



CHURCHGATE AREA ASSOCIATION

www.churchgateassoc.org.uk

The Association promotes the interests of all residents, businesses and property owners, not only in Churchgate Street, but also in the general area of all those streets that lead directly off it.

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Chairman's Report for the Churchgate Area Association 2019/20

Owing to current restrictions the Churchgate Area Association AGM will now be held by email and snail mail. See the information in the newsletter and on the CAA website.

Dear Friends, if all had now been normal I had planned to start my Chairman's Report with this flourish:

'After one of the most difficult nine months since World War II when we have all learnt to live in a different framework and at different pace, we are now emerging at last as Butterflies from a Chrysalis or Sleeping Beauty from her boudoir to a happier place where we can meet together again.'

Sadly this is not to be and we are still restricted. This Covid 19 summer has been frustrating for the Association and for the residents and businesses living and working in the Grid. We have not been able to serve you as you would wish and we do thank you for your patience. Before going any further, however, we should admit that, on the whole, we have been the lucky ones living in this beautiful town with the opportunity to find many varied walks and to enjoy the lack of traffic (at the start at any rate.)

We have been most mindful of those who have been self-isolating as it has been a stressful and lonely time and it is only thanks to our many volunteers who have stepped up to the mark to buy and deliver food to many of our residents that things have gone so smoothly: we are enormously grateful to them for their kindness, resilience and energy; thank you to you all.

I always try and call on anyone new in our area: unfortunately, owing to Lockdown, that has not been possible during the last months, but I hope to do so as soon as conditions allow. We welcome you all!

We are here to help you In case you cannot be bothered to read any further I am including this paragraph at the beginning of my report so that I hope it catches your eye. We are very happy to try and help with any problems that arise: dangerous and uneven pavements, dog fouling, bin collections, unsocial behaviour, Father Christmas going up the chimney the wrong way [although I do not think even the CAA committee would be able to retrain the reindeer.] Do not hesitate to get in touch with me or any members of the committee (whose names are always printed at the end of the newsletter) and we will do our best to resolve matters.

Membership We are pleased to report that membership of the CAA is at an historic level at 323 members which means that we have a very strong voice in the town. As you will all no doubt remember, the subscription was increased to £5 per person at the 2019 AGM.

If you would care to renew, it would be of great benefit to our membership secretary, Judy Broadway, if you could kindly pay your subscriptions by putting the money, plus your name, address, telephone number and email address (if applicable) through Judy and Alan's door at 68 Whiting Street. It will save us having to call on everyone to collect the money. Thank you very much.

Judy has emailed all members to remind them to a) please pay their subscription by the end of October and b) to ask all members who kindly pay by Standing Order to alter their standing order amount to £5 per person.

Civil Parking Enforcement Because so many of the Council Officers are working from home it has been a difficult time to achieve any new projects and we are intensely disappointed that the 30 new residents' parking bays that were to have been put in place in January this year have still not been implemented. To make matters more irritating Highways then decided to repaint the double yellow lines over where the new bays are to be placed. However, we are delighted to welcome Civil Parking Enforcement in the town (traffic wardens to you and me) who have been assiduous in clearing dangerously parked cars and vans from narrow streets and corners.

The Times newspaper has been running a campaign to bring the 20mph speed limit to all town centres to protect pedestrians and cyclists. 20mph restrictions are currently in place in Bury town centre but are often ignored. We are hoping that this speed limit will be more closely monitored by the police with more CCTV cameras and automatic fines. **'Twenty is Plenty'**.

Since the Lockdown there have been more incidents of cyclists speeding on pavements and being a danger to the public. Although more cycling and walking is encouraged, we are in the process of tackling the anti-social behaviour of cyclists and are in touch with West Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council Highways regarding this problem. We are also looking at ways to reduce the number of car journeys bringing children to our two primary schools which brings me onto the next paragraph:

Park and Ride Cathy Friel (our Licensing Officer) and I paid a successful visit to Shrewsbury to talk to their Residents' Association and the Shrewsbury Civic Society (which is the equivalent of our Bury Society and Town Trust). We chose to go to Shropshire as Shrewsbury is a medieval town very similar to Bury St. Edmunds, with narrow streets and even fewer parking spaces than we have here. Shrewsbury's success was founded on a Benedictine Abbey, built in the 11th century and great wealth from the wool trade; the town centre now comprises a mixture of residential and businesses. There will be 8,000 new houses by 2030; this is all very similar to our situation here.

Shropshire County Council run a very well-used park and ride system with the buses taking up the whole width of the narrow streets. The system works because there is so little parking in the town.

In a package worth over £200 million, our Government announced this extra funding in the Autumn of 2019 to make buses more environmentally friendly, and we still have the aspiration to discover a method of introducing an electric bus Park and Ride starting from the Rougham Industrial Estate off the A14.

Cumulative Impact Policy (formerly Special Area Policy) The CAA campaigned successfully for the adoption of a Cumulative Impact Policy in 2009, which was then renewed in 2014 and 2017. This was owing to the number of alcohol related crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour incidents affecting CAA residents in the past. The policy does not prevent businesses applying for a licence but it requires that they provide proof that it will not have an adverse effect on public safety, public nuisance, the safety of children and crime and disorder.

The adoption of a new CIP is still being considered by West Suffolk Council.

Air Quality Group (AQG) This committee has been set up by West Suffolk Council to mitigate the effects of pollution in Bury, with particular emphasis on the prevention of car idling, i.e. the car at a standstill with the engine running. The CAA has formed a sub-committee of the AQG to specifically look at ways to end the practice of car idling as *one minute of idling produces enough toxic emissions to fill the lungs of 60 people*. To work towards a clean air zone for the town, we continue to lobby for the pedestrianisation of the Buttermarket and Cornhill which was part of the Town Centre Masterplan first adopted six years ago. Diffusion tubes, measuring nitrous oxide, are working in our streets.

We are working together with Matthew Axton (the Environment Officer at West Suffolk), Lisa Ingwall-King (District Councillor), Diane Hind from the Town Council and students from West Suffolk College meeting on Zoom to press West Suffolk to re-launch the anti-idling campaign by flooding the area with posters, publicity and awareness campaigns (particularly near our schools) and to declare Bury a Clean Air Town.

It is our ambition to achieve the placing of Public Space Protection Orders outside our schools. We had information from Durham in October last year that there is a PSPO by their Junior school preventing drop-off and pick-up on pain of a £100 fine. Could Suffolk County Council Highways instigate the same in Bury?

The Two Red Phone Boxes in The Grid On a happier note, you may have noticed that our two red phone boxes have been repaired and repainted as they had been in a terrible state - one in Churchgate Street and one on the corner of Guildhall Street and Westgate. It will amuse you all to know that, although I have walked past that corner with the pretty garden hundreds of times, I am so unobservant that it wasn't till 3 months ago that I even realised that there was a phone box by the wall in the corner. Ridiculous, I know. But both our phone boxes are known as K6's - designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, son of Sir George Gilbert Scott, in 1934, and there are still eight thousand of them up and down the country. They were designed to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of King George V and can be easily recognised by their domed roofs and the insignia of the Crown on each face. When we were researching ways to force BT to repair the boxes, we discovered that both boxes were 'listed' which gave us an edge to insist that they be repaired. And very splendid they look now.

Committee Meetings Every member of the CAA is welcome to attend committee meetings if there are any particular concerns that need to be addressed. Please be in touch if you would like to come to a meeting which are held (in normal circumstances) on the second Thursday of the month at 18.30 in Goymour Homes in Hatter Street by kind permission of the owners. Our meetings are never more than 65 minutes and are run at speed otherwise they can be most tedious. We look forward to seeing you.

This year we had no meetings between March and August as there was really nothing to discuss (apart from pushing on with trying to secure the 30 new residents' parking bays), but you may rest assured that our work with members' welfare continued as normal: particularly our interaction between volunteers and those needing help during Lockdown.

While on the subject I would like to express my great thanks to our dedicated committee members who bear the brunt of the work we wish to carry out. Every member of the committee has an important rôle to play in the smooth running of the Association and I am enormously grateful to them all for their hard work, cheerfulness and loyalty.

County Lines drug dealing In spite of Bury St. Edmunds being a beautiful place to live and in spite of the privilege I know that many of us feel while living here, it is regrettable that drug dealing continues in our streets. If any of you actually witness dealing taking place, please dial 999; conversely, if you hear reports of dealing having taken place, you could try and ring 101 (but it can take up to 45 minutes to be answered) or please email the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team on: SNTBuryStEdmunds@suffolk.pnn.police.uk

County Lines often use red graffiti scrawled on BT fibre boxes or litter bins to point to the nearest dealing point; the CAA have twice paid for this graffiti to be removed.

Weed killing After a few gentle reminders we are pleased to see that Suffolk County Council has applied weed killer to the weeds in the pavements - some of which were quite bushy buddleias and, in one instance, a sycamore tree was growing out of a cellar. Quelle horreur! Can you imagine what would have happened had it been left to grow.

Printing the Newsletter We were most grateful to receive £500 from our West Suffolk Councillor, Jo Rayner, from her locality grant, to pay for the printing of our Christmas newsletter in colour over two years. We are most appreciative of Jo's gesture as the colour certainly enhances our information and work.

Re-bedding of the cobbles in Angel Hill and Crown Street We were delighted that Suffolk Highways have carried out extensive work in one of the busiest streets in our area to re-bed the cobbles so that the surface of the road is now smoother and the dips have been eliminated.

Extra parking at the Station There are now 80 new car parking spaces on the north side of the station (yes, we counted every one) which are reached by driving under the railway bridge in Fornham Road and taking the immediate first left by the Hand Car Wash. The Bury Society has suggested that Greater Anglia could re-open an existing under-rail passageway to avoid the walk from Fornham Road to the platforms. The great news is that it is now very good value to park your car there for 24 hours - only £4.20.

The AGM I am most disappointed that we cannot hold the AGM in person as it is always such a pleasure to welcome you all the Unitarian Meeting House, to hear a good speaker and enjoy the wine and nibbles. Let's hope for better times in 2021.

To finish on a brighter note - Holding another Street Party Do you remember the street party we held in 2016 when we celebrated the Queen's 90th birthday in Whiting Street South and what fun it was? We had hoped to hold another street party to mark the end of Lockdown, but sadly that turned out to be impossible. Therefore, rummage around in the attic for your party hats as we are planning to hold a party to celebrate being Covid-free in 2021, Deo Volente. Generously our West Suffolk Councillor, Lisa Ingwall-King, has offered the CAA £500 from her locality grant to help to pay for the party.

Vivien Gainsborough Foot - Chairman

October 2020

