



Leatherhead Residents' Association

We aim to:

- Conserve and develop the amenities of Leatherhead.
- Promote an active interest in the community and in local government.
- Foster and promote the development and enhancement of the local community for the benefit of the residents.

Summer Newsletter 2010 – Vol. 7

Contributions to the Newsletter are always most welcome. The views expressed are those of the contributors and are not necessarily shared by the Association

*We email members when new information comes our way; sometimes emails have been returned as “undeliverable”. **If you have changed your email address, could you please let us know.** Also, if any member reading this wishes to be added to the email list, please visit the ‘Contact page’ on our website and complete the on-line form.*

We also try to keep members and others up to date on our Blog: lraassociation.blogspot.com (Those without home computers can access this in Leatherhead Library)

Committee 2010-11

At the Annual General Meeting in May, the following were elected:

Chairman	Hubert Carr	chairman@leatherheadresidents.org.uk
Vice-Chair	Hilary Porter	vicechair@leatherheadresidents.org.uk
Hon. Secretary	Ray Brown	secretary@leatherheadresidents.org.uk
Hon. Treasurer	Paula Sabine	treasurer@leatherheadresidents.org.uk
	Caroline Brown	planning@leatherheadresidents.org.uk
	Fran Barnby-Smith	
	Cheryl Allen	
	Ann Cardew	
	Flip Cargill	

Overhanging bushes etc.

We have been impressed by how quickly SCC have responded when their attention has been drawn to bushes and trees which obstruct the footways. But problems arise with private hedges that obstruct the footways. If you have been inconvenienced by such growth, then you can let us know and we shall write to the owner of the property politely drawing their attention to the problem. Should this produce no result then we shall enquire as to the lack of response, and if practical try to arrange for assistance. We think that this is a far better approach than referring matters to the Council who may well end up at cutting the offending hedge at significant cost to the householder. We thank the Bookham RA for telling us of this scheme which works well in their area.





From our Chairman

Dear members

The committee and I are often faced with issues which are of concern to one of our members, but which are not necessarily a general matter for the body of residents. The extreme case was a planning application where each side had appealed to different members of the committee, each of whom had promised to help with the resident's case. However where to draw the line is not always easy. As a guide, the Association should not be expending time and resources in helping a member when there is a perfectly good route elsewhere for them to follow. For example if a member has a problem with a council officer, then their correct course of action is through one of their elected councillors – just because you do not agree with their political colours is no reason for you or them to discriminate on such grounds. If you do not know whether your matter is a County matter or District matter, don't worry, they will help you. If you don't know who your councillor is, then start with the Help Shop, or a call to the offices at Pippbrook in Dorking (01306 855001). Other organisations such as one of the Housing Associations can also be accessed via your councillor.

The role of this Association is to speak up on behalf of the Residents of Leatherhead. This includes groups of residents, where the issue is localised, but the concerns of a single resident become very tenuous to the Association. On the other hand one person's problem or concern may be representative of a wider concern, in which case it is worth speaking to your neighbours or colleagues. The Association may make enquiries before taking up or rejecting an issue. We have limited funds and limited resources and these need to be employed on behalf of the membership as a whole.

May I also take this opportunity to tell you that we are entering an exciting time in the future planning of the Town. Rather than repeat myself here, I would direct you to the Ashted and Leatherhead Local, or to our website, where we are posting the same text. Mention of the website leads me to say that I have been posting an edited version of the SCC weekly Highways programme of Works – at least when I can, and have sorted out the layout of their tables within the margins of the website. If you are interested, take a look.

Kind regards

Hubert Carr

chairman@leatherheadresidents.org.uk

Note: The Ashted & Leatherhead Local article is printed on the last page of this Newsletter – Editor



From our Secretary ...

Dear members,

There are three topics I wish to say a few words about in this Newsletter:

1. Spring Newsletter Questionnaire

My thanks to those who completed and returned questionnaires. Some comments were very helpful and we have taken most of the on board. As for the voting, the returns were as follows:

Start meetings at 7.00 pm	10.7%
Start meetings at 7.30 pm	53.6%
Start meetings at 8.00 pm	35.7%

Open meeting every month	21.4%
Open meeting on alternate months	28.6%
Open meeting once a quarter	50.0%

At its meeting in April, when only partial results were known, the Committee decided that from June onwards open meetings would start at 7.30 pm but to continue holding these meetings once a month.

At its May meeting, when full results were known, the Committee reaffirmed its commitment to start meetings at 7.30 and to continue to hold monthly open meetings since we were committed to hiring the room at the Institute each month. Speakers had already been arranged for the June and August meetings and we had agreed with the local police that they should present a report in July, September and November.

Also it should be noted that in fact less than 3% of members returned questions, so the results can at best be seen only as a guide.

2. Need to amend the Constitution

We thank those of you that attended our Annual General Meeting in May. Your officers were re-elected. However, we did less well on electing other Committee members than we did in 2009!

Our Constitution states in Clause 7: “The executive Committee of the Association shall consist of the Officers and not less than EIGHT and not more than SIXTEEN other members of the Association.” In 2009 the AGM elected seven members and empowered the Committee to fill the 8th place (though in fact the 8th place was never filled).

In May this year we elected only *five* Committee members besides the four Officers. This means that we are three short of what the Constitution requires. This is not a satisfactory state of affairs.

The numbers EIGHT and SIXTEEN in Clause 7 were inherited from the Constitution of the old Leatherhead Society. It was optimistically thought that with increased membership under the new Leatherhead Residents’ Association, more people would wish to be involved in the running of the Association and we would have no difficulty in achieving these numbers. Membership, indeed, has greatly increased but, alas, so far there has not been a similar increase in numbers willing to be on the Committee.

*We cannot function as effectively as we could without a constitutionally valid Committee. Therefore, the **September** meeting will be a Special General Meeting in which we can amend the Constitution.*

I do not think we need worry about there being so many people wanting to join the Committee that we need to state an upper limit of sixteen! But clearly the lower limit must be amended. It is proposed, therefore, to amend the first sentence of Clause 7 so that it will read:

The Executive Committee of the Association, referred to above and hereinafter as “the Committee,” to whom the general management of the Association’s affairs shall be entrusted, shall consist of the Officers and not less than FIVE other members of the Association.

Please make an effort to attend so that at least the meeting will be quorate and we can validly amend the Constitution.

3. Civic Voice

The former Leatherhead Society was affiliated to the Civic Trust. We have been asked from time to time if the LRA is affiliated to the Civic Trust. The answer is ‘no’, and it cannot be affiliated as the Civic Trust itself ceased to exist in April 2009.

The Civic Society Initiative was set up for one year only during which it consulted extensively and discussed with hundreds of civic and amenity societies and their members and with more than a hundred other interested organisations and partners about the future of the civic movement. As a result, in April of this year *Civic Voice* was launched whose mission is to work to make the places where everyone lives more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive, and to speak up for civic societies and local communities across England..

The LRA cannot join Civic Voice at the moment as the affiliation fee is £1.50 per member (up to a maximum of £500) and our annual membership fee is £2.00 per household. Clearly if there was to be any desire for the LRA to affiliate, we would need to set membership fee somewhat higher.

You may join Civic Voice as an individual; but this will cost £10 per annum. Obviously it would be considerably cheaper to join as part of an affiliated society or association. The nearest society affiliated to Civic Voice is the Epsom Protection Society which has a membership of over 1800. We have some way to go in Leatherhead!

If you are interested you can find out more from the Civic Voice website:

<http://www.civicvoice.org.uk>

You may also be interested in the Epsom Protection Society website:

<http://www.epsomprotectionsociety.co.uk>

(If you have no computer at home and, indeed, are not 'computer literate', you can always use one of the computers at the Public Library where the staff will help you.)

Kind regards

Ray Brown

secretary@leatherheadresidents.org.uk

Norbury Park Liaison Group Report

The LRA are kept informed of the activities at Norbury Park, by the Surrey Wildlife Trust, who manage the site for its owners Surrey County Council (SCC). Representatives of all interested MV and SCC groups are provided guided tours and slide presentations three times a year. Graham Manning, Ranger for the past 20 years, has worked on about 30 projects last winter, with some continuing into the summer. On the 7 June guided walk, we were shown some of the work first hand, in places that would normally only be seen by dog walkers, bridle path users, and other members of the pedestrian public who are welcomed.



Graham Manning on the site of the Douglas Fir Scrubs



Please mind the Gap!

Over the last few years the Douglas Firs, planted after the hurricane of 1987, have almost all been cleared (pictured left). Some of the ranger's work includes putting right some of the mistakes of the past. These Firs do not like chalky soil and did not establish well. The working Sawmill in Norbury Park has felled the trees that have such low-grade timber that it can only be used for wood fuel. However, we are informed that some of the best timber was used to build the hovels on the set of the new Robin Hood television series. As a good steward, the ranger has chosen to leave a few of the firs that provide a nesting place for some sparrow hawks. The patch of land will be replanted with native broadleaf, including Cherry that thrive in the area and bring beauty in the spring. **The Sawmill will be open to the public on Heritage Weekend in September.**

We were taken into the centre of a Beech Wood that was planted extremely closely about 60 years ago. This type of planting encourages upward growth and straighter tree trunks that are more valuable to furniture manufacturers, who can use only the first 36 feet of a straight tree. However, if left too dense the wood will not develop properly. For this reason one in every three trees was removed from a section last year. The carefully selected felling will continue through next year. Already there are signs of a recovery of the forest floor with bluebells reappearing this spring. The gap in the Beech Wood (pictured above right) was the former site of huge electricity pylons that have now been removed along with their concrete bases. A tiny path has already been worn by pedestrians. The greenery on each side of the path will be managed to benefit the wood and the users of the path. Because of the enormity of Norbury Park, there will always be work in progress.

Cheryl Allen

LRA representative on the Norbury Park Liaison Group

Shopmobility: An Invitation

If you have difficulties with walking and are finding it more and more of a problem to go shopping, we may well have the solution for you. We are Shopmobility Leatherhead and we provide powered scooters for people like you to use around Leatherhead town centre. The system is very simple – you join our scheme for an annual membership fee of £7.50 and this entitles you to borrow a scooter as often as you like. The scooters are up-to-date, safe, comfortable and very easy to operate – you don't need to have had any driving experience to be able to use them.

All you have to do is to come to the Swan Centre car park and find our office on the second floor, where there are plenty of disabled parking spaces. You can't really miss it – there's a big blue Shopmobility sign just outside. There you'll find a friendly volunteer on duty who will show you the scooters and how to operate them. You can have as much time as you need to try them out within the car park before you venture into the town centre.

The office is open from 11.00am to 2.00pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Joining the scheme only involves completing a simple form, producing some proof of identity and paying £7.50 for your first year's membership. You can, if you'd prefer, take a scooter out without obligation to make sure you're completely happy with it. In this case there'll also be a charge of £7.50 which becomes your membership fee if you do decide to join. Once you're a member you can borrow a vehicle as often as you like during the year.

You can just turn up when the office is open and take out a scooter, but it's probably a better idea to reserve one in advance by phoning 01372 362400. You can leave a message when the office isn't open.

We also have manual wheelchairs which members can hire and take home for extended periods. You could use one of these if for example you have a disabled relative or friend staying with you or if you have a temporary injury affecting your walking and you need to be mobile about the house or locally while you're getting better.

Our scheme has been running since 2003. It's a registered charity staffed entirely by volunteers. Our members come from Leatherhead, Epsom and the surrounding villages and they really appreciate the benefits. Here's what one of our enthusiastic customers has to say: "The motorised scooters are very comfortable and easy to use and the independence they give you is amazing. My husband and I use them weekly and were virtually housebound until we heard of Shopmobility's existence. You can generally take them into the shops and the shopkeepers and staff are very welcoming. You can call ahead to book your scooter and it will be waiting for you outside the office".

If you think that our scheme could help you why not drop in to the office? We'd be pleased to see you, to show you our scooters and to answer any questions you might have.

Heather Ward



Leatherhead Community Garden



Simon Woodhams and Flip Cargill are captured on camera planting the first plants in one of the raised beds of the Leatherhead Community Gardens. Although others have worked tirelessly, it is fitting that Simon, the Chairman of the garden project, and Flip, the donor of the plants, should share this moment. Read further for an update on the project.

One of the most exciting new projects in Leatherhead is the Leatherhead Community Garden and Learning Centre. With Simon Woodhams as chairman and Patrick McCord as a spokesperson, the garden is an example of volunteerism at its best when combined with assistance from local government organisations and the private sector. Both Simon and Patrick have an infectious enthusiasm for the project that makes people want to get involved.

On 7 June they came along to the LRA Open Meeting to explain what the project is all about, update us on their progress, and invite us to come and lend a hand. They also informed us of a temporary setback in the Spring planting schedule. A flood on the site had caused unforeseen delays. Seeking assurance from Thames Water that the problem of flooding would not recur caused even further delay. After months spent clearing the site, building raised beds and composters, weeding, sifting soil and infilling the beds the group of volunteers turned their attention to redecorating the former scout hut on the site in Woodbridge Grove. The building will provide the classroom and meeting place for the educational side of the project when completed by their September deadline.

The Project Defined

The Leatherhead Community Garden is a local organisation promoting and encouraging organic gardening within the Leatherhead area. Unlike an allotment, it is based entirely on shared work, planning, planting, and weeding, with facilities for meetings and instruction. The members take a strong interest in the larger Community as well.

The Big Tidy Up



On 3 July they took a day off from their Saturday redecorating work to participate in “The Big Tidy Up” at Teazle Wood. This wood contains a host of archaeological remains dating from as far back as the Bronze Age, plus a very wide variety of flora and fauna. “It would be wonderful,” said Lucy Quinell, “to see it used as a centre for environmental studies and, even, possibly, as a small town farm in the open section.” However, in the meantime, the wood has suffered from the sort of neglect that comes from being sited near to housing estates, schools and superstores. The “litter” includes large agricultural items, discards from motor vehicles and the usual paper and wrappers.

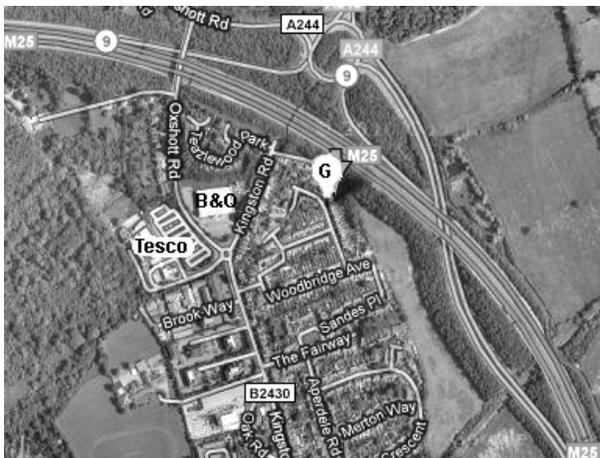
The Big Tidy Up achieved an impressive amount of accessible rubbish, but it is hoped that “Combat Stress” will be able to clear the ponds in the winter when a protected species, the great crested newts, do not need them. They may even be able to help the Ryebrook flow more easily again.

Some of the Committee of the Leatherhead Residents Association were there to do their share on the 3rd July



*LRA
Committee
Member,
Caroline
Brown, with
a haul of
litter and
other
rubbish*

For the Future



*Cheryl Allen &
Caroline Brown*

There is still much to be done at the Leatherhead Community Garden and all help is welcomed. A diary of the progress on the site can be followed on their website:

<http://www.leatherheadcommunitygarden.org.uk>

G marks the spot on the map.

Local Transition Towns

What do we mean by Transition?

The Transition movement is all about adapting to the potential changes that will need to take place in the way that we live today, as a result of factors such as the gradual depletion of the planet's resources and climate change.

The key thinking behind the Transition movement is that in working together as a community, perhaps we can make a difference.

You can find out more about Transition by visiting www.transitionnetwork.org

Those of you who read the *Ashtead and Leatherhead Local* (available free on the Help desk at Sainsburys), may be aware that Ashtead has made great strides in becoming a Transition Town. Dorking also has a well established Transition movement. This year Bookham began Transition Bookham when a small group of people decided to follow up on the environmental interest expressed in their Bookham Vision Survey, similar to our Leatherhead Health Check. As a trained Champion for climate change I have hoped that Leatherhead also would join one of the fastest growing community movements in the world. Several factors have made me optimistic that this dream will become reality.

During 2010 there has evolved a natural interest among those of us who attend the monthly open meeting of the Leatherhead Residents Association in environmental issues. In April we enjoyed the experiences of Heather Ward in creating her own nature reserve in her back garden. Her talk about "Garden Wildlife" informed us of how we can encourage biodiversity in our own gardens. One of our active members had posed the questions, "What has happened to our bees? Why can we not find local honey?" **At our 2 August open meeting, local beekeeper, Graham Fyson, will answer our questions and share his experiences.**

In recent months we discovered that a small group of people have worked tirelessly creating the Leatherhead Community Garden. Their concepts of growing organically, sharing the work in a community spirit, and making a neglected space a better part of Leatherhead, is at the core of the Transition movement. I believe that, without realising it, they have actually begun Transition Leatherhead.

At the AGM of the LRA in May, new Committee member, Flip Cargill, expressed an interest in moving in the direction of Transition. Knowing that the subject is vast, a few of us decided to look more closely at what Bookham is doing. As the most recent of our neighbouring towns to embrace Transition, we thought it would be helpful to see how they are progressing. On 16 June we attended their monthly open meeting. We found that in the six months since they first met they have come a long way. We plan to follow their progress and attend their monthly meetings for inspiration. Hearing that Leatherhead has an interest in Transition, we were contacted by the Transition Ashtead group, who offered their help and support.

Also we welcome the news that following trials of weekly food waste collection in Bookham and Fetcham, the Mole Valley District Council has extended the service throughout Mole Valley. Since food waste sent to landfill creates methane, a greenhouse gas 21 times more powerful than carbon dioxide, diverting waste away from landfill avoids the creation of methane and reduces our contribution to climate change. Your food bins will be delivered in either July or August. Recent news, both local and national, has highlighted the extent of the food waste some of us generate. It is estimated that the average family sometimes discards as much as £50 worth of unopened food per month. Care with making shopping list and inventories of our cupboards and refrigerators along with creative use of leftovers are recommended to curb the waste. We will become more aware of just

how much food we waste when we consign it to a separate container.

Will Leatherhead become a Transition town? I sincerely hope so. Watch for progress reports in future LRA newsletters.

Hilary Porter



Preview of Safety Day?

No it's the real thing. An electrical fire in the Cycle Works Shop in Church Street brought all three of the Surrey emergency services into action on Saturday 26 June. Rapid response seemed to bring the fire under control in an efficient manner. The staff were able to escape but there was great stock loss. This was a real display of what Surrey Fire and Ambulance Service is all about.



Leatherhead Safety Day

On 2 July the **Leatherhead Residents' Association** again participated in **Safety Day** sponsored by the Surrey Police. The organisers' main aim was to give everybody the opportunity to meet people who either volunteer or are employed to help us in our community.

With over 35 stalls in the Town Centre, there were educational opportunities and chances to get advice and help, and also to be entertained. Many took the opportunity to have the RSPCA provide a free chip for their dog or cat. Some were invited to set up Speed Watch sites in the area after seeing the radar gun demonstrated. Others watched the Surrey Fire and Rescue demonstrate their fire fighting equipment. Free smoke alarm fittings were on offer.

It was heartening to see so many people at both sides of the tables and stalls, to see so many people interested in the lives of others in Leatherhead. Our LRA stall, manned by Cheryl Allen and other Committee members provoked interest and we were pleased to sign-up five new members that day.

The town had a real buzz and even the weather was kind!

If you missed the event this year, keep an eye on the LRA website for next year's event. The pictures above show the emergency services in action in Leatherhead on 26 June.

Caroline Brown

Leatherhead Residents' Association attempts to save the Leatherhead Leisure Centre Locomotive



Many of the newer residents of Leatherhead will never have seen the Industrial loco that now sits unused at the Leatherhead Leisure Centre. It was generously donated by Adrian White to the children of Leatherhead. It was made as safe as it could be, satisfying the health and safety requirements of another period of time. It was then mounted in a position near the former water park and was available for children to climb aboard and take a look and touch a real engine that had been a work horse in past years.

The abandoned loco was called to the LRA Committee's attention by John Bleackley, who posted a picture of the sad little engine covered in brambles onto the LRA Blog over a year ago. John made some inquiries to the MVDC but was discouraged in his efforts to bring the loco back to its former state.

Another glimmer of hope

At the February open meeting of the LRA an announcement was made that Developer Contributions (106 money) were available for a Public Art Project. Councillor Rosemary Dickson had put forth an idea that a sculpture for children to climb on be placed in the Park Gardens. This idea triggered the thought that Leatherhead already had a large visual object that children in the past had climbed upon--the little loco.

New hope was in place as the LRA put forth the idea to the Public Art Committee that the Loco should be relocated and refurbished with the 49,000 pound fund. On 21 April and 24 April the public had a chance to have their say about the various projects that had been proposed. When the 'votes' were tallied it was deemed to be the most popular project, if just by a nose.

The next step in the process was to place the results in front of a panel of judges. After considerable debate it was decided that the very poor condition of the engine, combined with the cost of moving and restoring made the project unfeasible. There were also considerations concerning health and safety and a fear that it would be a target for vandals. Some people had objected because they thought the space in the Park Gardens was well used and the loco would cause overcrowding.

Many of you signed a petition to carry on with the effort to save the Loco even if the project was not selected as a recipient of Public Art Funds. It was hoped that at least some of the money would be designated for the popular project. With no funds forthcoming, the prospect of saving the loco was becoming even more difficult. Only a glowing report on the condition of the engine could make the uphill battle worth while.

Expert advice sought

Roy Allen invited representatives from The Bluebell Railway to visit Leatherhead in April to evaluate how difficult it would be to move the loco and its state of repair. Although access to the Leisure Centre site is now limited because of the construction work going on there, the experts could see enough to know that the project would be extremely difficult and expensive. The fact that it had not been maintained or protected led them to believe that there was a good chance the asbestos would be exposed. Contributing to the expense of moving was the precise location on an elevated spot with no chance of using tracks to bring the loco to a new location. Lifting a very heavy object such as this is an expensive exercise.

LRA abandons hope of saving engine

With great reluctance and regret we must now give up the idea that the engine can be saved for Leatherhead. We hope it will find a new home and be transported there when the construction work is completed at the Leisure Centre.

Can lessons be learned?

It was very encouraging to see the fondness Leatherhead residents have for their memories of a time when the Loco was available to them. The closing of the paddling pool meant that people no longer visited the site to use the engine as a play object. Unfortunately, maintenance is an expense that does not take priority in Leatherhead. We do not seem to treasure and preserve the gifts we are given. The Leisure Centre cannon was sold to the highest bidder and the loco was left to deteriorate beyond repair. Memories are important and some of you have your memories of one of our soon to be lost gifts.

Thanks to the Volunteers and Supporters of the Bluebell Railway for taking their time to help us evaluate the situation.

Cheryl Allen

Help needed

If you could help deliver the next newsletter in the Autumn, please contact the Hon. Treasurer.

Dates for your diary

- Monday, August 2nd – Open meeting: Graham Fyson will be speaking about beekeeping
- **Monday, September 6th – Special General Meeting** (including Police Report)
- Monday, October 4th – Open meeting (speaker to be announced)
- Monday, November 1st – Open meeting with Police Report
- Monday, December 6th – Christmas Social – all are invited!

All meetings will begin at 7.30 pm in the Leatherhead Institute.

If you have a particular interest or concerns on any of the above please contact us through our website (URL is given at the bottom of the page) or write to us at the address shown at the bottom of the page.

The Chairman's article in the Ashted & Leatherhead Local follows on the next page.

Our Chairman's article in the July edition of the Ashtead & Leatherhead Local

Leatherhead Residents' Association

At a well attended open meeting, the Association was addressed by Andrew Bircher, Head of Planning for Mole Valley District Council. A lively discussion ensued, during which many opinions were expressed. This subject concerns the future of Leatherhead, not just for the immediate residents, but also for all the environs which consider the Town to be their urban centre. In the past we have not been very good at relating our plans to our professed vision for the Town. Hopefully we can now set out a series of logical steps, or framework through which each proposed plan or project can be seen as a step towards our vision.

The Council are preparing a questionnaire which they hope will rationalise the issues and allow respondents to state their preferences in terms of the way forward. The Association's committee will endeavour to ensure that the questionnaire is well balanced and constructive, as well as being reasoned and logically related to the vision. We shall be assisting the Council in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires, at least to the residents of the Town, but we hope that responses can be obtained from a far wider area.

The population of Leatherhead's hinterland is of the order of 40,000. That includes Ashtead, Bookham and Fetcham, so it is suggested that we should endeavour to get at least 5,000 responses (12.5%). Clearly if we can get more than this it would be better, and carry more weight. However we are seeking more than a tick-box response. This area contains a large proportion of intelligent people, there must be many good and imaginative ideas within the community – as well as a few daft ones! So please help us define the future.

It is very encouraging to us that every month our form below, draws in few more members. The last month's increase in membership was also boosted by our stand in Town on the Leatherhead Safety Day. So if you live in North or South Leatherhead wards, do come and join us.

Hubert Carr, Chairman.

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