

St Margaret's with St Nicholas Ward Forum  
Quarterly meeting May 11, 2016

Dr Julian Litten in the chair

1. **The report of the meeting on 10 February** was approved by a show of hands. There were no matters arising.

2. **Talk by Councillor Nicholas Daubney: "Reflections and Projections"**

On his retirement as leader of the Borough Council after 9 years, Mr Daubney was pleased to be able to speak to the Forum. When he took up the post, the Town Centre had degenerated and there was little interest from investors. But a company was found which rebuilt much of it and business has steadily improved since then. Parking has always been a big issue – vast acres of surface parking are undesirable. A multi-storey car-park was built but a second one is needed. A programme of events has been built on the success of the two major festivals and there is now a full programme throughout the year, which Mr Daubney feels has made a difference to how people feel about the town.

On the downside it is still a low income area with a low educational achievement. But we have a fantastic College, recently expanded, with a good relationship with the Anglia Ruskin University, and the University Centre is currently being built.

The street scene has been improved and our successful Lottery Fund bids have made possible the great improvement in the two market places.

Outside business investment is being made and is generating jobs but more is needed, particularly for young people. The continued use of Marham as the main base for Tornados is important to the local economy.

Housing is always a challenge but the new housing developed in South Lynn has been very successful.

Mr Daubney was pleased that the plans for a unitary authority were abandoned and that the plan for an incinerator was defeated, due to a real community effort.

Looking to the future, he still hopes for a better setting for the South Gate, with traffic excluded. Nearly all the land required for this has been acquired.

The government has been talking about devolution and our Council was involved in the talks. If it does happen, it is important that West Norfolk plays a key part in constructive discussion. He does not like the idea of a directly elected mayor.

In conclusion, he said that he enjoyed his time as leader and hopes to continue playing some part in the future of the Borough.

Mr Daubney invited questions and many of them concerned parking. There was criticism of the loss of parking on the two market places and of the new arrangements on South Quay. He agreed that South Quay is a fabulous asset and the chairman reported that there is to be a meeting on 23 June to review the parking there. A second multi-storey car-park is needed. A member suggested that park-and-ride should be explored. Another member complained that too many proposals for new housing do not include parking but Councillor Lesley Bambridge said that the Planning Committee had picked this point up on current planning applications.

A number of comments were made about education and Mr Daubney agreed that there were challenges and said that the Council was discussing the problem with other Councils in the region.

Questions were asked about transport and the importance of good links, particularly with the North, West and South. Are we getting our fair share? Mr Daubney thought that we are doing better than some other parts of Norfolk and that we have a good relationship with the County Council.

The Chairman raised the question of empty properties, saying that there were about 1200 in the Borough as a whole. In the town centre there are many empty flats above shops – cannot the Council take some action about this waste of potential housing? Mr Daubney agreed that perhaps the Council could do more about this within the legislation available to it, though it was pointed out that independent access to the upper floors was often a problem.

Mr Daubney was thanked for coming to speak to the forum and for answering members' questions.

### **3. Treasurer's Report**

Credit balance stands at £7272. The Forum's accounts will shortly be audited, ready to present to the AGM.

### **4. Update of activity - matters arising**

- a) St James Medical Practice: The Chairman reported that planning applications for housing on the site of Greyfriars House had been refused and so that site should be considered as an alternative to moving to Kilhams Way. This suggestion had been put to the Practice with a strong recommendation that the practice should remain in its current area.
- b) Parking: There is to be a meeting with Phil Reilly of NCC Highways on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. He has been made aware of the problems on South Quay and he will monitor the current situation over the spring bank holiday. It was suggested that he should also monitor it on a normal week-day and this suggestion will be passed to him.
- c) Riverfront planning policy: A meeting has been held with Ostap Paparega and he has been asked to ensure that the Forum is consulted before firm proposals are made.
- d) Empty and derelict buildings: A meeting was held with Ostap Paparega, who shares our concern about certain buildings. A group within the Council is trying to get in touch with freeholders and some buildings are ear-marked for possible compulsory purchase but this requires a willing end-user to be found. The successful outcome of Northwold Hall was noted.
- e) Noise nuisance: JL is particularly concerned with the problems caused to near-by residents by Hanse House and urged those affected to complain to the noise-abatement officer at the Borough Council. He intends to take the whole matter up with the licensing committee. A member felt that noisy motor-cycles were becoming an increasing problem and he was asked to drop a note to the forum clerk with a view to a complaint to NCC Highways.

### **5. Any other business**

No other items for discussion had been notified to the clerk.

The chairman pointed out that the Forum has little representation from parts of the ward, particularly to the east and north. He asked members to look for any suitable potential members and to urge them to join.

He thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 8.57.