



## **Welcome to the ABOYNE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION newsletter for AUGUST 2016**

*Events this summer are as much city-wide as they are local. Do please have a read, there is much here you might want to engage with, as it affects the future of our lovely city.*

### **VERULAMIUM PARK**

Anyone who uses the park - and that's most of us - can't fail to be aware of current problems, due at least in part to the build up of silt. The most obvious evidence that something is not right is the smell - but there has also been significant loss of bird life.

Acting both as our own Residents Association, and as part of the bigger Joint Residents Association, we've been pushing the council to establish what exactly is causing the problem, and to come up with an immediate plan of action, and a longer term plan.

A lot of work has been going on behind the scenes, and things are now moving. Daniel Flitton, the Community Services Green Spaces Officer has told councillors about work that began last week.

Essentially the large population of waterfowl is not helped by all the feeding that goes on by visitors. The nutrient-rich bird droppings this produces are thought to have led to the current problem - heavily-silted water. In addition, low water levels in the river mean that the lake does not receive any fresh water from the river for months on end during the summer.

The proposed solution involves removing 150 tonnes of silt. Plans are now in place with Veolia. The scheme will cost £29,000 and is a short-term attempt to improve the aquatic environment around in the lake.

The Council has been working in partnership with the Environment Agency and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds on a long-term scheme to restore the River Ver to its natural state. A new, dedicated park ranger has been appointed to work full-time on the lakes. The aim is for the ranger to engage and educate residents about the harmful consequences of feeding the birds.

We welcome the progress here, but if feeding the birds is at the heart of the problem, one very simple action alongside the above would be much more prominent signage to that effect, placed at the various park entrances. It's too easy to miss or ignore the current ones.

## REDESIGN OF CITY CENTRE

Residents, businesses and other organisations are being invited to get involved in drawing up designs for the redevelopment of a major site in the heart of St Albans.

The plan is to transform a City Centre area of around seven acres that is bounded by Hatfield Road, Bricket Road, Victoria Street and St Peter's Street - essentially the old police station area. The public's views are to be included in the early master-planning of the area, which is now known as the City Centre Opportunity Site (CCOS).

Community group Look! St Albans is to host and organise a design charrette – a series of intensive engagement events. These include a public meeting on Friday 9 September followed by full-day workshops on Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 September. There will be a further public meeting on Friday 16 September. The events are designed to allow the development team to collaborate with the community on shaping the future of the CCOS. Be warned - it will involve a lot of stickies and felt-tip pens - but it is intended to harness some sort of community view.

For further details you can go to the SADC website at: [www.stalbans.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/press-room/items/2016/July/2016-07-05-help-redesign-the-city-centre.aspx](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/press-room/items/2016/July/2016-07-05-help-redesign-the-city-centre.aspx)

## REDEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF ST CLAIRE'S, CHURCH CRESCENT

Residents local to Church Crescent will now have had letters from Borrás Construction, who have been employed by Hightown Housing Association to carry out the remodelling and refurbishment works and associated external works to the existing property at No 38/ 40 Church Crescent.

The project team is led by Construction Manager Jeremy Young and Site Manager Perry Williams who will deal with the day to day running of the project. Perry Williams can be contacted with any queries or concerns regarding the works on 07973 978543

To minimise disturbance, the site is being securely fenced. The works were due to commence on 8th August 2016 and the project is due to be completed in February 2017.

As well as the building work, what is also essential here is how the new facility is managed. This is a point that was robustly made by Roma Mills, chair of the Planning, Resources and Housing Scrutiny Committee, at a meeting last summer. Roma Mills was sympathetic to the fears of local residents regarding the new facility, fears that were exacerbated by the lack of reassurance they were receiving from Hightown Housing Association and council officials.

We very much welcomed this call for a robust contractual agreement between SADC and Hightown that spelled out management arrangements, operational policies, performance standards and remedies for when things went wrong. It was requested that such a document should be prepared, and that Councillors be included in its construction. However, having heard nothing for months now, we were keen to establish if this had been achieved. We wrote to Roma Mills to this effect. She has now responded thus -

*“Councillors from Batchwood and St Peters Wards (which includes me) met with David Bogle from Hightown Praetorian and with our own senior Housing officers in February when we discussed and proposed some amendments to the draft house rules and license agreement for St Claires. That meeting was chaired by the Leader of the Council, which I hope demonstrates the Council is giving this matter due attention.*

*These documents have now been finalised but Hightown Praetorian do not want them shared with a wider audience and I also take the view that that would not be appropriate. I am however satisfied that - as rules and license - they appear sufficiently robust but the proof of that will*

*inevitably been demonstrated when the service is up and running. This will continue to be of interest to me as a local councillor as I have no doubt that local people will be 'phoning or emailing with any problems that arise."*

We can't pretend we're in any way satisfied with this. We're encouraged that Cllr Mills deems the house rules and license agreement to be robust. But oh dear, Hightown - yet another opportunity being missed by not sharing the relevant terms more widely in the interest of building confidence and restoring the faith of local residents. These are only the early stages of what will be a long term partnership between our community and this particular housing charity. This important and potentially productive relationship is being hampered yet again by the lack, and indeed the fear, of a more collaborative approach.

## NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

The ARA attended a meeting convened to discuss the issue - "How can SADC improve the local night time economy for businesses, residents and visitors?" This is essentially a group set up by another of the Scrutiny Committees at the council. We're not sure at this stage what it might achieve, but it's a good conversation to be having, and to be involved in. Other local ARAs were also present. The point we are keen to make, on behalf of our residents, is that we need this kind of effort and engagement and understanding to manage the always present tension between enlarging the local economy - especially the late night element- and what residents need/want. More meetings are planned - we'll keep you updated on any progress.

## ANTI - SPEEDING

Anti-speeding work is being done in Verulam Road and Folly Lane, and Cllr Chris White has agreed to fund some speed counts on there to see whether a 20 mph zone might be workable.

## ALBANY LODGE

Albany Lodge (the NHS Mental Health unit in Church Crescent) has been involved in an increasing number of disturbances caused by patients who now are smoking on the curb side of the facility. This is because NHS policy now compels smokers to go offsite - with little thought to the consequences, it seems. Councillor Alun Davies is also involved in discussions that are going on around this. He, local resident Lucy Povas, and chair Brian Benson attended a recent meeting at Albany Lodge to discuss things with the unit's Modern Matron. We hope this will be useful - a small action plan to try to mitigate the problems is now in place. Please report back if you are a CC resident, or feel you are affected by the above.

## FINALLY - THE STRATEGIC LOCAL PLAN PROGRESSES...

For anyone who is interested, or who might have involved themselves during the consultation period of the SLP, an update. On the 2nd August 2016 St Albans City and District Council submitted the Strategic Local Plan to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for public examination. As you may know, the Strategic Local Plan sets out policies on development in the District until 2031 and provides a framework for the Detailed Local Plan and neighbourhood plans. It identifies the Council's approach to new housing, infrastructure, commerce, industry and social amenities.

If this is something that interests you, then The Local Plan along with the supporting documents and evidence base can be viewed on the Council's website at:  
<http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/planning/Planningpolicy/library/>