

Minutes of Semilong Community Forum meeting

February 11 2009

Present: Zoe Martin, Brian Crutchley, Rob Chadwick, Steven Richards, Ruth Pott-Negrine, Jen Kenny, Mike Kenny, Trevor Gordon, Stephen Welyczko, Jonathan Evans-Southall, Andy Langton, Cllr Tony Clarke, Pam Thompson, Ally Dunn, Norman Grant, Sam and Kathrine from SWAN

Apologies: Ann Timson, Alastair Melton, Daphne Barritt, MP Brian Binley, Cllr Tess Scott, Michelle Aveyard, Jack Thompson

Abbreviations Used:

SCF - Semilong Community Forum

NBC - Northampton Borough Council

NCC - Northampton County Council

AGYCC - Alliston gardens Youth and Community Centre

MUGA - Multi Use Games Area

WNDC - West Northamptonshire Development Corporation

PCSO - Police Community Support Officer

FOR - Friends of the Racecourse

NHW - Neighbourhood Warden

JAG - Joint Action Group

HiMO - Houses in Multi Occupation

NISG - Northampton Irish Support Group

CFC - Climate Friendly Communities

NISG – Northampton Irish Support Group

The meeting opened at 7:40pm and was chaired by Zoe Martin

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed, PT noted that she had been missed off the list of attendees.

Action: BC to amend last months minutes.

Actions from last meeting

1. ZM had forwarded a list of pot holes to NCC via Street Doctor but had not received a response.
2. RC had reported the rubbish at the sub station to central networks but had not yet received a response.
3. ZM had arranged a CFC meeting.
4. No police representatives were available to provide distraction burglary posters.
5. RC reported the Semilong Only sign to NCC but has not yet received a response.

Action: ZM to contact the CW SCT regarding distraction burglary posters.

Guest Speakers:

Sam Benfield & Catherine from SWAN (Sex Workers around Northampton)

Sam explained what the SWAN partnership do – below are a few highlights.

Aim: To provide a safe, supported and sustainable opportunity for sex workers to exit from prostitution and improve life chances for women, children and young people engaged in, or affected by, the sex industry.

Female Sex Workers suffer from a number of issues:

- Poor general physical health, malnutrition
- Poor mental health, low self esteem, mental illness

- Physical and mental abuse: 'grooming' into prostitution and being 'managed' by pimps/boyfriends/husbands
- Effects of substance misuse
- Effects of homelessness
- Poor access to all services, including health
- High crime activity

SWAN partners include:

- Northamptonshire Primary Care Trust (PCT)
- Maple Access Partnership
- Northamptonshire Police
- CAN
- NBC
- Drug Alcohol and Action Team
- NCC: education, social work, child protection, youth work
- Northamptonshire Probation Services
- Substance misuse services (statutory and voluntary)

Services SWAN provides:

- Outreach and detached work in a priority action zone
- Individual case work
- Drop in sessions – rolling programme
- Fast track drug treatment: dedicated drug worker
- Dedicated probation service worker
- Dedicated housing support worker
- Access to mainstream health services: dedicated health worker
- Access to supported housing (NEST)
- Support to access employment / volunteering
- Training programme for service providers (schools, health professionals, sexual health services, etc)
- Young people's prevention programme

Street Prostitution Strategy – (Currently under review)

Local strategy based on National Prostitution Strategy (Jan 2006)

- Developing Routes Out
 - Referrals to SWAN
 - Joint case reviews/better information sharing
 - New sex workers a priority
 - Holistic approach to sex workers/prostitution
 - Appropriate and consultative ASBO's
 - Gathering intelligence
- Ensuring Justice
 - Targeting pimps/drug dealers
 - Targeting those that groom women
 - Stronger relations with sex workers to encourage crime reporting
 - Better focus on victims

- Attendances at court
- Training for probationary police officers
- Tackling Demand
 - Owned by Castle SCT
 - Increased visibility on Castle Ward/ Quorn Way
 - ANPR (automatic number plate recognition)
 - Operation Uncanny
 - Warning letters
 - Kerb crawler prosecutions
 - ASBO's
 - Change course

Outcomes (October 2008)

- 52 individual women logged by police on beat – 26 only 1 or 2 times, only 10 more than 10 times (6mth period)
- 80% women known to be now registered with a GP and able to access healthcare.
- 36 women have been exited sex industry (2006 – 2008)
- 35% women engaged with drug treatment
- 65% women known to be now housed
- Increasing women reporting physical attackers
- 16 children (under 18) have received support

Female sex industry in Northampton – Now

- 7pm – 7am industry, industrial estate based
- 10 – 20 regular female street sex workers
- 95% drug users – crack and heroin
- 35% in drug treatment
- £200 / day habit = £1,460,000 / year drug trade
- Occasional pimps/drug dealer presence
- Reduced levels of vice/drug associated crime

After the presentation the floor was open for questions.

AD asked what problems SWAN could foresee when the managed zone ends (expected end March 2009). Sam said that she was confident last year that the dropping of the managed zone would work but now felt that with the new policing tactics she was now not so confident. Sam felt that initially things would be fine but without the zone there will start to be dispersal of the sex workers and this would effect how easy it would be for SWAN to engage with the women.

TC felt that AD question was really an impossible question to answer and stated that it was important that the work currently carried out by SWAN is continued when funding for SWAN finishes in March 2010. TC said that if there were to be new problems occurring around prostitution then it would be down to the residents associations from Semilong and Spring Boroughs to raise this with the local councils and other agencies should really carry on the work that SWAN has been doing. Sam was confident that trained individuals were in place at partner agencies to carry on the work they have been co-ordinating.

Sam asked how we felt about SWAN doing outreach work in residential areas. This would involve handing condoms to women in the street and this may upset local residents – thinking that SWAN were encouraging prostitution in residential areas. BC said he could see both sides of the argument for and against.

TG asked if condoms could only be given out when the women saw an agency worker in private. Sam said that some of the women do not engage with agency workers and outreach work is their initial point of contact to build a working relationship.

RC said that the hard landscaping of the neighbourhood has been designed to discourage kerb crawling in residential areas and prevent the women taking their clients in public places. He hopes that this will be enough to help stop prostitution for continuing being a problem in the area.

Sam asked us to pass any information regarding prostitution to the police and themselves.

SWAN can be contacted on

swan@northants.nhs.uk

07717 734220

07717 448553

01604 633213

Police on 700700

Andy Langton – Neighbourhood Warden

AL said that after the snow the bins were collected today and another collection would take place tomorrow (12th Feb) as normal. As a result of the snow collections of fly-tipping had been suspended and would now resume so there was a backlog of work to be done.

AL had been organising the removal of a lot of untaxed vehicles. Last year 200 cars were removed from the streets. In addition foreign cars were now being targeted using the ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) system. Foreign plates are recorded on the database. Those that have been recorded over 6 months ago and that have not been registered in the UK have been located and removed. This operation started at the 1st February and they have already removed 40 vehicles. TC commented that NBC are cutting back on the Neighbourhood Warden service for the whole of Northampton and he would be personally fighting to ensure that Castle Ward keeps its Neighbourhood Warden.

Ad had attended the meeting at the FoNR at the beginning of February and had heard that the SCT would be located on the Racecourse. AL confirmed that this was not true as the information applied to a different SCT. The Castle Ward SCT is based at Campbell Square.

SR said that there had been some graffiti around Alliston Gardens garages and that what appeared to be drug taking had been noticed at the back of the garages that back onto Hester Street and the gate need re-securing.

ZM asked if there was a database for tagging.

AL said that there was only the one graffiti removal team now and their priority lay in removing offensive graffiti.

Action: No

Steven Richards - AGYCC

SR said that they will be holding a jobs fair at the centre on the 11th March (Wed). 2 church groups had dropped out on Sundays. Children's parties were very popular on Saturday evenings and bookings had mostly come by word and mouth. There has been an issue of used condoms and general fouling at the back of the centre. SR is hoping that funding can be found to provide a fenced area at the back of the centre.

Action: No Actions

Health

MA was unable to attend but had forwarded some information via SR.

International Women's day would be taking place on 10th March – more information about the event to come. MA has a new contact number : 657640

SW said that 12 men had been attending the Mens health group that started at the Gateway centre.

Finance

Since the last meeting the balance had not changed. Stephen confirmed that our balanced was £429.68 in the account with £3.53 cash in hand.

The website contract is due to be renewed in the next month and this would cost about £150.

Urban

RC said that he would write a draft letter for NBC planning for all HiMO planning applications that can be sent on behalf of SCF when these arise.

TC had confirmed with NBC Planning that they would be happy with our HiMO survey once the work was completed.

ZM said that she had not had any luck with NCC Highways and the pot holes she had reported.

BC asked what size they have to be before NCC would consider them worthy of attention.

AL said that they would have to be big enough to cause damage to a cycle or other vehicle before NCC would fill them.

ZM had contacted AL about the post office HQ site being cleared up. Ad said that they should put up fences around it.

RP-N had also been in contact with Royal Mail about it.

AL said that it was likely that while Royal Mail was still using the rear of the site fences would not be put up.

RC said that the two phone boxes at Alliston Gardens had been fitted with posters. Previously these type of posters had been discouraged as you could not see who was in the phone boxes and the CCTV would not be able to see also.

AL said that generally the top posters were removed at known drug spots where users would hide in the phone boxes.

No decision made.

Action:

RC will write a draft letter regarding HiMO applications for NBC Planning.

Environment Green

Climate Friendly Communities

ZM said that the CFC team had met and were planning to engage with Castle Primary School and hold a poster competition after a briefing has been completed by JK. ZM had contacts with the fish market art group and hoped we would be able to display the designs at the gallery as well as other venues across the town. The Grosvenor centre and local museum were also suggested.

SR suggested that we also get local youth groups involved.

ZM hoped that we could start with the local school and roll it out to other groups at a later date. There was also a plan to hold a table top sale at the school to promote the poster designs of the children and other CFC initiatives. Once some designs had been collated posters would be produced and if there was any funding left over to create some re-usable shopping bags.

Play Builder / Sensory Garden – Millers Meadow

JE-S said that the deadline for funding applications were April and November. JS-E said it would be a good idea to do some consultation in the local area to back up any funding application to ensure its chances of approval.

Grafton Street Memorial Garden

JS_E said that he had contacted Unilever regarding the Memorial Garden on Grafton Street but they had not shown much interest.

SW suggested JE-S contact the history group at AGYCC

JE-S said he also found nothing at the Library.

ZM asked if RP-N could write an article for the Chron asking if anyone had any information about the plaque. Brian said that he had some old picture when the daffodils were out.

FoNR

AD had attended the FoNR meeting the previous week and had seen the plans for the dragon mounds. RC had also attended and commented that it had been very well organised.

Comments are still open for the Kingsley Park Conservation Area till Friday 13th February.

Action:

BC to email picture to RP-N

Communication

The contract for the website hosting and domain name (semilong.info) were approved.

SW, JK and MK had attended the Hypercom event held at the Roadmender at the weekend. SW commented that the work created was very good and all the young people were very engaged with the 5 online comic stories that had been created as the user gets to choose the outcome of the story.

There was also live DJ'ing and MC'ing at the event.

Action:

BC to forward receipts to SW once website contract renewed.

Crime

No representatives were present this month.

Actions

No actions.

AOB

ZM said that she would see if she could get a housing Officer to attend the April/May meeting.

SR had secured £750 for a veg scheme from the Councillor Empowerment Fund. Sr hope that this will fund 300 bags of veg and provide instruction to those receiving them on serving suggestions.

SR is planning to get a Credit Union group set up at the regular community café meetings in the hope it will increase footfall.

TC said that he may not be able to attend every month as the SCF meeting was clashing with other commitments and hope to attend bi-monthly.

TG asked SR if there was an update on the AGYCC and the NBC budget issue. SR said that he had a meeting with the relevant councillor and had been assured that the centre would be OK.

TG will reschedule the NW meeting due to the snow that fell the previous week.

Actions

No Actions.

Date of Next Meeting

11th March 2009

Meeting closed at 21:20pm