

# **MILL ROAD COORDINATOR REPORT TO EAST AREA COMMITTEE**

**9TH JANUARY 2014**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Following my appointment in September 2012, I spent the first few months focussing on:

- Initial contact with key members of the community, councillors and officers
- Supporting festive lights scheme in 2012
- Consultation on what the focus of my role should be
- An exhibition event and charette in January 2013 to explore community suggestions for the area and establish membership for the Traders' Association

## **2. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MILL ROAD TRADERS' ASSOCIATION**

Following consultation with the different groups on Mill Road it was agreed that the initial focus of my role should be to establish a Mill Road Traders Association in order to develop a partnership culture amongst the Traders on Mill Road. Formal establishment of this new Association took place in February 2013. With the support of the elected Chair, Piero D'Angelico, membership quickly increased to over 150 members. At the time of writing this membership stands at 188. The Traders' Association initially met every month – this has now reduced to every other month, unless somebody wishes to raise an important item and have a meeting dedicated to it. We did this recently in October due to concerns raised about anti-social behaviour in the area.

The main activities of the group are summarised here:

### **Communication**

- Traders' Association meetings have included officers from the Police, the County Council and the City Council as well as other community members when requested.
- Weekly email bulletins are sent to a mailing list of 195 people. Most bulletins are opened by an average of 45% of the mailing list each week
- Traders' Association is represented at other community events or meetings by Piero D'Angelico, Matthew Boucher (Vice Chair) or by me.

- In January we will be carrying out a survey with the traders in order to seek their views on the activity of the Traders' Association and to see if they have any suggestions for how we might improve or strengthen it. We'll also be running another election to select a Chairperson for year 2. At this point, I'd like to say a formal thank you to Piero for his enthusiastic and proactive approach to the position over the last year.

### **Publicity and Promotional Activity**

- Monthly radio broadcast and better links with local community radio station Cambridge 105. Cambridge 105 also ran a joint advertising scheme for Mill Road traders whereby they bought an advert together and split the cost.
- Newspaper coverage. Joint advertising campaign for Independent Retail Month, various campaigns and events.
- Social media presence
- Updated shop directory on community website [www.mill-road.com](http://www.mill-road.com)
- Launched [www.millroadtraders.org](http://www.millroadtraders.org) – a website explaining the Traders Association and a listing for all members
- Recent Telegraph coverage was initiated through local community nominations
- Shop Front Award Scheme – launched December 2013, with 51 traders participating, publicity will be forthcoming in January.
- Networking. We stay in touch with other organisations in the city such as the BID and Visit Cambridge to share on publicity opportunities
- Throughout October and November we engaged Anglia Ruskin Business School students in a research project about marketing Mill Road. Some of the students' suggestions are included at [Appendix A](#).

### **Environmental Improvements and Streetscape**

- Festive Lights 2013 – with sponsorship of £5000 from Cambridge City Council we nearly equalled that from trader contributions allowing us to install and expand this year's lights. A new website [www.millroadfestivelights.org](http://www.millroadfestivelights.org) was set up and we held a successful Switch On event in November 2013.
- Traders feel strongly about tackling anti-social behaviour and improving the perception of safety on Mill Road. The traders have asked for redployable CCTV cameras to be installed and we will be getting these cameras in February 2014 for a short period to measure the effect.
- Traders also feel strongly about improving the condition of Mill Road's pavements. In April they submitted a petition to the County Council regarding pavement maintenance in the area. In addition, East Area Committee granted £5,300 to support improvements to trader forcecourts. Although at the time of writing no traders have applied for support from this fund..

### **3. OTHER AREAS OF WORK**

In addition to providing the administrative support for the Traders' Association and following up the suggestions made by traders, I aim to support other local groups in their work, for example, Mill Road Winter Fair, Mill Road Bridges and their community newsletter and Cambridge Art Salon with Romsey Art Festival. I am also looking to assist the Mill Road Society with developing the Milly Card scheme in 2014. This has not been done so far due to the Traders Association having other priorities.

I have been able to start some projects suggested by the community:

- Farmers Market events in 2014 – consulted on this during 2013 and launching the first event in March at Gwydir Street Car Park. Stallholder applications are currently under way.
- Shop Noticeboard/Street Marker project – the design brief for this has been tricky given the turnover of businesses in the area, however, we have successfully obtained funding from the City Council for this project and design concepts are submitted for Councillor feedback at [Appendix B](#).
- Hoardings Community Art project – this project will see a community art project installed on the hoardings between the Spar shop and Brookfields. Both owners have agreed in principle (Co-op and Mosque Project) and we are now in the process of seeking funding to pay the artists for design workshops and installation. Workshops will be held with local community groups and project managed by Oblique Arts.

### **4. PROPOSAL FOR EAST AREA COMMITTEE**

Based on my work over the last year and based on feedback from various community groups and members, I would like to put forward a proposal for consideration by East Area Committee, which is support from the City Council towards the proactive development of Mill Road as a distinct arts and cultural quarter of the city.

At present, the street offers independent shopping, cafes and international food, however there are no sightseeing options here. Creative events and activities add much to the feeling of quality of life and I think we have a fairly good offer of live music, poetry, dancing and art in the area. Mill Road's multicultural and individual character has the potential to flourish if it is nurtured in this direction.

Public art can improve the appearance of the streetscape dramatically and could provide another selling point for visitors. In addition, there is great benefit for local residents if public art schemes have community engagement included in the process. I hope that the Hoardings community art project will demonstrate this.