

CONSTITUTION OF THE ISLE OF DOGS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING FORUM

1st December 2014

1 NAME

The name of the group is Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Planning Forum (“the Forum”).

2 NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

The area of the Forum is shown on the attached map (“the Neighbourhood Area”)

It uses the boundaries of the four political wards of Island Gardens, Blackwall & Cubitt Town, Canary Wharf & Poplar in the Borough of Tower Hamlets as its main boundaries (it does however divide Poplar Ward by only including the area of the ward to the east of the A12/A102)

3 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Forum (“the Objectives”) shall be:

- a) To promote and improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the Neighbourhood Area;
- b) To prepare in partnership with the relevant local planning authorities a sustainable neighbourhood development plan for the Neighbourhood Area (“the Neighbourhood Development Plan”);
- c) To encourage the goodwill and involvement of the wider community in the preparation, production and implementation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan;
- d) To foster community spirit and encourage civic pride in the Neighbourhood Area;
- e) To involve and inform the community of any development related activity or consultations in the Neighbourhood Area or outside it if it is expected they will affect the Neighbourhood Area;
- f) To do such other things, ancillary to the preceding objectives, as may be desirable.

4 POWERS

In furtherance of the Objectives, but not otherwise, the committee of the Forum (“the Committee”) may:

- a) Invite and receive contributions and raise funds (including loans) where appropriate to finance the work of the Forum, and open one or more bank accounts to manage such funds in accordance with the mandate set out in paragraph 10d) of this constitution;
- b) Set up working groups with terms of reference to undertake tasks in furtherance of the Objectives;
- c) Publicise and promote the work of the Forum and organise meetings, training courses, events or seminars relevant to its work;
- d) Work with groups of a similar nature to the Forum and exchange information, advice and knowledge with them, including cooperation with other voluntary bodies, charities, and statutory and non- statutory organisations;

- e) Employ a clerk and other staff (who shall not be members of the Committee) and retain any consultants and other contractors as are necessary or desirable to conduct activities in furtherance of the Objectives;
- f) Take any form of action that is lawful and which is necessary or desirable to achieve the Objectives, including taking out any contracts which may reasonably be expected to help achieve the Objectives.

5 AFFILIATIONS

The Forum shall not be affiliated to any political party or organisation or any religious body. The Forum or its formal communications shall not be used for party political campaigning but can be used to communicate to people how they can register to vote (since only registered voters can vote in any referendum to approve the Neighbourhood Plan).

6 MEMBERSHIP

- a) The Committee shall have the power to accept members on written application.
- b) The Committee may, by resolution passed at a Committee meeting, refuse membership, or terminate or suspend the membership of any member, where the Committee considers that such membership would be detrimental to achieving the Objectives, or otherwise is disruptive to the Forum.
- c) Membership is open to:
 - i) All people over 18 years of age who live in the Neighbourhood Area, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability or religious or political belief;
 - ii) All business operators in the Neighbourhood Area of the Forum. Business operators may nominate up to 2 people over 18 years of age in their membership application, but they will have only one vote at Forum meetings;
 - iii) All validly constituted voluntary and community groups (including Residents Associations) which operate in the Neighbourhood Area. Voluntary and Community groups may nominate up to 2 people over 18 years of age in their membership application, but they will have only one vote at Forum meetings;
 - iv) Elected London Borough Council members who represent wards in the Neighbourhood Area.
- d) Membership shall be drawn from different places in the Neighbourhood Area and different sections of the community.
- e) Any member of the Forum may resign from membership by providing the secretary of the Committee (“the Secretary”) with written notice.
- f) The Forum shall have a minimum of 21 members. The Secretary shall maintain a register of members at all times and make it available for inspection to any member of the Forum or the public who requests it.
- g) People who do not live or work in the Neighbourhood Area, or who live or work in the Neighbourhood Area but are under the age of 18, or who live or work in the Neighbourhood Area but have a conflict of interest declared under clause 13 below, will be able to join as associate members, and as such will have all of the privileges of membership and can be Committee members, save that they will not be entitled to vote, fill an Officer role (as defined below), nor count towards a quorum in meetings (“Associate Members”).

7 FORUM AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- a) Except for Special General Meetings (as defined below), all decisions at Forum and Committee meetings shall be made by simple majority on a show of hands (or, at the discretion of the chair of the meeting, on a poll using voting slips) of members attending, entitled to vote and voting at the meeting. Electronic voting methods (such as without limitation Survey Monkey) can be used as a method to gather people's views, but shall not be regarded as binding on the Forum or Committee.
- b) In the event of a tied vote, the chair of the meeting shall have a second and casting vote.
- c) Members may vote and be counted towards the quorum in person, or by proxy provided in advance of the meeting in writing to the Secretary and signed by the member. Proxy nominations can only be valid for votes and quorums at the one specific meeting identified in the proxy nomination document, and the nominated proxy must himself/herself be entitled to attend and vote at the meeting. Standard form proxy nomination documents may be supplied to Forum members by the Secretary ahead of any meeting.
- d) Minutes of all meetings will be maintained by the Secretary and published on the Forum's official website.
- e) Notices of meetings shall be sent by email (or, where a member has notified the Secretary in writing that he/she does not have an email address, then by post or hand delivery) and shall also be published on the Forum's official website.
- f) General Meetings
 - i) General Meetings of Forum members ("General Meetings") shall take place at least 3 times in every 12 month period.
 - ii) Notice of, and an agenda for, a General Meeting shall be sent to Forum members no less than 14 days before the meeting.
 - iii) The quorum required for a General Meeting to conduct business shall be 21 Forum members.
- g) Annual General Meetings
 - i) Annual General Meetings of Forum members ("Annual General Meetings") shall take place once in every calendar year.
 - ii) Notice of, and an agenda for, an Annual General Meeting shall be sent to Forum members no less than 14 days before the meeting.
 - iii) The quorum required for an Annual General Meeting to conduct business shall be 21 Forum Members.
 - iv) The Annual General Meeting shall:
 - (1) Receive a report from the Committee of the activities that have taken place in the year and of the prospects for the coming year;
 - (2) Receive and consider an independently audited financial report of the Forum from the Treasurer of the Committee and, if so agreed, approve it;
 - (3) Appoint or re-appoint for the following year, and approve the remuneration of, the Forum's auditors;
 - (4) Elect and/or re-elect the members of the Committee. Elections to the Committee shall take place as follows:

- (a) The first members of the Committee shall be those people who shall have agreed in writing to act and whose names shall be published on the Forum's official website as the first members of the Committee. They shall hold office until the first Annual General Meeting when they will all tender their resignations and, if willing, stand for election to the Committee;
 - (b) Forum members wishing to stand for election to the Committee must notify the Secretary in writing of their intention to stand at least 7 days before the Annual General Meeting takes place. Nominations from the floor may be accepted if approved by a majority of Forum members present.
- a) Special General Meetings
- i) Special General Meetings of the Forum ("Special General Meetings") may be called from time to time by the Committee to consider amendments to this constitution or dissolution of the Forum. Such matters may only be considered at Special General Meetings.
 - ii) Notice of, and an agenda for, a Special General Meeting shall be sent to Forum members no less than 28 days before the meeting.
 - iii) The quorum required for a Special General Meeting to conduct business shall be 21 Forum members unless, in the case of a meeting called to dissolve the Forum, there shall be less than 21 members of the Forum at that time, in which case the quorum shall be the Forum members present at the meeting.
 - iv) Decisions at Special General Meetings shall be made by a three-quarters majority on a show of hands (or, at the discretion of the chair of the meeting, on a poll) of Forum members attending, entitled to vote and voting at the meeting.
- b) Committee Meetings
- i) The quorum required for a Committee meeting to conduct business shall be 7 Committee members.
 - ii) Committee meetings will be held a minimum of 6 times in each 12 month period.
 - i) Notice of, and an agenda for, a Committee Meeting shall be sent to Committee members no less than 7 days before the meeting.
 - iii) Two officers of the Committee ("the Officers") must be present at each meeting of the Committee, one of which must be either the Chair or the Vice Chair.
 - iv) The Officers shall be elected by the members of the Committee.
 - v) To avoid the possibility of the Forum becoming dominated by members of another organisation, no more than three members of the Committee may at any time be drawn from the Forum membership category for business and no more than three members of the Committee may be drawn from the Forum membership category for voluntary and community groups (as provided for in paragraphs 6c)ii) and 6c)iii) above).
 - vi) Should any member of the Committee fail to attend more than three consecutive meetings of the Committee then their membership of the Committee shall be deemed to have lapsed, unless the Committee decides otherwise. A temporary replacement for any such lapsed Committee member may be selected by the Committee from the membership of the Forum who will then take the lapsed member's place on the Committee until the next Annual General Meeting when he/she will tender their resignation and, if willing, stand for election to the Committee. In such cases where an Officer position becomes vacant, then their replacement shall be found from among the pre-existing members of the Committee.

- vii) During Committee meetings any Committee member having a personal or business interest in any decision of the Committee must declare that interest and the Committee shall have the discretion to exclude that member from that decision.

8 COMMITTEE

The Committee shall consist of a minimum of 9 members.

9 OFFICERS OF THE COMMITTEE

- a) The role of any Officer may be shared by two members of the Committee.
- b) The Chair of the Committee shall be responsible for:
 - i) Calling and chairing Committee Meetings, General Meetings, Special General Meetings and Annual General Meetings, unless specifically delegated to the Vice Chair in writing;
 - ii) Taking decisions on urgent matters between Committee Meetings, provided that such decisions shall be put as soon as reasonably practicable to the next Committee Meeting for ratification;
- c) The Vice Chair of the Committee shall be responsible for calling and chairing Committee Meetings, General Meetings, Special General Meetings and Annual General Meetings, if specifically delegated to do so by the Chair in writing.
- d) The Treasurer shall be responsible for:
 - i) Maintaining the financial records of the Forum;
 - ii) Arranging an independent audit of the Forum's financial affairs and accounts each year by a properly qualified and independent firm of accountants (which shall not be a member of the Forum);
 - iii) Presenting the audited accounts for the year, and a budget for the following year, at Annual General Meetings;
 - iv) Preparing and submitting financial accounts of the Forum to the Committee;
 - v) Acting as a joint signatory on the Forum bank accounts in accordance with the mandate set out in paragraph 10d) below;
 - vi) Taking meeting minutes if the Secretary is absent.
- e) The Secretary shall be responsible for:
 - i) Organising meetings, taking and circulating the minutes, and making them available to Forum members within 14 days of the meeting in question.
 - ii) Maintaining a register of members of the Forum and this constitution, and keeping them available for inspection by members of the public and Forum members.
 - iii) Sending a welcome email/letter to new members enclosing this constitution and references to the website and the activities of the Forum.

10 THE FINANCES OF THE FORUM

- a) Any money acquired by the Forum, including donations, contributions and bequests, shall be paid into one or more bank accounts operated by the Committee in the name of the Forum.

- b) A list of donations and their sources will be supplied to Committee members at each Committee meeting, and any sums received that are greater than £500 in value (in cash or benefit in kind) shall be declared on the Forum's official website.
- c) All funds must be applied to the Objectives and for no other purpose.
- d) All bank accounts shall be opened in the name of the Forum. Any deeds, cheques or other payment authorisations relating to the Forum's bank accounts shall be signed and/or approved by at least 3 Committee members, one of whom must be the Treasurer.
- e) Any income and expenditure of the Forum shall be the responsibility of the Treasurer, who will be personally accountable to ensure that funds are utilised effectively in furtherance of the Objectives, and that the Forum stays within its budget save only in exceptional circumstances approved in advance by the Committee.
- f) The Forum's management accounts shall be maintained and prepared on a monthly basis, and the Forum's annual accounts will be audited by a properly qualified and independent firm of accountants that is not also a member of the Forum, and presented to the Annual General Meeting.

11 NON-FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- a) The Forum welcomes non-financial contributions of time, goods and support. If such support is received it will be recognised on the Forum's official website in the list of contributions (if the provider of such help is willing to be recognised).
- b) Such help and assistance should not be seen as an endorsement by the Forum of any individual, organisation or group providing such assistance.

12 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

- a) Any decision to submit any Neighbourhood Development Plan or variation thereof to the local planning authority for approval shall be subject to a vote at a General Meeting.
- b) All consultation on the Neighbourhood Development Plan will take place with residents and businesses in the Neighbourhood Area, whether they are members of the Forum or not.
- c) The Committee shall be delegated to work on the Neighbourhood Development Plan with the local planning authority and any independent experts and advisers as they see fit.
- d) At the discretion of the Committee, working groups of the Committee may be delegated the tasks of preparing the Neighbourhood Development Plan or aspects of it, and may co-opt non-voting members onto such working groups as they see fit. All such working groups must include at least one Committee member.
- e) The members of the working groups may be drawn from Committee members, Forum members, Associate Members and/or external advisers to draft aspects of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. It is expected that work will be devolved into two types of working groups: those that will work across the whole Neighbourhood Area on issues where it makes sense to plan centrally; and local groups based in their specific communities to work on more local issues. The formation, responsibility and structure of such working groups will be the responsibility of the Committee.
- f) The Committee will have ultimate discretion and responsibility for reviewing, accepting and/or adjusting the working groups' proposals.

13 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- a) References to "conflicts" or "conflicts of interest" in this clause include actual or potential conflicts of interest.
- b) Conflicts can arise because of a member's personal interests or duties owed to a third party, for example, without limitation, by virtue of being an employee of Tower Hamlets Council, or of a developer or a company assisting any current or future developments in the area, or by working for or belonging to an organisation that might have a financial interest in the outcome of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. Owning a property or business in the area is not in itself a conflict of interest.
- c) Conflicts can inhibit open discussions and may result in irrelevant considerations being taken into account when taking decisions. The Forum aims to operate free from conflicts and manage conflicts appropriately when they arise. As such:
 - i) Upon joining, each member must disclose to the Secretary the nature of any interests that may give rise to a conflict. The Secretary shall keep a record of such conflicts.
 - ii) Members should be alert to situations that may give rise to a conflict, and promptly inform the Secretary if any such situation arises.
 - iii) It is for the member concerned to decide which matters to disclose but, if in doubt, they should make a disclosure.
- d) The Committee may decide how to manage conflicts as it deems appropriate. Without limitation, measures could include asking a member to become an Associate Member, or excluding a member from voting on certain issues.

14 ALTERATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

- a) Any changes to this constitution may only be agreed at a Special General Meeting called specifically for the purpose.
- b) Proposed amendments to this constitution or a proposal for the dissolution of the Forum must be conveyed to the Secretary formally in writing. The Committee will then decide whether to put the proposed amendments or dissolution proposal to a Special General Meeting.
- c) In the event that no Special General Meeting is convened within 30 days to consider the proposed amendments or dissolution proposal, members comprising at least 15% of the membership of the Forum entitled to attend and vote at such a meeting may serve notice on the Secretary requiring such a meeting to be convened forthwith.
- d) At a Special General Meeting considering a proposal for the dissolution of the Forum a resolution shall be proposed to decide how to distribute the assets of the Forum. If such a resolution is not passed the fallback is for the assets to be distributed to East End Community Foundation.

It is recognised by the Forum that it may wish to register as a Community Interest Company (or some similar legal framework) at some future point in order to be able to pursue its objectives. Such a decision will be ratified in a Special General Meeting.