

Westminster Councillors

Another year has passed in the life of Covent Garden and the wider local community. Many of the issues faced locally are hardy perennials (licensing, planning, traffic and crime etc) and, working with the CGCA and others, we continue to represent the concerns of all in the area.

We have participated in the increasing debate amongst Covent Garden businesses, landowners, residents and amenity groups about the future of Covent Garden – is it to become a central London theme park trading on a history largely forgotten perhaps by some involved? Or can we ensure that everyone who cares about the diversity, in human as well as architectural terms, of the area has a say and is heard? Despite the fall in tourist numbers in recent months, the area still shows a high level of stress and the bulk of this falls on the residential community.

The recently launched initiative by a number of local businesses and institutions to fund increased policing in the Piazza area demonstrates once again the community spirit still found in Covent Garden but also highlights the woeful reduction in police numbers available in the area and the ever present concern felt by both residents and businesses about unlawful behaviour against both property and persons. Signs of the evils of the drugs trade are frequently visible in alleys and doorways and a general lack of visible policing (due to police resource shortages) often means that the benefits of a particular policing initiative in one locality can lead to increases in reported crime in

other areas. Inspector Paul Wright and his local team do a tremendous job and need the increased resources they deserve.

Westminster Council's Civic Renewal programme was launched on the back of widespread public consultation and real resources are being targeted through the key aims of the programme. In Covent Garden the launch of a mobile urinal scheme has helped reduce the problems of public urination but it is essential that pubs, clubs and bars assist the Council by ensuring adequate facilities in their premises and by raising public awareness about the impact of such anti-social behaviour on the local community.

As we move towards celebrations to mark the Golden Jubilee of HM The Queen, we both would like to record that, while Covent Garden and the wider local area faces many stresses and strains, we would not willingly wish to seek to represent any other area of the capital in local government.

Cllrs Alexander Nicoll and Louise Hyams

Camden Councillors

During the last year there have been continual issues affecting the area. One has been the problem of drug-dealing and drug-taking in residential areas, made worse by displacement from the Lilac Project's narrowly-defined area. The Lilac Project has now come to an end, and many important lessons have

been learned, and will continue to be put into practice. Insp Des Rock has also inherited the police manpower of an extra sergeant and six PCs, who now work on his team out of the re-opened Holborn Police Station. Some of these arrangements have resulted from our lobbying, as has the allocation of a further 90 police for Camden as a whole.

Licensing and planning issues have continued to be important for the area. Bloomsbury Councillors have consistently pressed for a tightening of licensing policy to protect the residential community, especially against disturbance resulting from proliferation of the sex industry and the 24-hour city. The policy is now under review, and a second-stage consultation underway on "Night in, night out".

Consultation is also key to better policies on traffic management, always controversial, and especially so after recent U-turns!

The Bloomsbury Ward Councillors have always tried to assist the CGCA in funding, and supported the most recent winning of a supplementary grant from Camden Council, and a better understanding in the Council of the breadth of services the CGCA provides. We have held our drop-in Surgeries on the last Friday of each month in the CGCA, where many problems have related to housing, also including continual problems of Council block maintenance and security, which we have taken up.

The redrawing of Ward boundaries means Bloomsbury bids a sad farewell to Covent Garden, and hands over to Councillors for the new