



Welcome to the ABOYNE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION newsletter for JUNE 2016

This newsletter aims to keep our members up to date with any developments, major and minor, that may have an impact on where we live.

OUR 2016 AGM

Our AGM took place at the end of March, at Aboyne Lodge school. Thanks to everyone who came along - it was a gregarious night, with valuable time for a glass of wine and a conversation with neighbours once all the more formal proceedings were over.

Our speaker this year was Tim Boatswain, who talked about the valuable work of the Civic Society, often referred to as the City Watchdogs. He explained how they see their role as the conservation and amenity movement for St Albans. There was much praise for his slide presentation of the prizewinning buildings in their annual architectural awards. Each year the Civic Society celebrates imaginative development and design initiatives which have been completed within the city – anything from an entire housing scheme to a beautiful front door. You can see more of their work, and some very interesting winning buildings, here - <http://www.stalbanscivicsociety.net/awards.html>.

We always ask our local County Councillors to join us, so also present were Alun Davies (Con) and Alec Campbell (Con). Simon Grover (Greens) is usually with us, but this year he was unable to attend. Chris White, our District Councillor (Lib Dems), was also there.

And congratulations to Simon on his re-election in the recent local elections. It was a close run thing, with only six votes separating the top two candidates (the Lib Dems were the runners-up). Simon leads a group of three councillors on St Albans Council, the Independent and Green group.

OUR NEW COMMITTEE

At the AGM we said a very fond farewell to exiting Chair Mary Conneely, and thanked her for three years of hard work and strong leadership.

Previous Vice Chair Brian Benson now takes on this role - see his welcome on our home page - and other new committee members were elected and/ or took on new roles.

The full committee structure is now -

BRIAN BENSON: CHAIR
FIONA COUPER: VICE CHAIR
BARRY CROPPER: TREASURER
JULIA DUSCHENES: SECRETARY
CHRISTINE MCLAUHLAN
SUE NOON

THE ARA BIG LITTER PICK UP...

...or should that be, rather disappointedly small pick up but with BIG results. A resounding Well Done to new chair Brian Benson for his efforts here - this was back in February, when a small number of us were galvanised into spending an hour one Sunday picking up the debris in our area. By far the most noticeable result was the area round the garages at the end of Gombards car park - transformed by Brian and co who boldly dealt with some grim litter deposits, which the council then took away the next day. THANKS! We hope to run more litter pick ups - and we really hope more people join in this time.

UPDATE ON ST CLAIRE'S

Any progress here seems extremely slow. Especially when you consider the ferocity and urgency with which the council and Hightown Housing Assoc (the charity involved) argued the need for more housing for homeless people, and the amount of public money that has gone into funding the promised transformation of this building.

We're told the council has now circulated the final version of the proposed risk assessment and is meeting the development manager from Hightown this week. They expect to have more information relating to the appointed contractor and the build programme thereafter. So we may see some movement and developments soon.

HGVs NO MORE - ON BRITTON AVENUE AT LEAST

This will soon be in effect. It's bad for the road surface, it seems entirely incongruous to have HGVs in such a residential setting, it's terrifying to witness as drivers struggle to make the very tight turn, it's been the cause of some epic traffic build-ups, and it seems entirely unnecessary when Drover's Way exists for this very purpose. Doh, as Homer would no doubt put it.

PARKING - OR HOW TO CLOG UP A CITY CENTRE IN ONE EASY STEP

We were alarmed to hear about a council proposal to create three new parking places at the top of Upton Avenue on the left hand side. Thanks to our Street Rep Kate Green for this information - letters to residents regarding this proposal were sent sporadically, and only a very few people seemed to receive them.

Anyone who has experienced traffic build up at weekends and particularly at Xmas will know this idea to be little short of madness. It is at exactly this spot that many already congested roads come together. Meanwhile the traffic feed into the car park is determined by the limited speed of the ticket barrier, with two other lanes of traffic attempting to squeeze past and continue on their journeys. Many residents will have witnessed for themselves how strained the patience of drivers can become. It ain't always pleasant!

The ARA met with District Councillor Chris White in situ to examine the proposal. Even with one car parked in this spot for a short time - a car displaying a Blue Badge that had chosen that moment to park there - a build-up immediately ensued. Along with Chris, we've been in communication with Gary Payne, Environmental Compliance Officer (Parking) at the council. Full marks to Gary for his reasonable approach - we feel he's listening to what we are saying. Hopefully this will NOT happen.

YOU, YOUR STREET AND YOUR STREET REPS

Picking up on that one particular issue on Upton, with potential effect for all of us living locally, do please remember to get in touch with us if you feel we can help, or if you have any concerns or questions regarding local matters. Our gmail account is monitored regularly so you can email aboynera@gmail.com or speak to your local street rep.

Better still, become a street rep yourself. The ARA covers 15 streets, and we only have around half our street reps in place. It really doesn't take a lot of time, but it's a hugely important contribution to our organisation and our community.

THE ARA'S WIDER ROLE IN ST ALBANS - CNC AND JOINT RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

The ARA regularly works with and sits on a range of committees and local bodies. We're part of the City Neighbourhood Committee, which was put in place a couple of years ago to replace the former City Forum. The CNC has been created to help put localism into practice, and aims to provide unparished areas of St Albans with a greater say in local-decision making. It covers the eight electoral wards in St Albans, and includes many of the local Residents Associations, including the ARA.

We also sit on the Joint Residents Association, where we are able to stay across the bigger picture, and add our voice to issues that are on our doorstep, but not quite within our remit or limited resources. Together we are a more powerful body, and we are currently adding our voice to demands that the council step up its response to the ongoing pollution problem in Verulamium Lake.

We also share the concerns expressed by many, including the Joint RA and the Civic Society, that the proposed Rail Freight depot is a potential threat to an already overstretched rail service. We have added our voice to calls for our county council to

revisit plans to sell their, or our, land to the developers. This has now been raised in Parliament by Hertsmere MP Oliver Dowden. It seems that amendments to the Strategic Local Plan might allow the district council some room for manoeuvre here.

LARKS IN THE PARK, SUNDAY JUNE 26 - PLEASE COME AND SAY HELLO

ARA will be at the every-popular Larks In The Park, at Victoria Playing Field on Sunday June 26. Look out for our stall and please come over to say hello. We're happy to answer any of your questions, and talk more about the many achievements, actions and issues we've been involved in, since our inception back in the late 1980s to the present day.