there is no direct contact
- A resident asked what guarantees were in place for new businesses? Response is that new businesses often do their own surveys and research into an area before deciding to move in. This includes looking at demographics via the census and other markers. Gails was given as an example

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- Do high rents drive people away? Lorinda had not heard of anything concrete regarding this in Southfields. She made the point that transitions are tricky, and the loss of commuters may be key
- CR asked if are there any powers to force anything, eg in the case of Sikelia on Replingham Road which has been empty for a significant period? Lorinda explained that currently there are no powers for the council but if the levelling up bill gets through parliament, then this will change. Some units in the borough have been empty for up to 20 years
- Southfields Business Forum: Lorinda made the point that change can be painful and this is what Southfields is going through. Juanita and Lorinda feel hopeful that more businesses will come on board and attend meetings. They hope to support events being put on, for example Christmas and summer events, and to have quarterly meetings
- Nina Kowalska (Green the Grid) suggested that a factor for a vibrant high street is a pleasant environment (plants, parklets etc) and asked what the council can do to address this physical attractiveness? Lorinda highlighted that an area with high footfall is Tooting and does not have many of those green credentials, as is Camden. A supportive community appears to be key. Wandsworth Town is very clean but not that successful. However, she took Nina's point on board and would like to hear what people want in the 'public realm'
- The pavement licences and their 'leniency' during covid, is being reviewed in September 2023
- Gerard Sebastian asked what came out of the meeting with Fleur Anderson (MP) and what local residents can do to work effectively with Lorinda to support her work? Lorinda emphasised that residents should support businesses as much as possible rather than buy all online
- CR reminded the floor that the new edition of Grid News has a major article on this. The better the relationship with shops and staff, the more they can feel part of local community.

3. Special Guests:

Andrew MacMillan (Wandsworth Living Streets): "How do we reduce road danger in Southfields, enable more walking and cycling, and create pleasant, sociable, healthy streets which support the local community?"

Andrew is a Volunteer (Chair) with WLS ([About Us – Wandsworth Living Streets](#)) which has a focus on how to make the best of all streets. He presented his slides about the work of WLS and how the ideas could be applied to the Southfields Grid: <https://bit.ly/WLS28-03-23>

Key points:

- Main aims are to improve public health and tackle the climate emergency. This includes aspects such as loneliness, as well as public realms, park and connected neighbourhoods. An example of difficulties was illustrated in roads where cars are half parked on pavements, and Andrew distinguished between factors which can and can't be controlled locally (see slides)
- Future suggestions for Southfields included ideas such car-free areas, school streets, changing parking restrictions, experimental traffic orders, introduction of 'modal' filters (bollards) – or planters – and changes to bus and cycle lanes. (see details on slides)
- Andrew acknowledged the contentious aspect of his map; these are ideas only

Discussion:

- Regarding road danger from speeding: Andrew suggested filters (bollards) on Revelstoke Road could be used to reduce numbers of people driving through the Grid. Reducing frequency of cars reduces danger
- 'Perching' places for people to sit along the long streets: what kind of street furniture could be used to enable this? Andrew explained pavement space needs to be protected and should be well maintained, flat and level. Lambeth Council have a kerbside strategy ([Lambeth Council reveals trailblazing Kerbside Strategy - Love LambethLove Lambeth](#)) and have been analysing data eg parklets (places to sit, perhaps in one car parking space)
- NK (GtG) explained parklets were suggested in Southfields 3 years ago, with a local consultation. 95% people supported it, but the 5% opposition were so vocal it was not pursued, and she made the point that the improvements cannot happen with this outcome

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- NB The recent proposal to make an area outside Riversdale School (Pirbright Road) pedestrian only is a 6-month trial in the first instance

4. Council Matters: Cllr Guy Humphries sent his apologies. CR passed on key notes:

- The suggested dog mess bins on the Grid are unlikely due to the extra resources needed to empty them. However, Cllr Humphries is looking at new & improved signage
- There is still no definite date for the planning meetings regarding AELTC or the Rifle Club
- Wandsworth Council is currently holding a Citizens' Assembly on Air Quality, externally facilitated by Shared Futures. This will culminate with a set of recommendations that will feed into the updated Air Quality action plan. While the recommendations will come from the Assembly (consisting of 50 demographically representative and randomly selected residents), part of the process involves wider consultation of the whole borough through a consultation platform called Polis. This will be launched via webinar on 30th March from 7-8pm. The session will be recorded and uploaded to the [AQCA page on our website](#). Residents are encouraged to participate in a survey which is open until 17th April.

5. United Services Transport sign (behind the Shell Garage on Merton Road): *Clive Williams*

- CW explained that the Heritage of London Trust is contributing £10,000 to this renovation. More funds are needed, and avenues are being explored. The SGRA Executive Committee have offered £500 as a gesture.

6. Reviews of Window Wanderland & Storyteller of Southfields events: *Charles Runcie*

- Window Wanderland was a great success and will hopefully be repeated next year. The SGRA contributed to its funding and there is an article in Grid News
- The Storyteller of Southfields (Hannah Need) was very happy that more than 40 people attended and she hopes to do another event in the future

7. Front Gardens Awards 2023 *Charles Runcie*

A new organiser needed as Amelia Obertelli-Moriarty is unable to lead it this year. If anyone is interested in taking on this event, please email me direct on charles@charlesruncie.co.uk

8. Green Spaces Updates:

a) Friends of Wimbledon Park: *Nick Steiner*

Nick went through his presentation, which focused on Wimbledon Park in the context of the general state of nature in England, which is very depleted. Ancient woodland is not being looked after so it is a wakeup to everyone. His slides can be seen [here](#)

- Current activities: Bat surveys, tree planting and deculverting of the stream (so it can be seen in the open), which is currently half completed. The South East Rivers Trust is delighted and hope that the eels will return
- City Nature Challenge (an international annual event) is 28th April – 1st May. [City Nature Challenge 2023 | Natural History Museum \(nhm.ac.uk\)](#). Everyone is encouraged to take part and collect information via various activities taking place in the park. This includes a bat walk
- If interested in participating, please contact Nick at n.steiner@btinternet.com

b) Friends of Coronation Gardens: *Charles Runcie*

- The fountain is being restored during the summer
- A new playground is being installed in September. Plans will be available, and comments invited. The current playground will remain open all summer holidays then be closed for 6 weeks. Enable fed back how well supported the consultation was by locals, FoCG, SGRA and others
- As part of the Coronation celebrations, there will be an event of music, storytelling, gardening and refreshments on Monday 8th May. Do come along

c) Green the Grid: Nina Kowalska

Nina outlined the achievements and future activities of Green the Grid which is **5 years old this year. 2022:**

- There were 2 events giving out plants, in May and at Southfields Harvest. Usually at least 100 households attend
- 'Grid Growers' was launched: 23 people grew plants from seeds or were plant 'babysitters'! To be repeated this year. If you would like to be a 'Grid Grower' contact GtG (greenthegridsw18@hotmail.com)
- Nina and others have spoken with lots of other groups to spread the word, including Merton who have developed 'Merton Garden Streets' throughout the borough and 'Blooming Balham'. A Wandle Community Garden will be started

Looking forward:

- GtG aims to contribute to and positively influence what council are doing and feed into their green space, biodiversity and community strategies. It is a member of the Wandsworth Sustainable Partnership which held their second event recently at which over 150 people attended. There was a marketplace for all small groups to showcase their work, giving the opportunity for the exchange of ideas and experience
- **Finance:** £1000 is needed for activities this year. Currently this is raised from donations. Nina thanked the SGRA for help with printing
- **Challenges:** the watering of tree bases and front gardens in very hot summers. GtG have decided to promote drought resistant planting, focusing on low maintenance perennial plants. The message around planting not paving needs to be clearer
- **The Front Garden Campaign** this year is called **The Front Garden 5** (to mark 5 years) and highlights actions around **5 key principles** for front gardens: air quality, flood prevention, drought resistance, wildlife friendliness and wellbeing/pleasure
- **Plant Giveaway** is being co-ordinated with the Mend, Fix & Repair Café and will be on **Saturday 17th June** during the 'Wandsworth Great Big Green Week'. Only drought resistant plants will be given away
- Sucheta Samant (Southfields Library) offered to loan books on plants

9. SGRA Executive Highlights: Charles Runcie

- **Planning (Margaret Brett)**
 - The Rifle Club and allotments application is still open with 567 objections
 - The renewed application to build behind 24 Replingham Road has been refused
 - The AELTC application may now be considered in the summer (1142 objections). There has been some organised support (now about 240 in support)
 - The public realm works have not been completed as the work outside the station is still outstanding

Local issues

- The draft Local Plan is in its final stages and should be adopted later in the summer
- The Council has been seeking views on:
 - Cost of Living Commission
 - Air Qualify scheme
 - Schools streets scheme – Riversdale
 - Draft Night-time Strategy
- **Crime (Clive Williams)**
 - The January figures are low, around 8 crimes in this area
 - It was pointed out that several cars have been broken into and/or stolen more recently. Police are aware

10. Western River Waste Authority (WRWA) Trip – Open to SGRA members - Tuesday 2nd May, 11am

This is a tour around the site for up to 12 people. Details to follow

11. Coronation Weekend including Seniors' Tea Party (7th May) & Street Parties: Big Help Out (8th May):

- Margaret Brett outlined the Tea Party plan: this is free to Seniors and is in the main hall of St Barnabas. 50-60 people usually attend and there will be music by The Cygnet Singers, a good tea and activities. Lots of help is needed on the day for preparation – please do volunteer
- Charles Runcie reminded the floor of the Coronation Gardens event (item 8 above)

12. Forthcoming events:

- Southfields Ward Panel, Parish Room, St Barnabas Church: Saturday 22nd April, 10.30am
- Restart Southfields: Mend, Fix & Repair Café, St Barnabas Church: Saturday 22nd April, 12- 3pm
- Coronation Weekend: 6-8th May
- Seniors' Tea Party, St Barnabas Church, 7th May 3-5.30pm
- St Barnabas Quiz Night, Friday 12th May, 6.30pm

13. AOB

- Serena Potter gave information about the next Mend, Fix & Repair Cafe, to be held at St Barnabas Church on 22nd April, 12-3pm. Details are in the recent Grid News; please contact Serena on restartsouthfields@gmail.com if you can help on the day. This event follows the Ward Panel Meeting at 10.30am and is followed by a fundraising concert for victims of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, so a lovely day is promised at St Barnabas Church
- Coronation Parties: other than the FoCG it is not yet known if there are any street parties planned
- Sucheta Samant gave her thanks to Margaret Brett for her continued support in making tactile books for those with visual and other disabilities. These have been donated to 'Clear Vision' who are based in Linden Lodge School. Sucheta also told the floor that, due to the generosity of O2, Three and Vodafone the library can give away sim cards to those struggling to access the internet. This will take place in the library on Tuesday 25th April. Please pass this information on. Finally, the library has a DoE student offering IT help with phones/tablets every Saturday for next few weeks. Take your device for a 20-minute session. Book in advance: Southfields Library (0208 780 1945)
- Dr Sardar Ahmad (Fazl Mosque in Gressenhall Road) invited residents to attend the Big Iftar event on 15th April at the Baitul Futuh Mosque from 5-7pm. This is open to all and is a celebratory event during Ramadan. If you would like to attend, please email Dr Ahmad on hameedahmad@hotmail.co.uk. Guests will then receive an entry ticket. Full address is: 181 London Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 5PT

Next Public Meeting: Tuesday 23rd May **AGM 2023**, 7.45 - 9.30pm, St Barnabas Church

Appendix: Attendance List

Name	Role
Charles Runcie	SGRA Executive Committee – Chair
Serena Potter	SGRA Executive Committee – Secretary
Margaret Brett	SGRA Executive Committee/Lavenham Road Rep
Gerard Sebastian	SGRA Executive Committee Vice-Chair
Chris Puleston	SGRA Executive Committee – Treasurer/Elborough Street Rep
Ann Kerr	SGRA Executive Committee/Clonmore Street Rep
Clive Williams	SGRA Executive Committee
Nick Steiner	Friends of Wimbledon Park/Clonmore Street Rep

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Lorinda Freint	Head of High Streets, Wandsworth Council
Juanita Stanuel-Taitte	Wandsworth Council High Streets Team
Andrew MacMillan	Wandsworth Living Streets
Nina Kowalska	Green the Grid
Jackie Pearce	
Sunil Sood	
Ian Shaw	Brookwood Street Rep
Eliana Basto	
Trevor Howes	
Rod Lewington	
Sucheta Samant	(Zoom)
Hilary Simpson	(Z)
Dr Sadar Ahmad	
Rosemary Langford	(Z)
Di Brennan	
Jackie Lever	(Z)
Lesley McCaul	Astonville Street Rep
Peter Jackson	
Ameet Phadnis	(Z) Replingham Road Street Rep
Tamar Maor	(Z)
Ekaterina	(Z)
Deirdre Gooderson	(Z)
Grayham Skyrme	(Z)
Katrina Ure	(Z)
	Total: 32