

St Margaret's with St Nicholas' Ward Forum

Chairman's Annual Report

10th August 2016 to 8th August 2017

The forum met on four occasions during the period under report. On August 10, 2016 we had a presentation from Environment Agency officers Tamsyn Ellway and Alan Daniels, with a contribution from Kevin Kent, BCKLWN's District Emergency Planning Officer, on the measures which have been and are being taken in light of the North Sea Surge in December 2013. Subsequently the forum agreed to form a community group, principally to keep ward residents informed and distribute advice leaflets for householders on aspects of safeguarding themselves and their property.

The forum meeting on November 16, 2016 was preceded by an Extraordinary General Meeting at which the revised constitution was adopted.

The main business was a presentation from Ostap Paperaga, BCKLWN Economic and Regeneration Officer, and Niall McNevin (consultant: *urbandelivery*) on the proposals for the riverfront development in relation to the broader issues within the borough, including metric indicators of the areas of deprivation and low educational achievement, reference to the potential development of the King's Lynn/Cambridge axis, the gain via the re-irrigation of the Nar Loop and the means whereby consultation with the townsfolk and local community would be organised.

On February 8, 2017 Ostap Paparega made a return visit to outline the new Coastal Community Team and the town's recently-acquired Heritage Action Zone status and how they will affect the regeneration and economic programme of the borough. This was followed by a presentation from retired pilot Captain Rod Payn on the piloting of ships through the Lynn Sandbanks into Lynn's Alexandra and Bentinck Docks.

At the forum's last meeting of the year in question, May 10, 2017, Dr Veronica Sekules delivered a paper on the aims, objectives and activities of *Groundwork Gallery*, describing it as a springboard for promoting a link between contemporary art and the environment via exhibitions and sales of fine and applied art.

During the past year your committee has met on four occasions, October 10, 2016, and January 11, April 5, and July 5, 2017. The attendance of committee members has been high, though we were disappointed that ward councillor Clare Kittow did not attend any of the meetings. She has now resigned and we look forward to meeting whichever candidate is returned on August 3, (under our constitution ward councillors are invited to attend committee meetings in an ex-officio role). At its last meeting the committee was saddened to learn of the death of Robert Fraulo, who had only joined us in May and whose demise preceded what would have been his first attendance. A letter of condolence was sent by the chairman to his widow on behalf of the forum.

The areas of business covered by the committee during the year included the St James Medical Practice relocation, Norfolk County Council and parking issues within the ward, the Flood Community Plan, Premises Numbering and Street Names, the future of the Arts Centre, the matter of Planning Notices, the Riverfront Development Plan, and the Public Spaces Protection Area expansion. I shall take each of these items in turn.

St James Medical Practice Relocation

Our secretary, together with forum members Helen Russell-Johnson and Rosemary Bryan met with Dr John Galloway and Ms Kathy Foley, respectively lead practitioner and administrator of the practice, on May 25. It was a rather fruitless meeting in that it was made clear that the practice is determined to move to Edward Benefer Way, without having a satellite presence in the ward. Public transport options were discussed but it was apparent that the practice was more concerned about providing patient parking than how those without private transport would access the surgery, arguing that negotiations with public transport companies could only begin once the practice had signed the contract for the new surgery to be built. The only concession we managed to secure was that patients would be kept informed of the progress of the move through information on the surgery notice boards.

Norfolk County Council and parking issues

Our recent letters to the leaders of Norfolk County Council and the borough council requesting provision of residents parking has elicited a poor response from Cliff Jordan NCC and, I am afraid to say, no response from Brian Long. A second letter has been sent to Mr Long requesting a reply. One small success has been that our request for extended overnight parking on Boal Quay to match the hours of the borough council's car parks, was instituted in April.

Flood Community Plan

This is chugging along slowly and there is little to report other than that which was mentioned at the last quarterly meeting, that it is moving along slowly.

However, we remain in contact with the Environment Agency and we should soon be able to announce the list of flood wardens and the areas they will be asked to cover. Dennis Pearce has agreed to co-ordinate this. A letter to residents to inform them of the community action has been drafted and agreed with the Environment Agency. The borough council has agreed to print it and the police cadets to deliver it.

Premises Numbering and Street Names

Our response from the BCKLWN officer in charge of street numbering was disappointing. Notices have indeed been sent to all premises in the High Street reminding them of their statutory obligation to display their street number but it appears that there is no machinery for enforcing the regulations. We have written to the borough's chief executive pointing out this absurdity but have yet to receive a reply. However, the responsibility for the positioning of street signs rests with the borough and we have, yet again, provided them with a list of the missing street signs within the ward.

The Arts Centre

The future of the Arts Centre continues in doubt, as the building remains untenanted and uncared for. Your committee was surprised to learn that the borough had appointed an external consultant to advise on a possible development of the site vis-à-vis the arts. Consequently, we wrote to the borough asking if it had sought the opinions of the former Director of the British Museum, the former Chief Executive of English Heritage, the former Director of the Museum of London, the former Chief Executive of Historic Royal Palaces and a former senior curator of the V&A – all of whom live within five hundred yards of the Arts Centre – and if the borough was aware that such individuals lived within the ward. We have yet to receive a reply.

Planning Notices

You will recall that at the last forum meeting it was agreed that we should look at, and comment where necessary, on planning issues affecting the ward. Robert Fraulo kindly agreed to undertake this task for us, but his sad demise has meant that we have not taken it any further. We would be grateful for a volunteer, who is interested in planning matters, to help us in our deliberations.

Riverfront Development

The borough has now received the report from *urbandelivery* on the Riverfront Development Plan. There were three options of which the third gained most votes from the public during the consultation. Our draft response was circulated to forum members for comment. No-one highlighted any areas with which they disagreed but those who responded urged added emphasis on our objections to the high degree of housing, the loss of parking on Boal Quay and the proposal

to open up Hardings Way to all traffic, which we vehemently oppose and to which 77 per cent of consultees were also opposed.

The fact that the Borough could only develop the area for housing if a partner with £120M could be found may, we hope, kick the proposal into the long grass.

We were particularly disappointed that the retention of Friars Walk, which we had mentioned at a preliminary meeting last autumn and in our response to the consultation, has been totally ignored, especially as it is the last medieval rural lane in the town and one of a handful of such urban lanes in the United Kingdom. We have pointed out to the borough that this lane was under threat in the early 1920s, which led to Sir Guy Dawber, an eminent London architect who was born and bred in the house now serving as St Margaret's Vicarage, to form the Council for the Preservation of Rural England in 1926.

The new owner of the Somerville & Thomas building continues to remain a mystery and ideas for the redevelopment of the riverfront itself have still to be outlined.

The final version of our response was sent to Brian Long, leader of the borough council and to all borough councillors in advance of their meeting on July 27. The full version of the letter has been posted on the ward forum website.

Public Spaces Protection Area (PSPA)

Several members suggested candidate areas to add to the borough's proposed extension of PSPAs, and which your committee included in its formal response to the borough's consultation. We have yet to receive a reply and because of this, plus dissatisfaction with the control of anti-social behaviour within the ward and the apparent ease whereby licenses for the sale of alcohol can be acquired, it was agreed that a small group, drawn from the forum's committee, will solicit a meeting with the Public Spaces Protection team in September. In the meantime, members are asked to provide the forum secretary with photographic evidence of anti-social behaviour – ie dumped cans and bottles in areas popular with drinkers. *PLEASE do not attempt to picture drinkers and certainly not anyone who is drunk* – though verbal reports to the secretary would be very useful.

Julian Litten
July 2017