

Minutes of SCG Public Meeting, 7pm, Wednesday 3rd October 2012 The English Restaurant, Brushfield St.

Matt Piper began the meeting by introducing the recently elected Officers of SCG to the membership. He then introduced the evening's guest speaker, Lily Islam.

Lily, a lifelong resident of Spitalfields, spoke of her experiences of the area and the changes she has witnessed in recent years. She explained the problems she and her neighbours on the Flower and Dean estate have faced due to an increase in the levels of prostitution in the streets outside their houses and the difficulties this has caused them all. Recently Lily began a campaign to improve the area, petitioning first the police and later the Mayor of Tower Hamlets for increased resources in dealing with the problem. Due to the large amount of evidence she had gathered, and the backing of the vast majority of her fellow residents for the campaign, Lily has made significant progress in a comparatively short time.

Lily was able to provide very useful advice on how to organise such a campaign, how best to deal with the police, LBTH and the Mayor, and how to work on long-term solutions as well as quick fixes. There were a number of questions from members.

The meeting then became a Members' Forum – a general discussion on some of the problems the neighbourhood is facing with increased levels of street drinking around the off-licences on Brick Lane, and anti-social behaviour from patrons of the bars and restaurants in the area, most notably from the Truman's Brewery. Nicholas Morse (Spitalfields Society), Mike Myers (Market Residents Association) and Margaret Gordon (St Georges Residents Association) were present to hear members comments and to discuss how various groups might work together on tackling the problem.

There was a general consensus that the problem is getting worse. More people are drinking on and around Brick Lane late into the night, often sitting on the street and using the off-licences as bars. This makes life intolerable not only for those who live on Brick Lane, but also for those who live on the surrounding streets and the routes to Liverpool St, Aldgate East and other transport hubs. A recent event at the brewery had caused particular problems, with many hundreds of people drinking on Hanbury, Princelet and Wilkes Street and causing drunken chaos. The problem is exacerbated by understaffing in both the police and the local authority. Moreover, constant staff changes mean that there is no continuity in the response of these agencies.

Various proposals were discussed: meetings with the various authorities (licensing, planning, police), petitions and letters to LBTH, social media campaigns to highlight the problem, reviews of licences, and legal action against certain business owners. It was decided that a meeting should be held of representatives of each of the groups to create a strategy and a plan of action. That meeting should be held soon, while recent problems were fresh in the mind and while there is a strong sense that the community should come together to tackle the problem.

Clare Lovett announced details of the Spitalfields Music Winter Festival and invited members to attend the various events.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm.