

St Margaret's with St Nicholas' Ward Forum

Chairman's Annual Report

9th August 2017 to 8th August 2018

The Forum met on three occasions during the period under report, on 9th August 2017, November 15th 2017 and May 9th 2018; the fourth meeting, that scheduled for 28th February 2018, was cancelled owing to unfavourable weather conditions.

At its November 2017 meeting there was a presentation from Paula Hall, CEO of the Purfleet Trust, on the Trust's works and at the May 2018 meeting Richard Waite gave a spirited presentation on how the town could be improved by sensitive development and more thoughtful ways of controlling traffic.

During the past year your committee has met on four occasions, on October 11th 2017, January 10th 2018, April 4th 2018 and July 4th 2018. The attendance of committee members has been high, and I am grateful to them for the work they have done between meetings.

The areas of business covered by the forum committee during the year included Public spaces protection order areas extension. (Restricting Alcohol) the St James Medical Practice relocation, King's Lynn Traffic Route Survey, Excessive Noise from events held in the ward, the South Quay Regeneration Project, the Flood Community Plan, High Street Premises Numbering, the future of the Arts Centre, the King's Lynn 'B' CCGT Power Station, the Town Heritage Initiative and the provision of defibrillators in the town centre. I shall take each of these items in turn.

St James Medical Practice Relocation

Following a meeting, which our secretary and ward constituents Helen Russell-Johnson and Rosemary Bryan had with Dr John Galloway and Ms Kathy Foley, where it was seen that the medical practice is determined to move to Edward Benefer Way without having a satellite presence in the ward, some officers and constituents attended a Norfolk Healthwatch meeting on the future of GP services. The SJMP move was thoroughly aired and no-one was left in any doubt as to the strength of feeling. Subsequently the forum signed up to receive the Healthwatch newsletter, which might make us better informed.

King's Lynn Transport Study

A monitored survey and trial of traffic using the centre of town was mounted by the county council and borough council in the spring; constituents may have seen the pole cameras and the orange-coloured boxes containing the recorded information. The main

change affecting the ward in the trial has been the conversion of London Road from one-lane-out and two-lanes-in to town to two-lanes-out and one-lane-in. This has also led to removal of the traffic lights at the east end of Valinger's Road causing frustration to those residents of The Friars, and indeed anyone else using the Valinger's Road/London Road junction seeking to turn right (ie to the south). Such is the difficulty of turning right, vehicles now have to turn left to make a circle of Railway Road, Waterloo Street and St John's Terrace to get back on to London Road if they wish to proceed to the Southgate and the Hardwick roundabout. The alternative, as many have found, is to turn right into Hospital Walk and return via Windsor Road, bringing heavy traffic into quiet residential streets, which is surely not what the local authorities intended.

The creation of the single lane into town on London Road has made the parking of wedding cars and hearses outside Our Lady's, London Road an impossibility and these vehicles now have to use a bay in South Everard Street; Norfolk Country Council's excuse was that they were unaware of there being a church on London Road even though Our Lady's has occupied that site since 1845 – to say nothing of the, very fine, Methodist Church further down.

The ward forum highlighted these problems at the outset and an interim response is planned. Ward constituents were urged to send comments to Cllr Lesley Bambridge about this trial (in every sense of the word), which many did.

There has also been a proposal, from whence it emanates we do not know, to remove the 'gate', which presently bars vehicles from entering or leaving All Saints Street from the east and thus to open up another quiet route to through traffic. The ward forum will oppose this should it become more concrete.

Excessive noise from events held in the ward

Following sustained correspondence with the borough, the forum was offered a meeting with Dave Clack, the borough's Safety & Welfare Adviser, attended by Sally Smith and Dr Michael Brindle. Mr Clack offered to monitor events for the coming year with a view to assessing the degree of disturbance and what, if any, action should be taken. He also suggested that residents keep a log of excessive noise, which has now been distributed. Mr Clack did say that whilst some the events are council-run, others were private so the ability to take action to control noise will differ. The 'events season' began in May and the promised monitoring is certainly taking place.

South Quay Regeneration Project

This appears to have hit the buffers as a general advertisement circulated throughout the European Economic Community has failed, to date, to find a potential developer to provide the required £120M. The move entailed naming the area Nelson's Quay, a misnomer which the ward forum deplored in a letter to the borough and which, in turn, brought strong criticism from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Projects and Assets, Cllr Allister Beales (or, as he phrased it, robust defence). There were also similar letters to him from ward constituents who also suggested a range of alternative names including Vancouver. To this Cllr Beales stated that this would confuse the project with the shopping

centre and further stated: “Many people cannot understand why the shopping centre is named after a Canadian island.”

Much to our disappointment the original emphasis seems to have transferred itself to a proposal – not yet agreed - to open up Hardings Way to all traffic and to develop Boal Quay and the east side of Hardings Pits as housing. Our new ward councillor Mike Taylor, who has met us just once in order to discuss the Harding’s Way proposal, reported that when canvassing for the by-election at which he was voted in, a high proportion of people had been keen to see the route opened to all traffic. He will therefore base his views/actions on this when/if the time comes to make a decision.

We were particularly disappointed that the retention of Friars Walk 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 reminded the Borough that this lane, which was under threat in the early 1920s, 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 Sommerville & Thomas building continues to remain a mystery and ideas for the redevelopment of the riverfront itself has still to be outlined. In the meantime, the borough has given its approval to the long-term mooring of a restaurant ship in the Outer Purfleet which will involve the borough in creating a better base for the Outer Purfleet and for installing dock gates leading on to the River Great Ouse to provide access for shipping. Whether or not the restaurant ship project will take place remains to be confirmed.

Flood Community Plan

This is chugging along very slowly as the designated co-ordinator has been unable to move this forward. However, we remain in contact with the Environment Agency and trust that it will not be long before a new co-ordinator can be appointed who will select a team of flood wardens and be our contact with the Environment Agency.

High Street premises numbering

This has been one of our successes. The BCKLWN officer in charge of street numbering has visited all of the High Street retailers reminding them of their obligation to display their premise number, and most have now done so. Those who have not tend to be the more well-known high street names who argue that a street number does not figure in their corporate fascia design.

The Arts Centre

The forum continues to take an interest in the future of the Arts Centre and as well as attending meetings of the LArCH group (Lynn Arts, Culture and Heritage) wrote to Hilary McGrady, the new director general of the National Trust (owners of St George’s Guildhall) in an attempt to encourage it to take a greater interest in the future of the building, in particular its maintenance. In a response - from Russell Clement NT General Manager, for Lavenham, Melford, Oxburgh, Peckover – the forum was assured ‘We do not take a laissez faire attitude to the conservation of any of our places, rather we monitor

them carefully with our tenants and provide expertise, advice and assistance for their care and best use.

‘Our buildings surveyor and curator visited the Guildhall on the 12th March this year to conduct a conservation survey with our tenants and are content that it is being maintained well by the Council although we appreciate that in common with many buildings of age and historic significance the work of conservation can never reach a stage where it is complete, it is an ongoing process which requires time and resource’.

Subsequently the borough issued a statement on July 18th that an initial proposal from a private individual had been received to revitalise the listed buildings and create a gallery of national and international significance. Talks are still at an early stage and collaboration with the National Trust and the Arts Council is needed if the proposed charitable trust is to secure the long-term future of the venue. It has also been suggested that the Corn Exchange be reconfigured to accommodate events that may not be appropriate for the Guildhall and that the underused first floor space of the Corn Exchange be used to provide two further cinema screens to enhance the overall cinema offer in the town.

LArCH is meeting to consider this development, a forum representative will attend.

King’s Lynn ‘B’ CCGT Power Station

This project has been approved both by central and local government, thus our concerns rest more with matters surrounding the chemical emissions from the site. Ward forum constituents agreed at the May forum meeting that although outside the ward boundaries, the ward could be affected by emissions. We wrote therefore to EP UK Investments Ltd in June expressing our concern over these emissions but the reply we received was non-committal to the extent of saying that everything we had raised had been discussed with central government which was content with the levels of chemical emissions. The ward forum has been added to the company’s stakeholder list and will be kept informed of further developments.

Townscape Heritage Initiative

Work on the Wennis, Saturday Market Place has been completed and the new pub/bistro, Goldings, opened at the end of March. Works on the former Courts Furnishings premises in St James’s Street is slowly progressing and the conversion of the former RAOB building into residential accommodation, also in St James’s Street, is coming on apace together with the works forming the restoration of the former Rummer pub. Re-pointing work on the former pine furniture shop in Tower Street has begun and work is to shortly take place on the Chinese takeaway building in St James’s Street. One area of concern, though, is that a number of apparently un-approved signs have appeared on the Church Street elevation of Mr Snippers hairdressers, and the street sign reading ‘Church Street’ remains obscured by the heritage signpost. A second THI - covering parts of The Friars, London Road and Railway Road – will come into effect once the initial THI has been completed.

Provision of defibrillators

As constituents will be aware, the lack of 24/7 defibrillator provision in the town centre has been and remains a matter of concern. On behalf of the forum, delegated committee member Prof. Brian Falconbridge has maintained contact with Mr John Harrison Business Improvement District (BID lead on defibrillator provision) while this important project is being brought to fruition.

The forum is now pleased to report that the town centre will benefit from the installation of six CPAD (Community Public Access Defibrillator) units purchased by BID (£12k)

As informed by John Harrison, these will be installed at key locations of potential demand namely in Norfolk Street (at Youngster's World), Conduit Street (at Kenneth Bush Ltd), in the Tuesday Market Place (at Ward Gethin), at the bus station (at J. Sainsbury Ltd), in the Saturday Market Place (at the Pay Station), and finally at, or very close by, Marriott's Warehouse.

Any further updates available will be reported at the forthcoming AGM.

Cllr Mike Taylor.

As ward councillor Cllr Taylor, who was elected in August, automatically became a constituent of the ward and a member of the ward forum committee. To our regret he refused this position.

That completes my report for the year. I am willing to take questions which, if I am unable to answer directly, I will field to the appropriate officer.

Julian Litten
July 2018