

Minutes of the Voscur Central Network Meeting

Tuesday 27th February 2007, 2 – 4pm

CEED Building, Wilder Street

Attending:

Name	Organisation
Linda Bell	St Werburghs Community Centre
Paul Hazelden	Crisis Centre Ministries
Jessie Wainwright	BEST
Paul German	Rethink
Jayne Whittlestone	Knightstone Housing
Pat Foster	Extended School's Communities (St Pauls)
Michaela Alfred- Kamara	BREAD
Julian James	Streetwise
Rhian Day	One25 Ltd
Pete Bullard	St Pauls Unlimited
Lyn Shery	St Pauls NR
John Davis	Dove Street Action Group
Lorraine Woolston	Knightstone
Ruth Pitter	Voscur (Facilitator)
Emma Rice	Voscur (note-taker)
Matthew Symonds	Voscur
Wendy Stephens	Voscur
Kingsley Fulbrook	Bristol Townscape Heritage Initiative
Simon Humphrey	A&S Police Community Beat Manager, Ashley
Joe Gardener	A&S Police Community Beat Manager, Ashley

1. **Welcome & Introductions**

Ruth Pitter (RP) thanked everyone for coming and the group introduced themselves by name and organisation.

2. **Redevelopment of Stokes Croft and Portland Square – Kingsley Fulbrook (KF)**

- (a) Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) have started a new initiative in Stokes Croft; KF handed round the plans for this development.
- (b) Scheme background: there had been a previous initiative covering Portland Square, Brunswick Square, St Pauls and Stokes Croft which has been running for the last few years. It was decided that this was not concentrated enough and a new initiative should be focused on the Stokes Croft area.
- (c) Stokes Croft is one of the most deprived areas in the country but is also a very historic area, with houses dating back to the 18th Century. There are a number of listed buildings but some are empty and derelict.
- (d) The Township Heritage Initiative passed Stage 1 of a two-stage application process to the Heritage Lottery Fund in October 2006 and is now in the process of preparing a bid for Stage 2 which will be submitted in October 2007. Funding has been secured to work on the bid and develop the initiative.
- (e) THI hope to work with Jessie Wainwright when she becomes the new Enterprise Manager at BEST (Bristol East Side Traders) and also with St Pauls Unlimited.
- (f) The idea of the scheme is to encourage building owners to look at how they

Action

can improve their properties.

- (g) Buildings could be eligible to receive a grant for restoration from a Common Fund, this consists of £935,000, £535,000 which has been secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the rest being made up from Bristol City Council.
- (h) Grants will be awarded for eligible works, considered to be improvements to the front of buildings; the aim is to make a noticeable difference to the appearance of Stokes Croft.
- (i) THI plan to involve the community and to do this via education sessions A Community Education Manager will be appointed to develop a Community Education Plan to work on this engagement.
- (j) There will also be an architect working with THI who will draw up rough plans of works that could be completed on each building and work with the owners to see what they could apply for a grant to do.
- (k) The owners of the properties will pay for the works initially and then claim back their grant from the Council.
- (l) THI hopes for an injection of funds and enthusiasm to spark of upward movement in the area but without drastically gentrifying or changing the character of the area.
- (m) The objective is to make the area feel safer with less empty premises and less traffic problems.
- (n) A recent study was completed on Stokes Croft and good suggestions were put forward as to how the area could be improved, this includes chasing the owners of buildings in a state of disrepair to see what they intend to do to improve them.
- (o) Because of the timescale of 5 years for the initiative the Carriage House and West Moorland House have been excluded but the Council is still determined that something should be done about these 2 buildings. A Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) has been placed on the Carriage House and the owners have just submitted a new Planning Application which the Council is considering at the moment.

Questions:

Q: John Davis – Dove Street Action Group

Regarding the Carriage House, how long will the process go on for?

A: A planning application has been submitted, but this could be due to the CPO, it is difficult to tell.

Q: Pete Bullard – St Pauls Unlimited

When will the Council just accept that the owners are just stringing out the process?

A: It is a two-pronged approach that the Council are taking, although we are considering the Planning Application the process of applying for the CPO is going ahead at the same time.

Q: Jayne Whittlestone, Knightstone Housing

The owners of the Carriage House also own a number of properties around the country, what is the situation with these and does this happen all over the country?

A: It most probably does, owners are able to sit on properties for years and not have to spend any money on repair, etc. The VCS (Voluntary / Community Sector) will be involved in the initiative and THI are interested in hearing ideas on how the development of Stokes Croft should be taken forward

Q: Wendy Stephenson, Voscur

How will the Council involve local groups and people?

A: The Community Education Manager will draw up a Community Education Plan that will list ideas on how to involve local people and groups. A brief has been prepared for when the Manager is in post and some ideas include themed workshops on:

- (i) Citizenship
- (ii) Why areas decline and how we can improve them
- (iii) Urban studies
- (iv) Is there such a thing as an 'out of date' or 'unusable' building?
- (v) Conservation issues
- (vi) History – why should we value the past? What is special about Stokes Croft?

Q: Paul Hazelden, Crisis Centre Ministries

It is very unclear as to who these questions are aimed at and how you will involve people?

A: There are no pre-conceptions as to who will be involved. The Education Manager is yet to be in post, but once appointed it will be that person's task to ascertain and meet the needs of local people. From the Heritage Lottery Funds' point of view they are eager to involve people in the local area and to initiate communication between them and the Council.

Q: Michaela Alfred-Kamara, Bread Youth Project

Is this a matter of Consultation?

A: It is not a matter of Consultation, more a matter of making people aware of what is happening. People may have questions on why certain buildings are being saved and how.

Q: Paul German, Rethink

Is there any connection with the development of Broadmead?

A: Not really, but the development of Broadmead is close to the Stokes Croft area and has allowed us to look at the lessons learnt with the Broadmead Development. It is just a coincidence that the timing is so close together.

Q: Michaela Alfred-Kamara, Bread Youth Project

As public money is being spent to develop these buildings, how will they be used after they have been improved?

A: The spend will not totally be from public money, grants will be for 75% of each project and owners will be expected to pay 25%. The idea is to discourage building owners from moving on after the work is completed. Checks and measures have been put in place to try and avoid this happening and the Council are able to claw back grants.

The uses of buildings will not change that much at the end of the day, what was a shop will still be a shop and flats will still be used as flats. All buildings are subject to planning controls and so cannot just change use quickly. The Council are keen to have a mix of uses.

Q: Paul Hazelden, Crisis Centre Ministries

This process has been going on for years and the previous consultation raised questions about the use of buildings in Stokes Croft. It was identified that one of the problems was the constant shifting of tenants due to shops being granted on short-term leases. What has happened to the issues that have previously been identified?

A: The Council accepts that there has been a piecemeal approach with different

parts of the Council dealing with different problems. One of the aims of this new initiative and the Community Education Plan will be to bring people together to work towards the same aim.

Comment: Jessie Wainwright, BEST (Bristol East Side Traders)

Regards her new position as Enterprise Manager having a role in working with all the different departments in the Council and to ensure people and groups are talking to one another; it is evidently often difficult for internal staff at the Council to talk to one another.

Q: Peter Bullard, St Pauls Unlimited

Are there any updates on the parking issues?

A: Not a huge amount of space can be freed up for parking so this issue is still outstanding.

Update on Portland Square

- (a) There has been feedback on the new railings that are nearly completed now. Some people did not like them!
- (b) There has been an Order served on 28 Portland Square for the owners to complete urgent works to the property. The Council have been in touch with the owners to see what can be done with the property.
- (c) Sandu's workhouse has had an Application successfully put through for housing and a shop on Sussex Street. It looks as though this site will be sold on.

How will people be kept updated

- Via the St Pauls Unlimited website
- Through contacting Bristol East Side Traders (BEST)
- KF will send information to Voscur to promote on their website / in ebulletin
- The Council is planning public meetings; the Heritage Lottery Fund require that these are well publicised.

3. St Pauls Unlimited DVD

The DVD was shown highlighting good practice on how residents are influencing decision making and creating positive changes in St Pauls.

4. Community Policing – Simon Humphrey (SH), Beat Manager, Newfoundland Road Police Station

- (a) SH has been in the police force for over 11 years, for the past 2 years he has been one of the three Beat Managers in St Pauls.
- (b) Neighbourhood Policing has been an initiative around the country for the past few years and was introduced in Bristol in 2006. Major debates have taken place in Parliament to ascertain the powers of (CPSO) Community Police Support Officers.
- (c) CPSOs (Community Police Support Officers) have had a presence in St Pauls since August 2006, although CPSOs have been in the Lawrence Hill and St Jude's neighbourhoods for longer. At the moment there are 5 CPSOs (4 men and 1 woman) in St Pauls but this will be reduced to 4 due to budgeting reasons.
- (d) The ethos of Community Policing is to establish a relationship with people who may have problems or may cause problems. The Police aim to strike a deal with people in a firm but fair way and to look at why people indulge in anti-social / criminal behaviour.

- (e) Unlike most police officers Community Policing allows CPSOs more time to engage in community issues rather than just respond to problems.
- (f) Since August the CPSOs have been involved in a number of events, e.g. a 5-a-side football league in for local children and young people in St Pauls. Teenagers who have previously caused problems in the area have become part of these events and the feedback is that this has been a positive experience for all involved.
- (g) At present the CPSOs have traffic warden powers, and can begin to tackle the offence of car owners causing obstructions due to parking on pavements. Flyers have been placed on offenders' cars warning them that the CPSO powers now extend to ticketing of illegally parked cars. The police will take a sensible approach to this, as obviously cars are often parked in narrow streets where it is impossible not to park on the pavement.
- (h) Public Service: CPSOs are a visible presence in the community, but they do not have the power to detain anyone.
- (i) An initiative at the moment is to work with the street drinkers in the Stokes Croft area. They are talked to by CPSOs and moved on. In some cases they are given a ticket for drinking in a non-drinking zone. A recent change of tactics means that street drinkers are now given a warning letter and cautioned. If their behaviour persists they are prosecuted.
- (j) There has been some talk of creating an enclosed 'wet area' area where the drinkers can sit.
- (k) CPSOs are respected members of the force and do a crucial job, they are the eyes and ears of the community and can be approached with fears and worries that are then dealt with. Some go on to become police officers.
- (l) Community work: CPSOs are trained to work with school children and youth groups, including offering training on issues such as stranger awareness.
- (m) The St Pauls Neighbourhood Policing boundary is changing; it will now extend to a few roads above Ashley Road and end at Stokes Croft.
- (n) There is a new police station at Newfoundland Road with over 100 staff based there, including the Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Reduction Units for the whole of the City. The station also houses the Viper Capture Suite (for videoing and photographing suspects for witnesses to identify). The front office is open from 8.00 am to 4.00 pm

Questions:

Q: Julian James, Streetwise

If alcoholics are being moved on and prosecuted, why not drug users?

A: The police have worked closely with drug users for a long time as it is realised they need help and that there is a link between drug use and crime but this issue needs a major commitment from Central Government to be resolved.

Q: Pete Buller, St Pauls Unlimited

If the police are targeting street drinkers are they going to do anything about targeting the off-licences that sell to them?

A: Martin Devlin and Elliott Price are responsible for the policing of the other side of Stokes Croft and Martin has dealt with street drinkers before. There have been initiatives targeted at off-licences who sell to drunk and under age people, so this is being dealt with.

Q: The flyers that are placed on cars about the parking, are they also put through letterboxes?

A: No, although this is something we considered doing so residents would be aware of what is going to happen. Enforced action has not been taken yet;

warnings will go out before it is.

Q: Ruth Pitter, Voscur

What evidence is there since the introduction of CPSOs that there has been more police engagement with communities?

A: Beat Surgeries are being run; local people are attending them and giving positive feedback about interaction with the police. Events that the police have been involved in have also been successful and relationships have been formed whereby people are recognising and approaching police and CPSOs.

Q: Paul German, Rethink

Do CPSOs have training in mental health issues or other issues that may affect those they come into contact with? Rethink would like to work with you to develop this.

A: At the moment there is no training. It would be helpful to us to talk with Rethink as Beat Managers would welcome any input in considering what type of issues their officers and CPSOs should be trained in, and how they could source this training.

5. News and Views Update

Linda Bell St Werburghs Community Centre

St Werburghs Community Centre, is running a new small not for profit design company. The company aims to consider the environmental impact of printing and is looking to work with organisations within the VCS. Linda handed out brochures and further information can be obtained from the Community Centre.

Lorraine Woolston, Knightstone Housing

Knightstone have six 1-bedroomed flats available for intermediate rents. Knightstone acquires property with a view to letting to those who may not be given priority to obtain Council or Housing Association property but cannot afford private rent. The flats are in Chesterton House, St Pauls and local people will be given priority. Further information will be added to the Voscur website.

Peter Buller, St Pauls Unlimited

The Arts Festival Week / Open Space will be held between 16th – 21st April at St Pauls Learning Centre. Also a party in Portland Square aimed at young people from the local area is being planned to celebrate the completion of the new railings.

Matthew Symonds, Voscur

The Community Cohesion conference 'I'm A Bristol- Who are You!' is taking place on 21st March; details are available on Voscur's website and in the latest Voscur Newsletter. Voscur is keen to get representation particularly from local people and communities.

6. Close

RP thanked everyone for coming and participating and the speakers for their input. The next Central Network Meeting will be after the summer. If anyone would like to raise any issues or contribute to the next meeting then please contact Ruth at Voscur on 0117 909 9949 email: ruth@voscur.org