



Sopwell Residents Association

NEWSLETTER

Issue 6
September 05

Residents' AGM

Sopwell Residents' Association's second AGM was held on Thursday 7th July at Mandeville School. About thirty residents attended, in addition to the SRA committee, our local councillors, and Amanda Godfrey, Head Teacher of the school.

After the formal business meeting, which included the election of a new committee for 2005/6, Amanda Godfrey gave a presentation about how she would like to see Mandeville School integrating its activities into the community at large. Mandeville, Watling View and Marlborough schools have been chosen to pioneer a new 'extended school' scheme in Hertfordshire. Schools in the partnership will join forces and, together with other agencies, seek to provide better facilities and services for both pupils and members of the wider community. All three schools have facilities which are currently only in full use during school hours. For pupils, the extended school scheme would make these more available for after-school activities such as homework clubs, sport or other interests. For the wider community, the premises, and facilities such as computers, could be made available for community groups, adult learning, leisure interests etc. There is also the possibility of providing 'extras' such as a health centre.

Amanda is very interested to know what facilities, classes, groups, etc. local people would like to see, and would welcome suggestions. If you have ideas or comments, please drop a note to Amanda at the school, or email her on admin.mandeville@thegrid.org.uk. The school's website can be found at www.mandeville.herts.sch.uk.

Other issues discussed at the AGM included: the need for continuity with ward community constables, parking on verges, speeding, disabled access to the PO, Abbots Avenue shops and Sopwell Youth Club.

Following the AGM, the meeting regrouped at Sopwell Priory where Deputy Mayor Eileen Harris officially opened the new bridge which volunteers from Countryside Management Services (CMS) have installed to give better access over the ditch. David Kaloczi spoke on behalf of his mother, Anne, who played a leading role in the negotiations with CMS to bring the Priory open space under better management, but who was sadly not well enough to attend.

Sopwell Priory now has a management plan which includes a new mowing regime to manage part of the grass as a wildflower meadow, and plans for further work. There will be more on this project in the next issue.

Chris Pudsey

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Come and meet the neighbours at our
Community Tea Party
Sunday
2nd October
2.30-4.30pm
St Julian's Church Hall,
Abbots Avenue

Anne Kaloczi

It is with great regret that we note the death of Anne Kaloczi on 31st August after a brave struggle with terminal illness. Anne, as many of you know, was the founder member of the Sopwell Residents' Association. It was Anne who was instrumental in gathering us all together in St Julian's church hall two years ago last April to find a solution to some of the problems we have in the area. It was at that meeting that we decided to form a residents' association. Although Anne did not live in Sopwell, she saw its potential as a beautiful part of St Albans. She was particularly fond of Sopwell Priory and she worked tirelessly to persuade the council and the residents to make it the beautiful place it is today. Without her the SRA might never have been formed. We shall miss her greatly and our sympathies go out to her family.

Sandy Norman

Wheeler bins

The SRA was invited to attend a meeting at the council offices in July to discuss the use of wheeler bins for household refuse. The contracts for refuse collection are being reviewed and SADC's Refuse Collection Working Party is taking the opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of introducing bins to St Albans. Councillor Donald called the meeting to hear the views of

residents' associations and the Civic Society. There has been a pilot in the area for green bins for garden waste and cardboard. Residents were given a choice between a green bin or continuing to use a bag. Money from the Government (DEFRA) was used to pay for the bins. The pilot was well received by residents and the scheme will be rolled out over the rest of the district over the next year. Councillor Donald stressed, however, that this meet-

ing was not about green recycling bins but about grey bins for residual waste collection.

MRS, the current contractors, gave a presentation showing how the wheelie bin collection works. Although sack collection is cost effective they prefer wheelie bins for health and safety reasons. Bags are heavy and bin men suffer back injuries, causing high staff turnover. Households are only supposed to use two bags a week but many people leave out more. Much of the stuff included in the bags could and should be recycled. With wheelie bins, there is more control over what is collected. If there is too much waste – e.g. stuff which could be recycled – and the lids won't shut, they are not emptied. Another advantage is that bins are not attacked by vermin so there is less rubbish left on the street after the waste collection.

Dacorum Council shared their experiences on the introduction of wheelie bins for both green and residual waste. They admitted that revenue was a factor in their decision. Another factor was the Government's limit on the amount of biodegradable waste which can be sent to landfill sites. Each household received a grey bin, a green bin and containers for newspapers, cans and bottles. The grey bins, which come in different sizes, are collected every other week. (Several other authorities do this.) This forces people to recycle. Waste inspectors are employed to check on what is included in the bins. Despite a few problems, they consider the scheme to be a success, with over 90% of households in favour. If households choose not to have bins they are given biodegradable bags.

Councillor Donald stressed that cost would not be the main factor in their decision-making. The council was more concerned

about the environmental impact. There would also be a choice of whether to have a bin or not.

There was a very good discussion from the floor. Storage and access were big issues. There were complaints that the MRS video did not reflect streets in conservation areas with narrow pavements. Wheelie bins were seen as unsightly and impracticable in these areas where there is often no access to the rear of properties so they would have to be stored at the front. There was also concern over bins being abused by youths or stolen.

Weekly or fortnightly collection of non-recyclable material was discussed. No-one wanted smelly rubbish to be collected once a fortnight. However, it will be possible to put kitchen waste (including animal waste – bones etc.) into the green bins as the composting process operates at a high temperature which kills off all pathogens, so, in effect, kitchen waste would be collected weekly. If most other stuff is recycled, then there is really very little which needs to be taken to landfill. Home composting is also encouraged.

On the question of the cost of the bins, Councillor Donald said that the green ones are paid for by the Government. The grey ones would cost St Albans about £0.75m. Most of the cost would come from recycling money but it may be that each household would have to contribute something. Nothing was decided.

The next stage will be for the Refuse Working Party to propose solutions. There will be a further consultation after this.

Sandy Norman

Joint letter from community religious leaders

Recent events have brought home to us all the importance of communities like Sopwell where people of all faiths and all races may live together in peace and goodwill. It was especially good that we were both at Mandeville School on 14th July for the two minute silence in remembrance of those who were killed and injured in the London bombs. Both of us spoke of our horror at the bombing of innocent men and women. Both of us spoke of the Muslim and Christian belief in peace; both of us are united in our desire to work for respect and tolerance between those of different faiths and races.

The city-wide Interfaith Group recently reaffirmed their commitment to work together in a letter published in the local newspapers. The key issues from that letter are, that the leaders of the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faith communities in St Albans:

- offer their prayers to those bereaved or injured by the terrorist attacks in London;
- commit themselves to combat all forms of racial, sectarian and religious intolerance, and work steadfastly to create a community in which understanding between peoples, races, religions and creeds may grow;
- do all they can to maintain the rule of law, and foster peace and justice in our own community;
- reaffirm that we share a belief in God's compassionate love and a commitment to cherish and respect our common humanity.

There are many ways in which this is evident within the Sopwell area, with groups which meet at Mandeville School, the Salaam Mother and Toddler group at St Julian's on Monday mornings, and the Toy Library which also meets at St Julian's on Tuesday mornings. That morning, solemn though it was, marked the possibility of new ways ahead as we handed out certificates together to children and adults alike.

We would also like to invite members of the community to a tea party at St Julian's on Sunday 2nd October from 2.30 to 4.30pm. There will be food to share and a chance to chat. Please do support this further venture as we seek to get to know each other better. You will be very welcome.

Fakruz Zaman

Imam of the Jamie Mosque

Ruth Pyke

Priest at St Julian's Church

Verges in Doggetts Way and Wilshire Avenue

At the end of last year, some of our committee members arranged a meeting with Councillors Lee and Donald to discuss the state of Doggetts Way and Wilshire Avenue. Major concerns included the dumping of waste and building materials and the parking of cars on the grass verges. This, together with the high levels of litter radiating from McDonald's and the retail park, plus discarded supermarket trolleys, was blighting the area. In the case of the verges, Councillor Lee suggested that, if we canvassed residents to ascertain whether

they wished changes to be made to the verges, funds might be found to carry them out.

The survey was carried out in May this year. We asked the residents of Wilshire Avenue and Doggetts Way whether they would like: a) the larger grass areas to be planted with trees or shrubs and have bollards put in to prevent parking; b) the larger grassy areas turned into parking bays; or c) to do nothing. The majority of those who returned the form to the council (67%) preferred trees and shrubs plus bollards. The results have been sent to Councillor Lee with copies to Councillor Donald and we are now waiting for a response.

Len Lewsey

New tenant rep for SRA

Let me introduce myself: my name is Pam Marshall and I have recently joined the SRA committee to represent the tenants of Sopwell.

I have been involved in successfully asking the SADC to include double glazing for Tavistock Close, Tavistock Avenue and Watling View in this financial year. (Double glazing for Cottonmill will follow in the next financial year.) I also negotiate with them regularly to make sure that tenants' requirements are taken into consideration. I attend the Liaison Group meetings held quarterly in the council offices, and I am about to become a member of the Tenants Forum Group, a new group being formed by Jenny Owen. Our job will be to sit in on council meetings to make sure that all tenants are properly considered and represented.

Tenants who need to contact me can do so via the SRA – see details on page 4.

New community PC

PC Sharon Foster has replaced Paul Beecher as our community PC and has just joined St Albans from the Met. She therefore brings with her great experience from working in challenging inner-city communities which will help the fight against crime in Sopwell.

She is just completing her induction and will then be meeting with our committee representatives (and local councillors) on a monthly basis so we can keep up to speed with police activity in our ward. Obviously much of the police's work cannot be reported in detail as it may involve investigations which are at a very sensitive stage, but we will report what we can. Sharon is also hoping to attend our next public meeting so you can all meet her.

Other police-related news to report:

- Much of the nuisance behaviour involving motorcyclists on the Alban Way has been reduced as a result of more extensive policing using confiscations and fines.
- A Team Leader has been appointed to head up the implementation of ASBOs; he is Neil Kieran, a former housing officer, who also brings with him extensive experience of dealing with community issues.
- The new legislation regarding extended licensing hours will doubtless affect other wards in St Albans more than Sopwell (i.e. those with a greater concentration of pubs), but if anything has affected you that you would like report please contact PC Foster.

Contact numbers for our local police are as follows: PC Sharon Foster: 01727 796042 or Sharon.FOSTER@Herts.pnn.police.uk. Hertfordshire Police non-emergency no. 0845 3300222.

Linda Bateman

Watercress Wildlife Association: HELP REQUIRED!

This little patch of wildlife 'heaven' on the corner of Riverside Road/Cornwall Road continues to give an enormous amount of pleasure to those living in Sopwell. Accessible via the Alban Way (near the Orient Close end), the WWA site is an asset and enhancement to our community but has survived largely due to the hard work put in by a few very dedicated committee members. As some of these have now moved on, they would welcome the involvement of other local residents

who may have some time to devote to either outdoor or administrative tasks. Getting involved with WWA can be fun for the whole family and gets you out in the fresh air and learning about wildlife. This is the season for the collection of damsons and apples from the orchard to be made into jellies and jams, then in January there will be a chance to celebrate some old apple-growing traditions when the committee hosts a 'Vassail' on the site. For more information about WWA, log on to www.watercress-net.org.uk, join up to receive their regular newsletter or, better still, come along to a working party! The next one is at 11am on Sunday 9th October – gloves are provided. Linda Bateman

Useful Contacts for Sopwell Residents

1. Problems - if you want to report:

an abandoned vehicle	819391
flytipping*	819285
litter on paths/highways	819465
problems with parks & open spaces including litter	819366
problems with refuse collection	819285
mice, wasp nests, etc.	819440
non-working street lighting	01438 737320
abandoned Sainsburys trolleys	847707
abandoned Homebase trolleys	857113
noisy neighbours	819406/out of hours 811155
litter to be cleared by McDonalds	864676
a damaged bus shelter	0800 590889
potholes, broken pavements*, etc.	01438 737320
a water or sewerage leak	08459 200800
problem with the trains	08457 114141

2. Sopwell councillors:

Janet Smith	763907 janet.smith1@ntlworld.com
Eileen Harris	831611 harris@stalbands555.fsnet.co.uk
Dawn Pratley	840031 dawn.pratley@ntlworld.com

Contact the Sopwell Residents Association

Sopwell Residents Association
23 Tavistock Avenue
St. Albans, Herts
AL1 2NQ
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Internet: www.sopwell.org.uk

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Chris Pudsey • 16 Ashdales • 864981
chrispudsey@leedsalumni.org.uk