

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes following which the Cabinet Member may speak in response. It shall then be moved by the Mayor and voted on without discussion that the deputation be thanked for attending and its subject matter noted.

(a) Deputation concerning the requested closure of the alleyway between 27-28 George Street, Brighton.

Romany Mark Bruce (Spokesperson)

This is a narrow, partly covered passageway linking George Street with Dorset Street, which in recent years has become a public health hazard and an invitation to vandalism, arson and burglary. It is used as a public toilet, a place for drug-dealing, street drinking, rough sleeping and fly-tipping. City-Clean have said they do not have the resources to disinfect the alley on a daily basis. The Community Police, and the Kingscliffe Conservation Society have said they would support a request for closure. We have collected 65 signatures so far, of residents and all the businesses in George Street and the immediate vicinity, petitioning for this closure.

Arguments for Closure

- **Safety:** Items such as broken bottles, syringes and a toy hand-gun have been found on the ground and in the guttering. Two fires have been started which could have had serious consequences. Lighting has been smashed rendering the passage hazardous at night-time. Local residents and people using the alley have met with threatening behaviour and intimidation. Recently vandals in the alley threw a bottle through a window of number 30 George Street and broke the fencing of number 28.
- **Health:** People passing through the alley regularly have to step over human faeces, vomit and pools of urine. As the alley is partly covered, this is not easily washed away by rain, and the stink remains. The alley is regularly blocked by cartons of waste, old furniture, cans, bottles and rotting food. City Clean say they do not have the resources for regular cleaning and do not clean off graffiti unless it is specifically obscene and will remove only syringes but not bottles or cans. We have photos of cans and bottles that have been there since last October.
- **Crime Prevention:** The door to the garden of number 29, which opens onto the alley, was smashed down, providing access for a serious robbery to number 30. Drain-pipes have been wrenched from the walls on both sides of the alley, and cabling ripped out. Walls of property facing the alley are regularly defaced with graffiti, which has only been cleaned once in the past six months. The alley is an easy escape route following vandalism or burglary as was the case when a bottle was thrown through the window of number 30, last month.

Arguments against Closure

- This is a public right of way providing a short cut between George Street and Dorset Street.
- The alley is an historic twitten and this year became part of a Brighton Festival Walk.

How these matters can be addressed, if the alley is closed

- The alley is a few metres from Edward Street, at the top end of George Street. A few metres down the street is Little George Street which also provides pedestrian access, through Somerfield's car park, to Dorset Street. Closure of the alley would not inconvenience those seeking to cross between George Street and Dorset Street.
- Access through the alley could be arranged for Historic Tours during the period of the Brighton Festival, or on notice from conservation groups.

Benefits of closing the alley

- Closure will promote a cleaner, safer environment, especially at night.
- Policing will be easier with the removal of access and escape route for burglary and vandalism.
- City Clean will not have to clear and disinfect the alley and general upkeep will be negligible, thus easing the burden on Council finance and offering saving to the taxpayer.
- A historic alley will be preserved and protected.

We feel the alley's status as a public right of way is made unsustainable by the incidents we have described and by the continuing obstruction of cans, bottles, urine and excrement, and that the best and most positive solution is closure of the alley. In support of this Deputation, we attach the following:

- 65 signatures from residents and businesses (including all pubs and off-licences in the vicinity) supporting the request for closure. *[to be presented by Councillor Paul Steedman]*
- Recent photographs of syringe, bottles, gun and other detritus, found in the alley.
- Letters of support from the Kingscliffe Conservation Society and BLB Chartered Surveyors, whose premises abut the alley.