

HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

LOCAL AGENDA 21 FORUM

*THE BOROUGH'S INDEPENDENT PLATFORM, TAKING INITIATIVES
TODAY TO IMPROVE OUR QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE 21ST CENTURY*

Annual Report 1996-1997

OUR FORUM was established in 1994. It sets out to engage all elements of the community in reaching some consensus on the preferred form of our society in the next century, a society that is as sustainable as an inner London borough can be. And as important, a society that is inclusive, able to be self critical and confident that it can effect change for the better, to improve our quality of life. The membership of our Executive Committee aims to reflect the diversity of our community and is refreshed at each of its meetings by members of the public and of local organisations contributing to its proceedings.

So what's a Forum?

[Latin *forum* (fo'-rum) n. the market place]

THIS REPORT shows two things. First, that our Forum has been indeed a market place, a market place for ideas. Second, that converting these ideas into some agreed policy is difficult. The well of ideas in the Borough is easily used. Our Open Space programme has continued with one meeting in the south of the borough at Our Lady of Help Church, Stevendale Road and one in the north, at the Fatima Centre, White City. In publicising these events, we used the following slogan in exhorting the community to participate. It worked.

"A hundred visions for a better Borough in the next century"

SO WHAT MOVED PEOPLE IN FULHAM?

Aircraft noise: Heathrow T5; 4am landings; helicopters at Battersea; possible accidents

Accidents: Statistics show that Fulham has a higher accident rate than Hammersmith and other London boroughs, especially for those under 5 years and over 65. This principally relates to road accidents and reflects its traffic problems.

Injuries: Statistics show that Fulham has a higher incidence of non-traffic injuries. These relate to child abuse and violence in the home and public places. Also, the south of the borough has a high suicide/attempted suicide rate. It was agreed that these statistics must reflect stress levels in the borough. Loneliness was considered a cause.

Health facilities: The highly-rated Parsons Green Clinic should be kept open. When an environment assessment is undertaken, the impact on health facilities should be taken in consideration.

Living with disabilities: Step-downs across roads are too often blocked by parked cars which never seem to be booked.

The River Walk: Missing paving stones thrown in the river by vandals should be replaced

Air Quality: Statistics taken by apparatus in the borough measure NOX and similar gases but not particulates from motor engines. Until then, the statistics won't be credible indicators.

Vandalism: This might be reduced if CCTV was introduced. Local communities like that near Pineapple Park might agree to introduce a regular patrol in the park. An update from the police on the Neighbourhood Watch programme would be useful. Some element of zero tolerance might be re-examined.

Parks and Open Spaces: This part of the borough has a wonderful asset, the river -but it's wasted principally through the building of luxury blocks right up to the river side which create a tall wall along the riverside. This type of development strips from the river any link it has with the community. Riverside developments we'd like to see would feature grassy spaces, flowerbeds and social facilities like cafes. Youngsters want to see a play area a small wildlife area. And a maze! Older people, quiet benches for reading. Pineapple Park and South Park should be reviewed, with the participation of local youngsters.

Housing: Current policy on some council estates leads to introducing 'difficult' people among the elderly and disabled. This policy unfairly victimises the socially excluded who then lose heart in their efforts to maintain a community spirit. There is also a generational gap. Younger tenants don't appear to have the same feeling of ownership as older people. We feel the HAFTRA must be encouraged to increase its penetration and influence on such estates. There is criticism of the quality of housing management, especially on the Townmead and Water Meadow estates.

The Community: The local area, like the borough, is mixed. It is wrong to imagine the south of the borough, Fulham, as being rich and the north, White City, as poor. Statistics would support that but Fulham has pockets of poverty. Living in an area which is reflecting rising prosperity makes life more difficult. Local shops which once served a cohesive community now serve only part of the society (the poorer part). Richer residents can afford to travel outside the district to the West End and elsewhere. Conversely, the local amenity shops that have closed have been replaced by shops that stock items (antiques, pine furniture) targeted towards the lifestyle of richer residents and those living further away. While this attracts custom to the district, it does not benefit local people. The new residents tend to be in a different age-range (30-50) and are (like those in other parts of the country, no doubt) pre-occupied with elements of life which were not there, say, 30 years ago. We are tending to live 'on our own little islands'. This skewing of the community has also tended to ghetto-ise the elderly, traditionally seen as the cement of a community; keepers of the memory, the library of the informal society.

Some pubs no longer set out to attract the local community, rather to offer an ambience which might attract those from far away. Some are noisy late an night and intimidating to those living nearby. Again, pockets of helplessness in a seemingly rich community can exist. How can this be tackled? Formally through better police liaison. And, through the community forming, for example, forums such as ARISE. These can be 'beacons' for action. Both courses should be pursued. The existence between the rich and the poor in the district is a reality but more sensitive initiatives to prevent these parts of the community becoming blind to each other must be supported.

It was argued that we cannot return to the type of community spirit enjoyed fifty years ago; the necessary ingredients are not there. But, if there is a community at all, it is us. If we claim to live in the area, then the development of the community is down to us.

Traffic: Traffic within and through the south of the borough adversely affects community life. The volume of this traffic and its speed prevents us from enjoying local amenities to the full. For example, cars and heavy trucks using Imperial Road and Townmead Road travel too fast and existing controls are inadequately enforced, especially regarding illegal parking at street corner inclines intended for wheelchair users. There are too few controlled crossings on Townmead Road.

The advent of controlled parking is welcomed and severe reduction of spaces for non-residents is urged. Local companies should provide spaces for their staff. The problem on days when local football teams are playing at home should be addressed.

Public Transport: Improvement in public transport and reducing its cost would encourage local people to use their cars less. The feasibility of introducing a dedicated Car Free Day or, say, a Green Week (first week in June) should be examined. Bus lanes and bike lanes should be encouraged but we understand the problems these can bring to shopkeepers. The introduction of a bus interchange at Fulham Broadway should be examined; also, shorter routes. Frequency on routes C3, C4, 28 and 295 should be raised. Traditional Routemaster buses are preferred by some, mainly because their drivers are better disciplined.

...AND WHAT MOVED PEOPLE IN WHITE CITY?

Refugees: The Borough houses refugees from various countries. Some longer-established residents in council housing consider that the refugees have been offered superior housing (in the King Street area) at their expense. Ethnic minorities can be seen to be (and maybe are) exclusive of each other. Some are better organised and are seen to get things done, again at the expense of the broader community which, of course, includes immigrants from an earlier era. It is tempting to think that this two-dimensional image fits a stereotype which those responsible for forging the social structures of the future can afford to dismiss. "Let's address the needs of the young to avoid creating more of such people." That temptation must always be resisted. In fact, as shown by later discussion featuring creativity, insights into tolerance and philosophical reflection, such knee-jerk statements, quickly recorded, can give entirely incorrect images of the social mix in White City.

Listening to the excluded:

The theme is one that reflects a society that includes those who feel excluded, unheard, even rejected. White City houses many who see themselves as the excluded; after all, the unemployment statistics of wards covering the area make miserable reading.

"My boy, a brilliant runner was passed over for a white boy to represent the school. No, I didn't see the head master, what was the point? A friend of his, representing the school with the epee, he was passed over also. Why, because he wears contact lenses! So, how can he represent the school? Yes, there's racism in the school. And yet, the local sports stadium is named after the olympic gold medallist, Linford Christy."

So what's the challenge?

The challenge is to persuade local people that their efforts will bring results.

"A full bucket is filled by single drops, the first no smaller than the last but no less effective."

So how long will integration take? 100 years, some participants argued. Is the prediction of such a

long period a cop-out, a rejection to pour the first drop? Why not try to make it 20 years, a period that would be relevant to our children? What initiatives can we take now that can reduce 100 to 20? In the community, we should seek to bring together leaders of the different immigrant communities, commit them to work together and to stick together; to establish a climate of tolerance and mutual inquisitiveness.

How might it work?

How would one imagine a project in White City that would bring together leaders from, say, ten immigrant groups? A project that would lift personal horizons? What would sensitize them to stick together? Is there a mission out there waiting to be initiated? What existing social structures need to be sensitively taken into account?

What about the women?

How has the role of women been handled to date? The example of FULPAC might give a clue. If a similar project was instituted in the White City, would mothers from different ethnic groups provide a bonding force? The creche is a levelling influence. Has any formal sociological or psychological research been undertaken in this context? What is the literacy rate amongst women in ethnic minorities? How would we measure the success of such a venture? Perhaps by the number of children; the number of ethnic groups working within it, its survival and its copying to other parts of the borough.

Aliens are fantasy...or are they?

Areas like the White City can be alienating. Residents, especially the young can only resort to fantasy. This is offered by TV and drugs and other experiences that can be switched on and off. The idea that we are all part of nature is not recognised and, as a consequence, we become alienated from nature. The demands of young people are such that they feel rejected if their wishes are not met. The vicious circle will feed on itself if not broken. The introduction of projects in the community which recognise and teach about the reality of nature (as opposed to man-made fantasy) should be encouraged and given project-funding.

So what do youngsters worry about?

Youngsters from local schools highlighted the high incidence of bullying in both the playground (which should be stopped) and in public places. This appears to be a constant problem, rooted in local traditions. But, again, the circle can be broken if initiatives are taken. For those under twelve, the provision of play centres is important. The Australia Road play area is highly rated and the 'girls only' night approved. The Janet Adekoko Centre in Blomfontein Road is over-used and it is too far to travel to Action or Brentford, the nearest similar facilities. Football and basketball facilities are scarce but we must acknowledge that our Open Space event was using the basketball court; however, no previous booking had been made!

Can youth empowerment really work?

We need in the borough a one-stop *First Base* which can direct young people towards constructing their careers. The example of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea's *One Step* programme was examined. This operates with funding from the Borough and the European Social Fund. One third of its course members come from LB H&F, mainly from Shepherds Bush and White City. Its *'Independence Association'* seeks to provide younger people with the life skills necessary for independent living through short courses, some termed *'taster'* courses. Subjects offered include cookery and household maintenance. The sister *'Portobello project'* offers counsel on

empowerment. The Metropolitan Police support '*Bash*', which helps recovery from a stroke. A participant introduced the SERVOL programme in Trinidad which offers on-the-job training. We should support current initiatives set up by the borough's Community Liaison programme.

Local initiatives

Activities to encourage young mothers to get out of their homes, together with their children, should be encouraged. The importance of creative expression as a way of identifying and strengthening cross-ethnic connections is insufficiently recognised and developed. Can the concept of creating creativity itself be the 'pull', the idea that making things -putting things into the system - is more rewarding than taking things out. Clearly, a forum or platform, a festival or recurring event is needed which will enable such manifestations to breathe, reach and sustain criticism and brush against the wider world. An example of 'Independence training', perhaps, and one that, if pursued, would tend to maintain contact with those continuing to live in the area. Wishful thinking? No. Each year, the Notting Hill Carnival offers hundreds within the community the opportunity to 'bend wire', to help construct magnificent costumes and floats. Within the area, there must be Mas' camps, working late into the night for the late-August event of the year.

An event which encourages a broader cross-section of the community to contribute should be encouraged. As a footnote, traditional Mas' themes follow closely those identified with Local Agenda 21.

Who eats out?

As lifestyles change, more people are choosing to eat out more often. More restaurants are opened, putting further strain on Council health inspectors. Some people are deterred by fears that kitchen cleanliness is not up to scratch. Why not initiate a 'Clean Kitchen Club', inviting all restaurants to state that their kitchens are open to diners at any time; perhaps after meals have commenced, to deter walk-in trouble-makers.

Care in the community

The borough has its fair share of disruptive residents, a reflection of society at large. But what is the responsibility of the community in handling such people? This is never made clear and, as a result, leads to worsening the quality of life for many. The fallback excuse that 'it's up to the council' seldom leads to satisfactory results. Who is to tell the council, the police, the relevant GP, even relatives? What are the civic responsibilities of neighbours in these cases?

In some locations where the elderly and disabled find themselves colonised by dysfunctional incomers, some prematurely released from hospital, the quality of living will take an acute nosedive with possibly harmful consequences. In most cases, single residents can create a shadow over a small area with nobody sure what to do.

There is a need for some course which neighbours can follow, akin to training. We explored whether streets could establish some sort of informal support network, along the lines of Neighbourhood Watch. Like a cat's cradle, the collective efforts of such a micro-community could take action to the benefit of all but there are no guidelines. Within the council, the need for coordination between different services is prerequisite but, despite elaborate structures and highly-skilled managers, unnecessary incidences continue to occur. The cooperation of the community is needed but only if it can be linked to the statutory body responsible for maintaining the 'bottom line' support, the Council. After all, that is what is being paid for. Well, isn't it?

EARLY OBSERVATIONS ON THE OPEN SPACE EVENTS

So how and when do we translate these hundred visions for a better Borough into a consensus? We

plan to continue the Open Space programme in the coming year. The format is successful, throwing up ideas which formal consultation procedures could never do. Then, using other sociometric concepts such as Future Search and a Vision Fair, we will be able to synthesize the myriad visions of the future into that consensus. We recognise that this will take time.

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE FOR THOSE WITH DISABILITIES

The Forum has discussed the particular challenges facing those with disabilities, some of whom feel excluded to such a degree that they distrust initiatives to assist them. The stance taken by the Forum is to encourage these, through HAFAD, to discuss and agree their own visions and to share them. We have asked HAFAD, through its *Speakeasy* group to settle on some indicators by which we could measure changes for the good (or bad) in our society. We recognise that this will take time and we are prepared for the long haul. Here are some of the early issues we have discussed.

Transport indicators; the advent of 'kneeling' buses and their distribution. Might this be dependent upon the choice of garages equipped to service these buses? Indicators of taxicard and dial-a-ride usage were also valuable.

Social Benefits; the incidence of Incapacity Benefit payments, relating this to education; the take-up of Evening classes run by the council, indicating what percentage are accessible to the disabled. *[An easy check could be made on how many hours are attended by those who qualify for discounted tuition fees, essentially the disabled]* The percentage of disabled children in integrated schools, but what would be the target and why?

Further, a schedule of the borough's sports and keepfit facilities reserved for the disabled would be a good indicator. Perhaps a pilot scheme, measuring the take-up in hours per month, could be tried.

The *Access Guide* is now totally outdated and needs to be revised prior to being useful as a startpoint as an indicator. It could report on banks, cinemas, council services, supermarkets, theatres, and other public areas, indicating features like steps, counter height and speakpoints. The *Home Delivery Services* are vital, essentially for those who do not qualify for a 'carer' service. A pilot scheme using local shops who will collect orders, say weekly, and deliver from the order could be tried.

HAFAD's location

The planned relocation of the HAFAD office concerns many users. A measure of how many person visits there are to HAFAD and how many will use them after it moves should be straightforward. Also, how might the total quality of the service be measured?

How does the rest of the community treat those with disabilities?

Following our meetings, HAFAD will have a brainstorming session at future *Speakeasy* meetings. They might arrive at '*The ten most exasperating features where the wider society overlooks the needs of the disabled*'.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS IN THE BOROUGH

Last year, we affirmed our determination that the wider community should participate in determining those indicators that will reflect progress towards a more sustainable society and towards raising the perceived '*quality of life*'. To encourage this, we set out to identify a series of '*quick start*' indicators. What progress have we made?

Transport: Our transport working group has put 'on hold' moves to use London Transport statistics in this work. Instead, it has decided to examine more closely the decision-making processes in the borough and in adjacent boroughs. It registered its disappointment with the borough's Environment Committee which, practically uniquely in London, chose not to endorse the (last) government's widely-welcomed Road Traffic (Reduction) Bill. This has led to continuing discussion with the borough's Roads officer. The group has entered into discussion with the representatives of the developers of the new White City development, adjacent to the railway line. We see the most recent proposal as an improvement on the original plan but regret its lack of attention to dedicated bus lanes, parking provisions and lack of commitment to the provision of delivery of goods by the key stores to the elderly and disabled.

Recycling: We were disappointed that our many creative suggestions tended to be overlooked by the Council. However, we are now in fresh discussions and expect to make better progress in the coming year.

Health: We have established the indicators we introduced last year, thanks to the cooperation of the West London Health Promotion Agency.

Economy: We have been assisted by the Hammersmith & Fulham Trades Council in reaching the type of information we require to establish meaningful indicators. These will assist identify those wards where poverty is highest and achievement is lowest. We might choose to target these wards for *Open Space* meetings to ascertain what changes are seen there as realisable.

Social Change: We continue to work closely with Hammersmith & Fulham Action for Disability (HAFAD) as indicated elsewhere in this report.

OTHER INITIATIVES

THE RIVER THAMES

The Forum discussed the planning proposals for Fulham Football Club on several occasions, especially the impact of the permitted encroachment into the river. We concluded that the decision of the Inspector appointed by the (previous) Department of the Environment was flawed. It decided to support the new *ThamesBank* initiative and it expects to become a member when that body is formally constituted. Also, the Forum is represented on the Committee of the River Thames Coordinating Group.

TELLING IT AS IT IS

The Forum agreed that, if possible, a Newsletter should be published. A questionnaire seeking the views of the community is being analysed. In a parallel move, the Forum has applied for a National Grid *Community 21* award, seeking to publish an 8-page tabloid style newsletter with a circulation

of about 10,000.

LISTENING TO WHAT'S HAPPENING

The Executive Committee invites presentations from members of the public and those representing local organisations. A number of departments of the Council have made presentations also. These are very welcome.

KEEPING AFLOAT

The Forum's financial statement to 31 March 1997 is attached. Above the income granted through the Borough's Environment Committee, we have sought financial support from the community. Members range from individuals to international corporations based in the borough. We intend to strengthen this programme in the coming year.

Elected Officers and Committee for the year 1996-1997

<i>Chairman</i>	David Wardrop
<i>Hon Secretary</i>	Sue Ingham
<i>Hon Treasurer</i>	Mike Lachowicz

Representatives of the following sectors of the community

<i>Business</i>	The Body Shop
<i>Education & Young People</i>	Vacant
<i>Employees Representatives</i>	Hammersmith & Fulham Trades Council
<i>Faith groups</i>	Vacant
<i>Health</i>	West London Health Promotion Agency
<i>Ethnic/Minority Communities</i>	Council for Racial Equality
<i>Owner occupiers</i>	Vacant
<i>People with disabilities</i>	HAFAD
<i>Tenants</i>	HAFTRA
<i>Transport</i>	SUSTRANS
<i>Women</i>	Womens Environment Network
<i>Local Authority</i>	London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
Elected ordinary members	Helen Rawlinson, Michael McDermott, Anne-Marie Perry

Note: we seek to fill all vacancies.