

LEE GREEN LIVES INAUGURAL MEETING

**Wednesday 24 March 2010 7.30pm – 9.30pm
Lee New Testament Church of God
351 Lee High Road, London SE12**

Record of Meeting

- 1.0 **Welcome, introduction and format for meeting**
2.0 **Cllr Brian Robson welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the meeting agenda as follows:**

- Introduction and format for meeting
- A presentation on Meanwhile
- Adopting the Lee Green Lives Group constitution
- Break
- A presentation by one of the Lee Green Lives partners (Make Believe Arts)
- An update on Town Centre Management
- Update on youth forum activities
- Nomination of officers to the Group

In his introduction, Cllr Robson stated the reason the meeting had been called. Leegate identified as a priority for the area at the first Lee Green Assembly meeting held in June 2008. Other assembly priorities were improvements to Manor Park, provision for young people and parking control.

What has been done so far to move Leegate priority forward:

- A core group of local people has met with owners of Leegate Centre(St Modwen) and local businesses to discuss Leegate issues.
- A survey created to get the views of local residents and businesses in the area about the Leegate Centre
- St Modwen has offered the use of Unit 3 Leegate for community usage
- Partnership work has been developed with a government project (Meanwhile) and Make Believe Arts to develop unit 3 Leegate

Cllr Robson thanked all the volunteers who had been working behind the scene to move the Leegate priority forward and introduced Jess Steele from Meanwhile project.

2.0 **Presentation - Meanwhile project**

Jess Steele introduced the Meanwhile project a government project set up in 2008. Jess works for the Development Trust Association. The meanwhile idea was embraced by cross politicians when the idea was suggested to government. The project was set up to support individuals and organisations to bring buildings and lands that has become temporarily redundant into constructive use. She mentioned that the Meanwhile Space works with landlords, landowners, developers and local authorities to relieve them temporarily of liabilities (i.e. rates, insurance e.t.c.) associated with holding redundant land and premises whilst an appropriate solution is sought.

She mentioned the effects the recent economic downturn have had throughout the country in towns, villages and cities across England which has resulted in businesses closure and shops boarded up. This had exacerbated the economic slump: partially vacant high streets do not encourage people to shop locally, invest in the area or develop new initiatives and businesses. She explained that the department for Communities and Local Government had recognised that this issue needs to be addressed hence the introduction of Meanwhile project.

An explanation of Meanwhile use described as the idea that vacant shops and other town centre properties can, and should, be used in a way that benefits the area, the local community, the local authority, and the landlord, until such a time that they can be used for commercial purposes again. She explained that Meanwhile use is not the same as a temporary lease or licence because it explicitly recognises that the search for a commercial use will be ongoing. Jess listed some of the Meanwhile programme of works as follows:

Meanwhile Programme of work:

- Promote the idea of the benefits of Meanwhile to communities, businesses, land owners and developers
- Get owners to agree the use of empty premises rent free. The idea is that landlord will offer premises rent free and users will be responsible for paying rates for use during the agreed period.
- Some of the project developed by Meanwhile across the country can be found in Hoxton Street in Hackney, Dover, Bexley and Bradford.
- Partnership work developed between Meanwhile project and Make Believe Arts to move forward the Leegate vision

Jess stated that offering this support to the community sometimes results in local people owning those assets. In the case of Leegate, local people invited Meanwhile to assist with driving forward the Leegate vision thereby developing a Meanwhile lease at unit 3 Leegate Centre. The propose usage were for a youth club and a community resource centre. Meanwhile has agreed £25,000 funding to further the vision for the Leegate project. The funding has been agreed with the understanding that other empty unit within the princint

will be opened for community usage. Jess encouraged attendees to get involved and make good use of the fund allocated to Leegate.

Jess cited examples of areas where the Meanwhile project has been successfully delivered. She mentioned the Bradford project 'FABRIC', where a Bradford based arts umbrella organisation, converted two acres of the Westfield Hole, a delayed development site into an urban park and is developing pop-up arts space in a flagship building in Bradford's Centenary Square, including a pop-up cinema as part of Bradford film festival.

The Southampton approach was also cited where the Trust had been working with a group of local traders to spark new investment in the local retail economy of Northam Road, Southampton. This is an area once considered the hub of the city but now suffering with a high level of empty properties. The initiative set up a street market to increase footfall to the area, brought three redundant units back into use and encouraged local enterprise by refurbishing and launching three retail incubators for new business start-ups. The project also install local art and planting displays in and around vacant units to create an attractive and unique shopping environment.

A question raised about community share initiative and how they benefit community. Jess informed that the Development Trust Association are experienced at working with a number of projects for community share. They can provide advise if the community in Lee Green wishes to explore the option.

Cllr Alexander commended the works of the Meanwhile projects and asked if a tool kit can be developed to support Council and other partners. Jess informed that a handbook had been created. An intermediary hand book has been added to the handbook to support owners who do not wish to deal with small groups. In this instances, a large organisation such as the Council can be invited to act as intermediary.

3.0 **Constitution**

The Lee Green Lives Constitution was introduced by Cllr Robson who explained the benefits of having a set of rules guiding the Group. He stated the benefits of adopting a group Constitution as follows:

- Essential for opening a group bank account
- Required when making application for funding
- Useful for when applying for charitable status and rebate for business rates

A voting by show of hand took place for adopting the constitution. Result shows all in favour and none against. Cllr Robson implored attendees to support the group by considering joining the committee.

4.0 **A presentation – Make Believe Arts**

Trish informed that Make Believe Arts a voluntary organisation based in Deptford, was established 8years ago. The organisation delivers arts and theatre to children and young people. The project works with parents and teachers in schools and stay and play groups across London. Key to the work of their programme is the use of story as play (acting). The project also delivers youth theatre at holiday programmes.

Trish mention that the organisation involvement with Lee Green Lives group was new. The project was approached by Meanwhile space to assist the newly formed Lee Green Lives Group to take on the temporary lease of unit 3 Leegate for six months period pending LGL application for charitable status. The project will be working with the Lee Green Lives Group and the Lewisham Youth Service to deliver a range of activities within the initial six months and hope to continue delivery after this period. Some of the proposal for the area include the development of a mother toddler group at Leegate.

Part of the support provided by the organisation has been around applying for the Meanwhile space funding on behalf of the Lee Green Lives Group, drawing up a budget breakdown on running cost for unit 3 and the designation of an outreach worker to the area. Ross Bolwell-Williams outreach worker assigned to Leegate introduced at the meeting.

When asked about MBA links with the Leegate survey, Trish explained that MBA will be considering the ideas collected from the Leegate survey and will be working in partnership with the community to realise their vision for the Centre. Trish was also asked about what percentage of the funding secured will be spent on activities and core cost. Trish responding informed that the fund is currently a loose budget, but further conversation will need to be held with Lee Green Lives on distribution of budget.

There was a request for information on the activities and some of the projects that has been delivered by Make Believe Arts.

Action: Trish to send information on MBA activities and projects to Ade to circulate with minute of meeting.

Jim Mallory reiterating the partnership work between Lee Green Lives and MBA mentioned that some of the fund secured from Meanwhile will be used to improve Leegate environment which will include provision of benches, planting, open market and art exhibition e.t.c. Jim commended the involvement and the work that has been done by young people towards this project to date and encourage the involvement of the wider community in Lee Green. It was felt that community involvement and presence will be key to future development of the Leegate Centre, where views of the community will be reflected.

Salma Hathbul, new Town Centre manager assigned to Leegate Centre introduced to the meeting. Salma had recently been appointed by the Council to support businesses across three areas (Leegate, Brockley and Ladywell until Sept 2011). Her role comprises of offering business advice and support to old and emerging businesses in the areas she covers including access to information and support on sustaining their businesses. Salma has been support St Modwen to generate investments to keep the Centre vibrant.

Since her appointment, Salma mentioned that she had forged a good working relationship with local businesses in the Leegate area, making sure they have a voice in communicating projects and their aspiration for the centre. Salma has met with St Modwen to find out the company aspiration for the centre and get their agreement to proceed with proposed projects towards reviving the centre. Some of the works planned for reviving the centre includes:

- Producing and displaying lively pictures and art works on vacant shop front
- Improving communal lighting at the centre. Permission had been granted by St Modwen for lighting works and art and craft market in the square.
- Contact made with Police Safer Neighbourhood Team following complaint received about antisocial behaviour in and around the centre. Works to address problem to commences in April
- Creating investment paths to support new and emerging businesses. These information will also be sent to local estate agent and individuals registered with the Council who are looking at starting a business
- Work with local businesses to do promotion that will generate and attract more business for the area.
- Town Centre Management newsletter available for publicising news on local businesses.

A suggestion was made that Town Centre Management might want to involve Make Believe Arts and local schools in creating painting and arts for display on empty shop front. Salma informed that partnership work to deliver all the projects proposed for the centre is paramount to the works delivered by town centre management and all parties will be involved in the improvements of the centre when creating pictures and arts to brighten up the area. Salma also gave update on five vacant units at the Leegate Centre in the process of re-letting. Details of the units has been passed to St Modwen Legal section for further actions. The units are units 3, 11, 5, 14 & 15. proposed usage for these units are community resources centre, book shop, gents hairdresser and green grocers.

6.0

Update on Lee Green Youth

Three young people from the Lee Green youth forum gave a summary outline of what the youth forum has been doing since it was created in Dec 2009. They informed of the piece of work that young people has done in contribution the Leegate process as follows:

- Youth presented ideas on young peoples views and aspiration on the current state of Leegate Centre and what they will like to see included in any proposed future development at the lat Assembly Meeting held in January.
- Leadership training delivered to 25 young people in Dec 2009.
- Young people have held discussion on the different ways they can contribute to improving their area.
- Outreach work conducted in the community with different ages to collect views about improvements to their local area.

The young people stresses the importance of developing community cohesion and building good working relations with all sectors of the community. It was felt there was a strong sense of belonging amongst young people from the area. Young people present were keen to get involved in the Leegate project and expresses a keen interest in the work that will be delivered by Make Believe Arts and Town Centre management.

A summary of funding acquired to progress with the different projects proposed for young people were mentioned. These includes the £20,000 from the Assembly Mayor's fund allocated for the development of a youth space in Leegate and the additional funding given from the Locality fund for training and development. Currently young people from the youth forum are planning a residential for young people which is aimed at galvanising young people's energy.

Ross from Make Believe Arts mentioned that he felt very encouraged and impressed by the energy brought into this project by young people and pledges MBA support to further develop the process that had already begun.

7.0

Nomination of officers to the Lee Green Lives Group Committee

Following a nomination process conducted the following people were accepted for the Lee Green Lives Committee.

Chair – Jim Mallory

Vice Chair – Will Shepherd and Karen Pollock

Secretary – Mary Petty

Treasurer – Andrea Hughes

General Committee members: Barbara Reid, Ralph White, Duncan Mason, Paul Connelly, Dee Weeks, Elizabeth Jecka, Jade Lawrence (young people representative), Agatha Elliott and Jo-Anne Tidldesley.

In his closing remarks, Cllr Robson thanked all attendees and informed that all nominated committee members will be advised of the date of the first committee meeting. A proposal was put forward to co-opt Cllr Robson as an honorary member in recognition of his contribution towards an established Lee Green Lives group. This proposal was accepted by all.

The chair thanked attendees and brought the meeting to a close.