



OUTER AVENUE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Chair's Annual Report 2016

I hope the following report shows you our efforts to carry out the goals we set ourselves last year. As you will see, we have carried on working away at our Common Ground core activities relating to greening, cleaning, planning and developing community links and spirit but we have also achieved some success with fresh projects and taken on some new challenges.

The very visible achievement is the Mural at the Alma /Gordon junction. The History group worked very hard to raise funds to finance this project and were supported by those people listed next to the Mural plus many, many more. A spin off from this has been the discovery of the artistic talents within our community with the success of the two Art Fairs at Blue Door. The changes to our local Medical Centre have led to OARA also becoming involved with the centre and its future. The problems of parking have been raised leading to liaison with the Council about how to move forward. Many thanks to our Councillors and Council Officers for the support and advice they have given us during the year.

It is encouraging to see membership continue to grow and to see healthy numbers, usually over 30, attending General Meetings and joining together to discuss what else we can do to improve our area in the future and how to get more residents offering hands-on help.

MEMBERSHIP

At present, there are 150 email recipients who receive OARA news and of these 93 are paid up members. The paid-up members are mainly permanent residents but there are also students, landlords, police, City Council, local business, churches, voluntary groups and private individuals living outside the area included on the email-list. All residents are welcome to join the mailing list and the £5.00 is voluntary. The mailing list is only for OARA correspondence and can't be used for other purposes.

A breakdown of the membership shows that 85% of members are residents of Avenue, Alma, Gordon and Cambridge roads. Other roads have four or fewer members per road. Here is an approximate breakdown of where members live in the area:

Street	No. of members	Approx. % of membership
Avenue Road	38	33
Alma Road	28	24
Gordon Avenue	19	16
Cambridge Road	16	14
Livingstone Road	4	3
Lodge Road	4	3
Cedar Road	3	2
Earls Road	2	1
Spear Road	2	1
Clifford Dibben Mews	2	1
Rose Road	2	1
Rigby Road	2	1
Highcliffe Av.	1	less than 1
Southcliffe Av.	1	less than 1
Boston Pl., Portswood Rd	1	less than 1

GREENING

The Greening Group has continued to maintain our existing planters, beds and barrels, ensuring an attractive display for most of the year, with very positive feedback from other residents. The group has aimed for a twice-monthly get together, not always possible but we have tried. The

core group of around 8 people is unchanged and varies in who is available on a given date. There was great relief when we recovered the lost /stolen small tree and ½ whisky barrel which had been taken (we think in mischief rather than malice) from two locations in Avenue Road and which we will soon re-home.

As well as the **upkeep of our existing areas** this year we have worked at implementing our aim to improve the bottom of Gordon Avenue with more colourful containers and window boxes. We have had some success with containers but the window boxes have only been partly successful for various reasons, including the need for regular watering and a couple being too attractive to passers-by! In addition, we teamed up with a local student-letting company, which supports OARA, to improve the front garden at one of their properties.

We had a really good event for planting **our 50th cherry tree** with Roy Lancaster, the well-known Plantsman, who came to formally plant the tree. We aim to continue our tree planting and hope that more people will come forward to host our chosen tree 'Prunus Hillieri Spire.' Please contact us if you would like a tree in your front garden.

We held two **Table Top Sales**, raising a total of £270.76 to fund our planting, and tried out frontages at Portswood Church and the former Blockbusters as alternative venues. We also had a successful Plant Swap in June, with more plants being shared around gardens and gardeners in the area.

COMMUNICATIONS

We have continued our efforts to let more people know about the work that OARA does and to keep our existing members and supporters informed about activities and events. We have:

- continued to send **regular mailings** out to members and supporters. In 2016 this included a strong reaffirmation of our commitment to respectful community relations;
- produced **four bulletins** which have been circulated to all members and our wider mailing list;
- raised our profile through positive **local press coverage** of the planting of the 50th cherry tree and the completion of the Mural;
- revised our **Welcome leaflet**, which includes offers of help from us, encouragement to be a good neighbour and guidance on bin "etiquette". This was delivered to every household on our patch in early October, to catch the new student cohort, and with an invite to the "Meet Your Neighbour" party. We managed to reach a lot of new residents as a result - and remind others we are still here battling away;
- continued to use our **Website and Facebook** to enable a wider audience to find out more about OARA and our activities. Thank you to Matt and Ruth for their work on these and our best wishes to Ruth who has now moved out of the area;
- set up an **OARA mobile phone** contact for emergencies and members without the internet. The number is 07501 176922.

COMMUNITY LIAISON

Developing positive community links, and often having fun in the process, has remained an important focus this year. As part of this we have:

- held three community events: **'The Big Lunch'** and **'Meet Your Neighbours'** street parties, plus the **OARA Christmas Party**;
- continued to attend **PACT meetings** and to liaise with the local police and send out police alerts. The neighbourhood team supported both our street parties;
- offered support for those residents suffering from **anti-social noise and nuisance** with a certain amount of success. Produced, in liaison with the Students' Union and SCC Environmental Health, a standard letter to be given to student and any other households in response to parties held at unreasonable hours;

- liaised with the manager of Kingsley House, now the **Alma Road Hostel**, to help facilitate good working relations with local residents;
- worked closely and very successfully with **The Students' Union** to encourage student societies to get involved with our community events;
- used the new **OARA community notice-board** to let locals and other passers-by know what is happening in the area;
- worked closely with the local community, including local businesses, in the production of the **history mural**. Spent three weeks in Alma Road explaining to people passing what was happening during the painting of the mural and the reasons behind it;
- **held two successful art events**, in partnership with the Blue Door Estate Agency in Lodge Road, which showcased the work of some talented local artists and raised more funds for OARA projects. The Blue Door Estate Agency offers very good facilities and are excellent hosts.
- attended meetings of the **Southampton Common Forum** to contribute to consultations about its care and plans for the future;
- **liaised with other residents' groups**, including attending meetings of NORA, the National Organisation of Residents' Associations), the North Southampton Community Forum and the Inner Avenue Residents' Association;
- held a "**Lantern Walk**" in December on the shortest day of the year and left a card to thank all the households who had brought some festive cheer to the area through their lights and decorations;
- became involved with **Alma Road Surgery and their Patient Participation Group (PPG)** to help strengthen the link between the local community and this key facility in our area. As part of the re-organisation following the closure of the Newtown Surgery Alma Road now has its own revived PPG. It is early days for this newly constituted group. One of its interests is the number of patients who visit the surgery who might benefit from social facilities and interventions in the community rather than a traditional medical or pharmacological intervention. If you are a patient registered with the Alma Road Medical Centre and have an interest in linking up this medical facility with the community in which you live, you would be very welcome to join the group. You can contact us via the OARA email for more information.

SMART STREETS

Trying to keep our streets clean and pleasant to walk along remains one of our most important activities. We know from comments that other residents really appreciate this and that it makes a difference. In the course of the year we have:

- held **21 street cleaning sessions** with 10 -12 people helping each time and a total of 24 different members helping at some point during the year. During these we have picked up over 200 bags of rubbish off the streets and moved countless bins off the pavement;
- sent regular follow up **reports to the Council**, resulting in prompt pick-up of any fly-tipped items/excess rubbish and in some cases removal of misused recycling bins - we are very grateful to our HMO Wardens, putting to good use services of the Community Payback team, and our Refuse and Recycling Officers;
- requested **No Dog Fouling/Pick up Your Poo** signs- agreed with Council, locations tba
- continued the **Bin Buddy Scheme in Gordon Ave** with the Student No Fee agency, encouraging students in those houses to have good bin habits, making sure bins are moved off the street and raising money for the greening project in the process;
- put **house number stickers on bins** in Alma Rd (a sterling one-woman effort from Barbara);
- organised a successful **Student Litter Pick** event in February as part of Student Volunteer Week, which we hope to repeat. We also supported the SUSU Shift Your Stuff initiative at

the end of the uni year, although this seemed to be used by fewer students in our area this year. We have offered our help to publicise it more widely in future;

- **met with Council Officers** to discuss what could still be done, separately and jointly, to improve the state of our streets. As a result there has been more targeted street cleaning by the council during student holidays – although this is something we would like to see still more of - and we have had better links and responses when issues such as overflowing bins occur; we also assisted the Council with providing more information to student houses about proper use of bins and recycling.

HISTORY AND HERITAGE

The History Group has continued digging into local history in a number of ways:

- planned and raised funds for the **'Welcome to Bevois Mount' mural** including a pub quiz, a fayre at Avenue St. Andrews and input into the first Art Fair;
- held a successful **guided walk** with emphasis on local artists;
- regular updating of our **Facebook Page** with research, facts and photos about the local area. (We have 465 likes on Facebook and 66 followers on Twitter);
- were interviewed by the **Echo and Southampton TV**;
- ran a stall at the Heritage event at St Denys Church;
- Produced a very professional looking **2017 Calendar** with colour photos front and back;
- painted a mural!

PLANNING

Planning has been an ongoing activity as we keep up to date with new applications coming forward. We have regularly made our views known to the planning department, including to the Head of Planning and the Environmental Health Office when they accepted our invitation to meet members at our October OGM.

Many of the applications are for modifying existing HMOs to house extra tenants, resulting in an increase in the density of occupation, which we oppose because of the impact on local infrastructure and services.

The planned block of flats between Westwood Road and Cambridge Road was refused and the appeal upheld the refusal so that there is no change for now.

There is a move within the City for more purpose-built blocks for student accommodation and we will have to wait and see what impact this has in our area.

The Council agreed changes to the Article 4 directive, under which change of use requires planning permission, but currently this has little impact in our existing area.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING PROJECT

Parking and traffic issues are constant issue in our area and frequently raised by members. The OARA Committee therefore decided, with the backing of the OGM, to find out if there were ways of improving our community experience through the introduction of customised traffic or parking schemes. In August, residents were invited to let us know of any problems they were experiencing. A dedicated e-mail address was set up for comments and Dorothy Haslehurst agreed to act as project officer for the initial survey and future action. A significant number of residents made very detailed and thoughtful suggestions for improvements. These have been

communicated to the relevant Council Officers and there is a commitment by the Council to carry out relevant feasibility studies during the early part of 2017. Any significant changes, e.g. 1-way systems and /or an extension of the Zone 5 parking scheme, would be subject to further detailed consultation with residents.

All in all a busy and eventful year! Thank you to everyone who has contributed to what has been achieved. We'll look forward to carrying on working together in 2017.

Sue Swallow OARA Chair

January 2017