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Dear Members,
Welcome to the last newsletter of the year and what a year 2025 has been.

Hopefully, in this the final month of the year we can all find some time to sit and enjoy the colourful many hued leaves on our trees and shrubs, I hope so. After the glorious and somewhat lengthy summer we had, we can enjoy one of the best autumnal shows we've had for sometime. This seasonal change reflects a wider canvas, which as we move into 2026 will affect us all.

Firstly, I'd like to thank the many members who attended the AGM. It was a lively evening and I want to say, we listened and heard from those who asked for more opportunities to see what we as a committee are doing. We want to find ways to ensure we provide better feedback and updates to members on our work. We will go forward into the New Year and keep working on this and be more responsive.

I'd therefore like to draw attention to the changes that the committee has already undertaken and we invite you to visit our [website](#) more frequently to see the work that has been put in place to improve the site and offer more to members and to casual visitors.

In particular I'd like to highlight the **Watchlist** page, which considers and provides an overview on planning applications in the city and the wider area. The site covers the individual and the multiples of planning applications that are underway and which collectively will create a scale of change in the city and beyond that is bound to affect the city's future and its liveability. We remain concerned about this and will continue to monitor this and raise our voices and oppose where we feel it's right to do so.

The **Spotlight** section, is a monthly round up of important events affecting the city, some celebratory and others such as the impending changes affecting the city, especially the Local Government Review (LGR) and the Community Governance Review (CGR).

It is these changes that will affect all of us in St Albans and in the County for many years to come. St Albans District Council (SADC) along with the County Council, were the only two areas to support the proposal to have two Unitary Authorities (UA) to replace the present county and 10 districts of local government. The other district councils supported either the proposal to have 3 or 4 UA. All the responses were submitted to the government at the end of November and we await their response, which is expected sometime summer 2026.

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St Albans
City & District Council



Community
Governance Review

The CGR process has now moved into the [next phase](#). I would like to thank all of you who came to our public event back in September and then undertook the mammoth task of helping us deliver over 10,000 leaflets. The outcome was a successful campaign that SADC could not ignore, with over 98% of respondents saying yes to a Parish Council for the unparished area of the city.

As you know, our own focus is on the CGR process and we are now entering the CGR Campaign stage 2 phase, with the outcome and feedback from Stage 1 and the release of the consultation papers which are going to every household in the unparished area now. We have already successfully had the projected end date extended, to take account of the later start and because the whole consultation period is overshadowed by either Xmas or the New Year; not a great time for responding, but we are where we are.

The CGR poll letter that is being delivered all over the City is different from the online CGR survey that many of us responded to previously. Any comments left online now will not be counted in the ballot/poll re establishing a parish council for St Albans. The comments will be recorded and reported on, but they will not count in the tally. **The Poll/ Ballot** is being sent to all residents of the unparished area, and the other areas where decisions are required (Harpenden Town and Harpenden Rural/ Highfield). *These are only in printed form.* *There is a code on the ballot that can be scanned if completing online, so have the code ready and remember this is not just a response as previously but a vote.

Only 1 ballot per household is eligible as each has a unique code for each household. So please spread the word and tell people not to lose the form, because of each household's unique code which all responses have to contain. Remember you can keep the paper form if you're busy, and do it in the New Year, the poll closes 23/02/26.

In reality this is a one question consultation, asking households "do you support a Parish Council in the unparished area Y or N?". There is a limited amount of information within the consultation pack, with an already short window and during which time most people are engaged with a myriad of other demands.

So the key challenge is that we need to ensure we get a very high level of responses supporting the proposal – a Yes vote. In short, this is because it's been billed as a "non-binding referendum" by SADC, so a low turnout may not ensure that the proposal for a Parish Council goes forward. In essence, we remain concerned that the leadership and many councillors have been slow to support the idea of, and need for, the parish council, as their efforts are all about the LGR.

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As we approach the end of 2025, we are planning our strategy for the CGR 2 Campaign and we will update you with further information on this plan in the new year. We hope once again we can rely upon your support, input and effort to make this as successful as stage one. We also need to raise funding to support the campaign; we are intending to produce a short A5 leaflet, hold some public events and produce banners to ensure we raise awareness in the wider community. Any help you can offer towards our campaign funds would be greatly received, please contact me (chair@stalbanscivicsociety.com) if you want to find out more.

Finally, I'd like to extend my thanks to all my fellow trustees and members of the Executive Committee of the St Albans Civic Society, this has been a demanding and very busy year for us all and everyone has played an important part in helping to change the way we undertake our responsibilities and to improve how we operate. This work will continue.

My thanks also go to all of you, our members. We appreciate your support and look forward to hearing from you in the future; hopefully together we can continue to work to make our city the best place to live for our communities now and in the future.

A Very Merry Christmas to you and a Happy New Year,
Mary Conneely
Chair, St Albans Civic Society
chair@stalbanscivicsociety.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2026

At the AGM in October it was explained that the Committee had agreed that we should increase membership subscription rates (for the first time in 20 years) to enable the Society to function more effectively and to bring us in line with what is charged by other similar charities. New rates of £20 per year for individuals, or £30 for a household, are now in force and will be due at your next renewal – for many that will be 1 April 2026. Members aged under 25 years are not now required to pay a subscription at all, but concessions will otherwise only be offered in exceptional cases.

We will also be asking all members to switch to payment by Direct Debit rather than by Standing Order. We plan to implement this change from the first months of 2026 and we will be communicating with all members individually to explain how the switch to direct debit will be achieved. Of course, we will continue to accept payment of subscriptions by other means for those who are unable, or unwilling, to pay by direct debit.

CONSTITUTION UPDATE

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the updated version [here](#)

PLANNING

Some of the items our planning group have been commenting on in the last month:

- A new application has been made in relation to 69-69a St Peter's St. There is already approval for a 4 storey development and this new application is to increase it to a part 5 storey building. We are objecting to this. This follows similar applications for 5 stories for 63-65 and 67 St Peter's St. which we also objected to. The application for 63-65 has been refused and that for 67 is still under consideration.
- The Society received some good publicity for our objection to the dreadful application for the advertisements proposed for the windows of the old W H Smith building and it is pleasing that a much more modest proposal has now been approved.
- The application for the demolition and redevelopment of the old Argos site in Spencer St has now been submitted. We agree that the old building has no architectural merit and are pleased that the developers engaged proactively with the Council and local residents. Have a look at the [Watchlist](#) on our website for more details of this application.

You can see details of previous comments on the [website](#)

OUR WEBSITE

Here's a round-up of the latest changes to the [St Albans Civic Society website](#)

Spotlight – new page with November's round-up of the [latest topical or important items](#).

Watchlist – [new detail](#) on the Argos site in Spencer Street and an update on the land adjacent to the Woollam Park development on Harpenden Road.

City matters – [expanded to include](#) St Albans tour guides; Samuel Ryder; detail on our 60th anniversary sponsorships; and maps and new text added to Local Government Reorganisation.

What's on – [summary of 2025 activity](#), including our work around the need for a parish council for

[illegible]

Proposed 20mph zone north and central St Albans

Transport for Hertfordshire is consulting on a proposal to introduce a 20mph zone in the north and central areas of St Albans which include roads in New Greens, Batchwood and Bernards Heath. You can read full details and respond to the consultation [here](#)

Committee Contacts

You can always contact us by using the email addresses shown below:

Chair: Mary Conneely chair@stalbanscivicsociety.com

Secretary: Robert Osborne secretary@stalbanscivicsociety.com

Membership: Jan Cropper membership@stalbanscivicsociety.com



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