

# City Centre Neighbourhood Forum

## REPORT FOR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2008

Our neighbourhood forum has been in existence for four years, since September 2004. And we continue to be accepted by the City 'movers and shakers' as a genuine voice of those people who live in the city centre, as distinct from those who work here or visit it.

This forum has board positions on both of the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) operating in the city centre area - Jon Lord and David Foster are the nominees with Retail and Broad Street BIDs respectively. Both of us make it our duty to engage constructively with the businesses within these BIDs. This gives residents an effective route to influence business operations in these neighbourhoods. Prospective BIDs (Colmore/Business District and Southside) want to include resident representatives in their organisations, too.

Committee members have also represented residents at the City Centre Partnership Board, in Police Neighbourhood tasking meetings and, more recently, with our NHS Primary Care Trust (Heart of Birmingham Teaching PCT) from whom we are hearing more this evening.

### **On the topic of big future plans for Birmingham...**

In May last year, the Forum heard presentations from Philip Singleton, a senior officer in the Council Planning Department, on the City Centre Masterplan. At the time, residents asked to be consulted as this major activity developed but he gave no promises. A recent contact leads us to hope for a serious opportunity to contribute before the end of the year. We residents must become more demanding. We hope to arrange another public meeting on this topic at the end of the year.

### **On the topic of recycling ...**

At our public meeting in December Jeremy Shields of the Council's Waste Management Department promised improved refuse segregation services for city centre residents. So far these have not been delivered on the timescale he indicated, though there is some progress. Through our involvement with the City Centre Partnership, we know that segregated refuse bins are being planned for city streets.

We have also helped several residents and resident groups with advice, and by helping them to draw official attention to their issues.

In the course of the year Birmingham council has changed the way that local community participation within the City is funded and organised. The Council's B:cen community empowerment project has ended, as has the Council's direct support of the central Birmingham Association of Neighbourhood Forums, BANF. A formal "Local Strategic Partnership" called BeBirmingham has been established by the Council. This is required to form a range of consultation mechanisms and we have tried to determine how best to engage with it. Since BeBirmingham is where your Forum must now apply for its annual support grant, this is important. This changing regime has encouraged various new networks to emerge, for example, Community Networks 4 Birmingham (CN4B). For the time being we cannot see any benefit from becoming formally involved with any other networks, but will keep this under review. At the moment we shall continue to be formally linked with BANF.

This report began by stating that this Forum is accepted as a "a genuine voice of those people who live in the city centre". If we are to continue to be accepted the committee must be strengthened. The committee currently has 5 serving members and we hope that more of you will join this evening.

It is also essential that residents can maintain close contact with committee members throughout the year so we can represent your views. Public meetings are organised when you tell us of issues you want to discuss. A newsletter is possible, though it is costly to produce and the delivery is uncertain.

We have tried a number of electronic routes for communicating with residents including email, a website, and on Facebook.

- email ([forum@brumcitycentre.com](mailto:forum@brumcitycentre.com)) – please ensure you have added your email address to our meeting registration form if want to be added to our circulation list.
- a website (you can see it at [www.brumcitycentre.com](http://www.brumcitycentre.com)), this is still being improved and we aim to make it more interactive so please continue to visit it and see it grow.
- the Facebook group 'brumcitycentre' - just search for this in 'groups' on Facebook (<http://www.new.facebook.com/group.php?gid=24324326816>)

Please let any committee member know what you think about these, or any alternatives you can propose.

The committee has had to change its postal address during the year. So, as well as any of these electronic means, you can reach the City Centre Neighbourhood Forum by conventional mail:- c/o King Edwards Wharf, Sheepcote Street, Birmingham B16 8AB.

M. D. Foster  
(Secretary)  
September 15, 2008