

ARA

Aboyne Residents Association

ADELAIDE STREET
BRITTON AVENUE
CHRISTCHURCH CLOSE
CHURCH CRESCENT
CATHERINE STREET
(South side)
ETNA ROAD
FOLLY LANE
(Odds only)
GOMBARDS
RUSSELL AVENUE
SELBY AVENUE
SPENCER ST
STAPLEY ROAD
UPPER DAGNALL SREET
UPTON AVENUE
WORLEY ROAD

Newsletter | August 2014

Our first AGM

We held our first AGM in late March. Turnout was good - thanks to all who took the time to come along - we were over 30 in all.

We gathered at the Lodge Room at Aboyne Lodge school. Bar Meze very kindly provided some very decent wine, thanks to them for their support. County Councillor Chris White and (pre-election) Ward Councillor Michael Green attended - our thanks to them too. We're a non-political organisation, so we also invited Simon Grover, who couldn't make the date, and Alex Campbell, who was able to join us for a drink later and speak to residents.

The three Ps dominated the meeting - parking, pavements and potholes. All of these issues were addressed and to some extent illuminated by both Chris and Michael, when they were invited to speak and take questions.

Chris, who represents St Peters and Clarence Ward, explained to all present that it's the County Council who are responsible for some of the biggies - highways, education, etc. Highways are a big issue county-wide at the moment, and Chris has reviewed the state of some of our local roads with a senior Herts County Council officer and members of this committee. The vagaries of some of the decision making processes were debated - for instance, how is it decided to resurface Selby Ave, but not Britton Ave? And subsequently - we hear that Britton Ave may be resurfaced after all - but not till 2015/16.



Our plans and our priorities

Now that we've been in place for over a year, we know a bit more about what we are doing. We're still a small group, and likely to stay that way (though anyone with the time or inclination to join us is most welcome).

We have a better idea of what people's concerns are, and also about where we can be most effective. So in year two, we plan to create our own ARA website. **Anyone out there know how to do this?** Seriously, if it's your area of expertise, we could do with your help. We'll keep our website simple, but the sooner we can get it up and running, the better - all help gratefully received.

Our newsletters would then be available online, but will still be delivered by hand, as it's a good way for us to get to meet you all. We think the following issues are really important -

- Staying abreast of planning issues and getting involved with any planning developments, domestic and commercial, that will have a bearing on all our lives
- Establishing the ARA as a presence with key organisations and individuals, such as our local and district councillors
- Representing the ARA on the various council committees and local bodies relevant to our interests and ethos
- Championing road safety and local parking on your behalf.

Other areas matter to us too, but we hope some of the more minor things, such as issues to do with rubbish collection, might be solved using our contact list, or by an initial conversation with your street rep. who can then steer you in the right direction. If you have a real problem though, of course we will do our level best to help.

Our street reps

We've just had our second meeting with our team of street reps. Firstly, thanks to all of them for their time and commitment, and their energy.

Through the street reps we're hearing your voices - your concerns, your issues, your good ideas. The reps have made really helpful suggestions regarding how we run the organisation, and their contribution is proving invaluable in other ways too.

Thanks to street rep Nigel Gale for the idea that we do something positive and fun, rather than always be reacting and responding to some of the more tiresome and frustrating issues. This could take the form of some guerrilla gardening, or maybe we can clean up an eyesore and create a wildlife oasis instead.

All suggestions welcome - we'll keep you up to date with plans that are hopefully inventive enough you'll want to join in. You'll find your own rep here -

ADELAIDE STREET & CATHERINE STREET - rep needed

BRITTON AVENUE & RUSSELL AVENUE - **Anna Davis**

CHURCH CRESCENT - **Jackie Bell**

ETNA ROAD - **Bashir Javani**

FOLLY LANE - rep needed

GOMBARDS - **Christine McLauchlan**

SELBY AVENUE - **Julia Duschenes**

SPENCER STREET & UPPER DAGNALL STREET - **Rita Waldon**

UPTON AVENUE - **Victoria Grey**

WORLEY ROAD / top & STAPLEY ROAD - **Kate Green**

WORLEY ROAD / middle - **Sue Dennis**

WORLEY ROAD / bottom - **Nigel Gale**

Your Residents Association needs you

The ARA represents 15 streets, and over 300 households. It's great to be able to report that one year on we're nearly there in terms of finding all our street reps, but we - the original half dozen who revived the committee - still need others to join us.

St Albans is thriving - but St Albans is changing. You as a resident, and us as a committee, are an important voice in shaping that. It takes just a bit of effort, and a bit of time. If you have an hour or two to spare a month, we'd love to hear from you.

Household waste sites

You may have seen reports of proposed changes to the Sandridge waste site in the local papers. We've included this information from councillor Chris White's newsletter, as we think it may interest and concern many of you.

The county council is consulting on a drastic reduction in the hours of household waste sites.

St Albans residents will be particularly affected by the proposed changes at the St Albans Sandridge Road site and at the Watford Waterdale site. It is suggested that the St Albans site will no longer open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, while Waterdale will close on Thursdays and Fridays. Users of the St Albans site are supposed to go to Harpenden when St Albans is closed. Users of Waterdale are supposed to divert to Rickmansworth! Even when the sites are open, it will only be between 8 am and 4 pm all year round including weekends.

This is a 44% cut in opening hours and flies in the face of common sense. How many people go to a waste site at 8 in the morning? Most people want to go at the end of the day after they have cleared their garden or garage. And will people really make a huge extra round trip to go to another site if they find their usual one closed? It's a fly-tippers' charter.

So it's really important that as many people as possible complete the county council questionnaire at www.hertsdirect.org/wastechanges so that residents voices are clearly heard.

Drover's Way

Few local people will have failed to notice the closure of Drover's Way, to facilitate the new Premier Inn. This big new hotel, while generally welcomed, has 100 rooms and no allocated parking – the plan (if that's not too grand a word for it) is that hotel visitors will just park in the Drover's Way car park. Green Party councillor Simon Grover is also unhappy about the hotel's application to erect garish illuminated signs on the building to advertise their presence. No other premises on St Peter's Street are allowed this type of illumination, which helps maintain the character of our historic area. If you want to make a comment on the application, it's ref 5/2013/3447 on the St Albans City and District Council website.

A new block of flats has also been approved at the corner of Drover's Way and the BHS alleyway. Clearly Drover's Way has been something of an eyesore for years, and in some respects any improvement is to be welcomed. However we're disappointed that there is no affordable housing aligned to this development, as the number of bedsits and flats stops just short of the statutory requirement that would make affordable housing a necessity for such a project.

Worse still, if you are a local resident, is that no parking is being provided, though bike

racks are part of the plan, which aligns with the Government's green strategy.

We commend this as an ideal, but the reality is that most of these new residents will be car owners, and this issue is not going to go away.

Parking

The parking changes which began at the start of April, and included a £1 fee for Sunday parking in the city centre, have proved very unpopular, particularly amongst retailers. Now it looks like these changes could be scrapped, after a full district council meeting voted in principle to reverse the scheme. A final decision is expected in the autumn. Meanwhile, if you want to make your views heard, then you can add your name to this petition - www.ipetitions.com/petition/unfair-parking-charges-in-st-albans/

Also look out for a letter specifically on the subject of residents parking from SADC (St Albans District Council) to all local residents - the commencement of the long awaited parking consultation is imminent, we are told. Our ideal for the ARA area is that the residents-only hours are extended to 10pm each evening and all day Sunday.

The saga of the Spotted Bull/Brickyard

Essentially the new owner of the Spotted Bull has over-extended without the necessary permission, and an enforcement notice has been issued.

The new owner is appealing against this, and we've been informed that a hearing is being arranged. The Spotted Bull is just out of our boundary area, but a much larger pub opening in place of the old (smaller and quieter) one has noise, parking and safety implications for all around it.

The residents of College Street are fighting the development and we support their concerns. There's also a very important principle here. As domestic residents, we all have to stick to the SADC planning laws and regulations, so it's only right that a commercial development does too. Well done to the Planning Office for taking this seriously.

However, the new owner is still trying to open, despite the lack of planning permission. The license was apparently not in order either, so a new application for a variation to the licence has now been submitted.

As we go to press, it's expected that the Planning department will object. The right to object is also open to all of us - details of how are on the blue sign outside the pub (closing date for objections is August 27). The ARA plans to object and we expect other residents associations will also contest this.

Our position remains the same here – we

were sorry to see the old Spotted Bull close, and we would welcome a new establishment in keeping with the local area. But right now that's not how the proposed and much enlarged new Brickyard is feeling.

City Neighbourhood Committee (CNC)

As part of our commitment to contribute on a wider stage to city developments, we are now members of the City Neighbourhood Committee. This is chaired by Cllr Beric Read, who is the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Localism. A number of Residents Associations sit alongside councillors and council officers and its key purpose and why it's been established – to quote from the official line - *“(is) to advance the localism agenda and encourage local groups to take a greater role in relation to the strategic oversight or management of assets”*.

So the CNC is looking at issues that affect eight of the inner city St Albans wards, such as parks and open spaces, playground equipment, public conveniences, free car parks, the war memorials, allotments and bus shelters. So far the main issues have been the restoration of the war memorials across the city, plus the Xmas lights budget allocation and impact.

The budget overall for CNC was £677,731, however, the vast majority of this is allocated to ongoing contracts, especially grounds and open space maintenance, leaving just over £90k for the committee to comment and influence on its use. Over half of that was allocated to the war memorial work and so we shall report back on how this process plays out and if indeed any true sense of 'localism' emerges on its use. The jury is still out on that.

Mary Conneely - Chair
Andrew Dawes - Vice Chair
Cynthia Ireson - Treasurer
Sue Noon - Secretary
Brian Benson - Planning Issues Lead
Fiona Couper - Communications Lead
Anna Davis - Roads Lead

ARA committee

HERTS COUNTY COUNCIL
www.hertsdirect.org 0300 123 4040

Road, footpath or streetlight faults
Direct line 0300 123 4047

ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
www.stalbans.gov.uk 01727 866100

Direct lines

Environmental issues 01727 819598

Refuse bins/recycling 01727 819285

Anti-social behaviour 01727 819 566

Out of hours noise and licensing problems
0777 0701 720 or 01727 811155

Drainage and sewers

(Thames Water) 0845 920 0800

Water leaks (Affinity Water) 0800 376 5325

Useful contacts