

Minutes of the Open Meeting of the Leatherhead Residents' Association
At the Letherhead Institute on 6th October 2008 at 7 o'clock

Attending: Hilary Porter (Chair), Clare Gomes Fidalgo, Paula Sabine, Roy Allen, Fran Barnby Smith, Heather Ward, Cllr. Sylvia Sharland, Cllr. David Sharland, Cllr. Tim Hall, and P.C. Fran Davey with PCSO Hermione (Henry) Pilbrow plus 7 members of the LRA and visitors..

In Attendance: Louise Blackmore (Unilever) and Leatherhead Press Officer.

Apologies: David Smith, Ray Brown, Caroline Brown, Cheryl Allen, John Bleackley, Hubert Carr, Cllr. Bridget Lewis, Cllr. Rosemary Dickson

Police Report and Local Concerns :

There have been two burglaries reported, which both took place overnight in South Leatherhead, where no suspect was seen on the premises at the time. Scenes of crime officers have attended where there have been possibilities of forensic evidence. There have also been three non-dwelling burglaries, when property has been taken from private areas of a public house belonging to staff.

Violent crime relates to 5 assaults in the area, where 3 arrests have been made and 2 suspects have been identified and will be dealt with in the near future. These crimes were all in relation to domestics or alcohol consumption.

Criminal damage relates to broken windows and damage to two vehicles.

There has been an increase in theft from shops over the last month, where 7 reports have been made, 7 arrests have been made with regards to these incidents. Out of those, 4 people have been charged with theft, one investigation is on going and another investigation has no further leads to identify the suspect. These incidents were dealt with using the assistance of shopsafe radios.

There is usually an influx of shop theft during the lead up to Christmas, police are aware and will be patrolling.

Local officers have increased patrols in the area with regards to people in possession of controlled substances, drugs. 4 people have been stopped and found to be in possession of class C drug cannabis, where the crime has been detected. Two further people have been arrested following a police warrant being conducted where class A drugs were located.

Police continue to patrol the riverside where there have been no further incidents to the scale of the previous one reported. Some people in smaller groups have been located in the area, however they have not been antisocial and have moved their tents and cleared their mess and dropped beer cans up when requests have been made.

Police have worked with Pitstop and they have now produced their new improved Code of Conduct, which was passed to all attendees to glance at. Amendments include that no children or teenagers under the age of 16 are to be allowed into Pitstop unless accompanied by a parent or guardian who is capable of adequate supervision. The code of conduct is still to be formally introduced to the people attending the site. Police will continue to keep an eye on the area and be involved in monitoring the Pitstops' code of conduct.

Police have been working with boys that use the Guildford Road skate park, giving them mobile phone numbers to contact, and as a result, graffiti there has reduced.

Knoll Roundabout

At Knoll Roundabout 4 people have reported 6 incidents of drivers cutting up onto the pavement in mornings. Police are aware of the problems on this roundabout and will make it a priority to patrol the area at busy times.

Sally Edwards has been campaigning for improvements to the Knoll Roundabout to make it safer, and addressed all attendees on her frustration at the lack of progress on this. She informed that it seems not to be a council priority due to lack of funding, despite her estimate of it costing no more than £40,000. She put forwards three suggested improvements; putting in red anti-skid surfaces on roundabout entrances, the reduction of three lanes into two, and installing high kerbs or barriers where vehicles frequently mount the kerbs. She has had much support, including from the council, police and the Leatherhead Residents' Association, as many residents have had their own experiences of danger in crossing this busy junction. The application for improvements has not been rejected, it has been an issue of funding, taking into account other proposed works and improvements throughout Mole Valley and Surrey, although she believes that various funds could be available for this project. She is also concerned that if nothing is done, a serious or even fatal incident could occur before there is any action.

The Councillors present were asked whether they were in support of this campaign and where money for this could come from.

Cllr. Tim Hall replied that the section 106 money is linked to the North side of Leatherhead and some is already allocated, such as in the Randalls Road/Station Approach improvements, with assistance from Unilever. The Plough Roundabout has also already been assessed as a priority, due to severe flooding outside the Plough Pub, resulting in school children having to go out into the road, and £40,000 has been set aside for dealing with the drainage problem within the next couple of months. He believed that Highway Engineers thought that installing higher curbs would only be a temporary solution, and a more comprehensive scheme was needed. He also felt that a reduction of lanes would cause severe gridlock.

Cllr. David Sharland informed everyone that they have to deal with issues covering the whole of Mole Valley and have to look at the wider picture, so money is limited. They have to compare the associated dangers and prioritise.

Cllr. Tim Hall added that it might be possible to get this into next years' budget, but currently the plan is not comprehensive enough and needs more work. Long term, he agreed with Roy Allen, that the roundabout needs re-alignment.

Sally Edwards responded that Andrew Leech, an engineering contractor for Surrey Highways is in support of a reduction to two lanes, and that a third was put to show funnelling of traffic only. She also felt that there really needs to be first a short-term solution, whilst parallel planning and introducing long term solutions as well. She also noted that the high kerb on the other side of the roundabout does appear to work.

It was agreed that putting up bollards in the problem kerb area would be cheaper than going ahead with all of the current proposed suggestions and would be a good short term

fix. Cllr. David Sharland agreed to talk to the council on Tuesday 7th October about this. Cllr. Tim Hall said that he would look into the possibility of trying temporary bollards to deduce the lanes to see the effect on the traffic before considering a permanent lane decrease. However, timescales on this depend on the engineers and financial budgets, but at least investigation is underway.

Poppy Fox informed the Councillors and Police that she has a mobility scooter, which she uses to cross the Knoll Roundabout from Leatherhead to Ashted. She finds the pavement to be too windy and narrow at places and some of the uneven grass verges almost tip her up. Therefore she has to go on the road, which is very dangerous. She believes that a wider, more even pavement is needed, with higher kerbs and dropped sections to cross. On a recent journey a driver who was using a mobile phone in their vehicle almost ran her over. PC Fran Davey suggested that she could take number plates and report any further incidents to the Police. Unfortunately the current pedestrian bridge crossing has steps. This was flagged up as an issue for the access group and Leatherhead Area Partnership. Cllr.

David Sharland was concerned about the driving of a scooter on these roads, although he admired her independence. The Police advised her to wear high visibility or fluorescent clothing at all times when travelling in her mobility scooter.

Cllr. Tim Hall reported on a recent meeting with local residents in the vicinity of Fortyfoot Road about parking problems. A small working group was created and it had been agreed that being an unadopted road, they would put their own no parking markings in place.

Police will concentrate their patrols on Epsom Road and the Knoll Roundabout, and the shops in the lead up to Christmas .

Minutes of the last meeting held on 1st September 2008

Amendment: Heather Ward said the minute that the Leatherhead Area Partnership would “report concerning consultation on a new project”, should read “report concerning a new project”.

Planning

Roy Allen reported no major issues. Observations on the local area had been requested by the MVDC Planning Department.

Bus Stop for Windfield: The Company Secretary for Windfield Leaseholders had request that the Leatherhead Residents Association conduct a questionnaire for Windfield and surrounding residents.

Town Centre Forum Hilary Porter advised that the proposal that Leatherhead should introduce an Awards Scheme for Leatherhead Architecture, as currently in place in Dorking had been referred to the Leatherhead Area Partnership, This had originally been proposed to the Leatherhead Healthcheck and the Leatherhead Society three years before and was now again mentioned through the Leatherhead Area Partnership for the Leatherhead Residents’ Association to discuss, as this would take an interest in plans that aesthetically improve the area.

Unilever

Unilever have been doing research into integrating and developing a community programme and their officer concerned Louise Blackmore had attended the meeting.

Concern was expressed regarding the worsening of the traffic overload. It is understood that buses have been put in place for employees to travel from Crawley, Kingston and Walton, and also for lunch times in association other Leatherhead-based companies. The company are trying to reduce the amount of 9-5 commuters so are incorporating flexible working hours and staff working from home where possible. The moving date is 10th November, with more staff coming each Monday of the month afterwards. As an ex-Unilever employee, Roy Allen mentioned that he was concerned that 3 productive offices with a wide catchment area have been closed, and that the substitute location is based in Leatherhead at some distance from the train station.

It was asked if the company had been invited to consider investing in or sponsoring the Knoll Roundabout. Cllr. David Sharland advised that the Section 106 money given by the Company had, been discussed with the Company and allocated to areas close the new building. Parking solutions have been found temporarily by car parking spaces being allocated on a temporary basis for the next 18 months for Unilever staff at Pakesham Golf Club, Bourne Hall, Randalls Road, Leatherhead Leisure Centre and Fetcham Football Club. \Parking spaces will have to be booked in advance by employees through Unilever. Clare Gomes Fidalgo asked if any suggested route for employees who choose to drive to Leatherhead from Crawley and previous sites has been issued or if there has been any discussion with the council about such planned routes. It was agreed to invite further representation from Unilever.

Ashtead & Leatherhead Forum Report

The last meeting was held at the Letherhead Institute on Monday 8th September at 7pm and was well attended. The first issue discussed was a Partial Review and PowerPoint presentation of the South East Plan by the Regional Assembly to consider the proposals for the number of pitches for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople in Mole Valley by the Council's Planning and Policy Manager, Jack Straw. This was followed by a Surrey PCT presentation and hospital update to consider future hospital and medical care and provision in the Ashtead and Leatherhead area, by Jill King and Wendy Lockwood. Attendees were informed that Epsom will probably be downsized, but plans are still up in the air, and Adrian White might invest in Epsom Hospital. A lot of money has gone into improvements to St. Helier hospital. There is some interest in expanding the Leatherhead Hospital site, with expanding car parking and possible GP relocation. Services should continue to some extent at Epsom and Leatherhead. There was then an update from Jean Pearson, Portfolio Holder on Environment & Sustainability. She discussed improving streets and cleanliness of local towns, such as the Council's chewing gum campaign, where a full cleaning of Leatherhead High Street was undertaken on 1st-3rd September and the road was closed for proper cleaning. She also discussed reduction of the districts' Carbon Footprint, including reducing CO2 emissions and encouraging the use of shared driving and use of public transport, which sparked a debate on the infrequency and current limitations in local bus services.

The next meeting will take place in Ashtead on 26th January 2009 at 7.30pm, and again in Leatherhead on 22nd April 2009 at 7.30pm.

Ashtead Residents' Association - Hopper Buses

On Friday 12th September at 2.30pm at Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall a meeting was held to discuss Hopper Buses in our area. There was a Chobham presentation on the implementation of Hopper Buses from Chobham to Woking in peak periods. It is locally controlled public transport in-between bus services, with the support from Surrey County Council. The meeting was to look at using this model and implement it for the Ashtead area, possibly also to use for youth transport to other areas and for elderly trips to the local hospitals. Our dial-a-ride buses are classed as buses so cannot be used. We would need to register all possible roads under Section 19 and organise all tickets to be paid for in advance, to establish membership of the scheme. The outcome would be a reduction in traffic, a saving on local daily car park charges, pressure on the voluntary car scheme and taxi fares. There is a real interest from Ashtead, especially as their train station car park is always full.

Representatives from Leatherhead, Bookham and Fetcham residents Associations had attended. The meeting and were enthusiastic about considering following up the possibility of similar schemes in their own areas.

Environment

There has been a proposal from the Green Mole Valley Forum to make Mole Valley a transition area. (speaker to be invited).

Big Tidy Up: The North Leatherhead Community Safety Group organised a Litter Pick place on Saturday 13th September at 10am. This focussed on problem areas such as the footpath and underpass from Leatherhead Train Station to Kingston Road and worked well. Residents for South Leatherhead, would be invited to suggest their own areas of concern for future action. In the hope of reintroducing the previous twice yearly organised litter pick. This idea to be discussed with Steve Strickland and Patrick McCord, maybe as guest speakers in future meetings.

Climate Change: the Every Action Counts programme encourages 5 areas to work on; caring for your area, travelling wisely, saving energy, shopping ethically, and saving our resources by recycling. The MVDC food waste recycling test scheme has been successful and Cllr. David Sharland informed that more properties in the area are to be bought into this scheme.

Membership

Fran Barnby Smith and Paula Sabine informed attendees that about 450 households are currently members, but anyone joining now will be a member for 2009, which means they get a few months' free membership. There needs to be more coverage and membership for the North of Leatherhead, and B@ttitude shop in Kingston Road will now accept membership forms. There will be a membership drive in Leatherhead Town Centre outside Sainsbury's on Thursday 16th and Saturday 18th October using the barrow, both of these days are also market days. The membership forms have been updated and the Leatherhead Residents' Association now have a new mobile phone contact number – 07986 430935.

A.O.B.

Future Events: There will be a **Quiz night** on Friday 24th October by the Chamber of Commerce at the Parish Church Hall at 7.30pm, for teams of 6 to participate and all funds raised will go towards the festival committee.

Halloween festivities will take place in Leatherhead Town Centre on Friday 31st October from 3.30pm.

Christmas comes early to Leatherhead Town Centre and there will be celebrations on Saturday 6th December, including Santa and real reindeer. Unfortunately not all the shops are having Christmas trees and lights this year.

Town Centre Forum and Leatherhead Area Partnership AGM: will be meeting on Thursday 6th November at Park House at 5.30pm. Heather Ward will also be writing a paragraph or article for the next newsletter in November. The Leatherhead Town Centre Forum has been meeting every two months' but to continue it will need participating groups to pay for the meeting venue in 2009. The LAP are looking at agreeing sites for benches and cycle racks in and around Leatherhead Town Centre, as currently only proposed areas are known. Heather Ward offered to bring plans for all possible sites to the next LRA meeting.

King George Vth Park Gardens: Cllr. David Sharland mentioned that on Tuesday 14th October at Park House between 5-6pm or 6-7pm there will be an artwork consultation for the garden. Such installations will include canopy arches, planting and benches.

Signpost outside Lidl: following a blog on the website about the positioning of a signpost being too close to the bus stop outside Lidl, making passage difficult or impossible for a local resident with a mobility scooter and parents with double buggies, the post will be moved.

Access Group: David is to bring up the Knoll Roundabout kerb issue.

Date of the Next meeting: 7pm on Monday 3rd November 2008.

Meeting concluded at 9.02pm.