

St George's Ward Partnership

Tuesday 2 February 2021, 7pm to 9pm

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. COVID-19 Community Response: Food and VCS with Q&A (Pam Aristokle, Community and Ward Partnership Development Manager)
3. COVID-19 Community Response: We Are Islington with Q&A (Manny Lewis, Strategic Lead – Customer Access and Experience)
4. Local Mutual Aid with Q&A (Elaine Maffrett, Hilldrop Community Centre)
5. Borough Investment Panel with Q&A (Gerard Coll, Team Leader – Viability and Obligations)
6. What do you want to see happen in St. George's? Discussion and Q&A (Councillors)
7. Close and AOB

Welcome

Clr Tricia Clarke, Clr Satnam Gill and Clr Gulcin Ozdemir welcomed attendees. Clr Clarke assumed the role of chair.

Food and VCS Response

- The community has pulled together during the COVID-19 pandemic – voluntary organisations, We are Islington, and local institutions have all worked together to assist residents.
- 22 community food projects have been in place across the borough, throughout the last 11 months. Hilldrop Community Centre has been central to these efforts.
- The Phoenix Project has delivered 10,000s of food parcels from the central food hub which has been hosted at the Emirates Stadium, and is now at Westbourne Community Centre. Arsenal have provided over 8 lorries full of food, and local businesses have made significant donations and contributions also.
- Councillors have been delivering food parcels directly, as well as providing gas and electricity top ups.
- These systems will remain in place until there is no longer a need for them. Currently, work is being done on how this system and legacy of these hubs working together can be maintained.
- So far, £400,000 has been raised to support the crisis efforts of local organisations - £100,000s of which has been raised through national lottery funding. Thousands of volunteers have signed up, and there has been some redeployment of council officers to organise placements for people interested in volunteering. Including MAGs (Mutual Aid Groups), who were the first responders at the beginning of the pandemic.
- Through Test and Trace funding and the Covid Winter Grant, aligning with the London Community Response Fund Wave 4, £120k was funded to 13 organisations supporting community food initiatives and messaging. More funding to go out.

We Are Islington (WAI)

- Launched on 21/03/2020 – set up to support anyone who was vulnerable, lonely and self-isolating.
- Phonenumber number is 020 7527 8222 – call for anything Covid-related or that you need support with. The number has a BSL (British Sign Language) and sign video link.
- WAI is linked in to a range of services including medication, income maximisation, and adult social care to provide specialist support.
- 16,000 contacts since March 2020, in addition to 8,000 shielded residents, needing support with e.g. food, prescriptions, fuel and general wellbeing. Contacts are still coming through.
 - St. George's Ward – 552 contacts including 40 people in financial difficulty, 13 needing fuel support, 11 needing a carer, 31 needing help with prescriptions and 70 with wellbeing/welfare concerns.
- WAI is now expanding by helping the NHS test and trace service – so far had 1300 referrals from the national test and trace service.
- Helped parents during school closures by providing food vouchers and supporting hospital discharge pathways.
- Now working with NHS to design and implement an offer to support the vaccination programme.

Question from resident: How would people who don't have transport get to vaccinations?

Manny: if you have trouble getting to a vaccination centre, contact WAI as we can arrange transport.

Question from resident: I help residents get vaccinations. What happens if someone is in a LTN (low traffic neighbourhood)? I could get fined for going across. How is this being coordinated?

Manny: I will have to investigate and come back to this question. My approach generally is we will find a way.

Question from resident: How has it been working with Mutual Aid Groups (MAGs)?

Manny: Brilliant – WAI wouldn't work without MAGs; they've advised us on how to develop the service.

Question from resident: for Pam and Manny – have you seen volunteer fatigue and what is the advice/strategy around this?

Manny: I haven't seen volunteer fatigue personally; we are still getting a lot of community support. What I'm hoping is that the vaccinations are the light of the end of the tunnel and this allows us to scale back.

Pam: We have link coordinators for MAGs – WAI have communicated that it's OK for them to be tired and "hand over" residents to WAI. We know volunteers do need time off.

Comment from resident: The partnership between We are Islington and Mutual Aid has been brilliant.

Manny: I just want to thank everyone again in our wonderful mutual aid groups and to all our volunteers. As I said, We Are Islington would never have worked as well as it does without your support. Thank you.

Pam: I am always amazed and humbled that volunteers give their time, talent and energy, from every walk of life.

Local Mutual Aid

Elaine presented a slideshow. The main highlights were:

- Food became a real concern. Hilldrop developed a food hub stall with deliveries from Arsenal – particular demand for fresh fruit and veg.
- Hilldrop developed activity kits for families.
- Deliver 10 meal kits every week for families.
- With local people and ELBA (East London Business Alliance) they distributed 70 xmas presents with the help of MAG volunteers who identified need.
- Have handed out 1,000th parcel recently.
- Are deliberately not operating a food bank to break down stigma – are set up like a market stall to promote a common sense approach in utilising food surplus.
- A lot of people manage budgets very tightly – during Covid suddenly there are 3 kids at home which messes up the budget. There are additional costs of heating and electricity all the time. People who usually manage well are financially stretched so it's important the food hub is open to everyone.

Comment from a resident/trustee from Hilldrop:

Support from the council has been "top class" - they've provided moral and financial support. We couldn't have done it without the council.

Comment from a resident: Fantastic presentation Elaine, lovely to see the fantastic, well thought through programmes supporting our local community - love the kids' activities in the food boxes.

Comment from a resident: Well done all you wonderful people. Islington is the best borough with lovely supportive people who work together very well. Thank you Elaine and everyone.

Comment from a resident: What a wonderful ethos of the food hub that builds community around food, rather than making it purely a one-way service. I know many who have really benefitted.

Comment from Manny Lewis: Fantastic Elaine. Such a great source of support for the community.

Borough Investment Panel

- Residents can email councillors their ideas for ward improvement (on which Section 106 money can be spent).
- All documents are available on the Islington website.
- Residents suggested improvements around:
 - Perspex screens
 - A water fountain in Dalmeny Park – action for Gerard Coll to investigate.
 - Hilldrop planters

Question from a resident: could we have a toilet or portaloo in Dalmeny Park?

Gerard: Unfortunately this requires staff to run the toilet (cleaning and keeping it safe) which we don't have money for.

Question from a resident: Can the money be used for different kinds of equipment? E.g. laptops for young people or those who are isolated.

Gerard: this is difficult as the funding has to show a direct relationship - that it's mitigating the impact of development hence mostly used for physical infrastructure.

Cllr Gill: However we could use LIF (Local Initiatives Fund) money. There is now no closing date for applications.

Question from a resident: There is very little green space in St George's. Maybe we could have perspex screens or boards which people can decorate on - this alleviates the stress of development. We can develop the street scenes but we can't develop the green space as there is so little.

Cllr Clarke: I would appreciate hearing more ideas around how to 'green' the space in St. George's.

Cllr Ozdemir: I would also – e.g. any food growing projects.

Gerard: We can take this away to our arts team.

Elaine (Hilldrop): the Hilldrop website has examples of perspex boards.

Question from a resident: Lots of Black and Minority Ethnic groups have been hit really hard, especially school children who don't have access to laptops and the internet. Is there support for this?

Cllr Ozdemir: There is a funded children's services scheme – they give out devices through the schools. A council officer shared a link to a ['Digital Inclusion Resource Pack'](#) developed by Islington Council.