



Roehampton Partnership

Reflections on Membership, Structure and Goals

June 2022

Introduction

At its last meeting the Partnership considered the question of membership. The question was raised whether the membership structure could helpfully be reviewed. Key questions included whether it would be wise to change the structure so as to be able to involve more institutional members, and on the merits of increasing the number of members beyond the current limit.

A small group was asked to consider these questions in more detail and scheduled a meeting for 22nd March – alas, this meeting was not confirmed in everyone's diaries and so the whole group was not able to meet. Three members did have a fairly wide ranging discussion, but were concerned that their reflections may not have been representative of the wider group.

Subsequently, of course, there was a change in leadership in the council. This may very well have a large impact on how the Partnership can and should operate.

Thus the time seems right for a reconsideration of what we do and how we do it.

This note synthesises some of the reflections of the small group that met, and poses some questions arising out of the change of control of the Council. It is not meant to foreclose debate, but simply to provide a starting point.

Current situation and questions to consider

The constitution describes our purpose thus: “to engage key stakeholders in the community in advising the Council on the development and delivery of regeneration and other development programmes aimed at making Roehampton a better place to live and work.” – and in particular, (a) to be a forum for consultation on regeneration (b) to provide strategic advice on development in Roehampton (c) to support engagement of residents and other local stakeholders.

At present the constitution specifies 21 members as follows:

- Four Councillors and one Cabinet Member
- Three residents, two representatives of voluntary / faith groups, one representative of young people
- Representatives of NHS, Patient Consultative Group, Police, Roehampton Trust, Roehampton Forum, RU, RUSU
- Three local businesses

Three questions worth considering are:

- Does the change in control of the council create any opportunities?
- What should be our practical focus month to month in pursuing our constitutional objective?
- Are there changes to the membership structure that would help this work better?

The remainder of this note draws on the tentative sub group discussion in March. It sketches some possible answers to these questions as a starting point for discussion.

Impact of change in control

The constitution specifies that the Chairman [*sic*] of the Partnership is a Council Cabinet member. For several years the Council has declined to appoint. Given the change of control, we should be open to the possibility that this may change. We may think there would be advantages to a such direct

connection to the centre of the Council, if available. The present Chairman would content to relinquish the chair to facilitate this if it were thought worth pursuing. At any rate, there is a discussion to be had about opportunities for stronger formal engagement with the Council than has heretofore been possible.

The main impact on the activities of the Partnership will of course be through whatever decisions the new Council takes on regeneration. It is not yet fully clear what changes will arise from the change of control. Realistically it seems unlikely (though we must always be willing to be surprised) that regeneration will move forward at once; it is also so far unclear what form it will take if and when it does go ahead.

We need to be ready to fulfil our constitutional function of offering advice and information. But realistically there is probably a window of a year to eighteen months where there will be some uncertainty about big strategic questions, and in which we could helpfully occupy ourselves with smaller concerns that would help put us in a position to have an impact on the strategic picture when it becomes

Focus of Partnership Activities

The constitutional objectives seem to be a sensible basis for action in the long term. Given the current uncertainties about the environment in which we will pursue these activities, however, it may be right in the short term to focus on achieving a few modest but concrete results parallel to the regeneration agenda. This could help establish our credibility as a source of information and advice, and strengthen our community network, thus positioning us to have an influence when regeneration does get under way. This would mean promoting initiatives that

- Can realistically be achieved within eighteen months from now
- Will be well supported and, ideally, visible
- Go with the grain of policy and public opinion

We should be selective, and do a few things well – perhaps just one thing. The paper from the transport sub group might provide a basis for a suitable initiative.

Membership structure

Those who met in March were tentatively of the view that the current membership structure falls between two stools. In order to represent the breadth of individual perspectives in the wider community it would ideally be more broadly based. At the same time it does not have enough slots to draw in the full range of businesses and institutions whose input would be helpful.

We also noted the growth of the Roehampton Response Network during the pandemic, which seemed to be becoming an effective forum for the articulation of the perspective of individual residents and community groups.

One possible structure would be to work towards bringing the Partnership and the Network together. The network (perhaps when a full time co-ordinator will have been appointed) could have a formal voice in the Partnership. It might even be that the Partnership could play a useful role in the long term hosting of the Network, if that was desired by the current sponsors (that would of course involve the Partnership acquiring a legal personality, which might be no bad thing in itself).

This might then make it possible to rebalance the Partnership's membership structure to open up further slots for institutional members, without making the Partnership unwieldy in scale.