

**Minutes of the Meeting held on
Monday 5th July 2010 at 7.30 pm
in the Letherhead Institute.**

Present:

Members: Hubert Carr (Chairman), Hilary Porter (Vice-Chair), Ray Brown (Secretary), Caroline Brown, Mike Lewis, T. Hugh Tatham-Thompson, D.A. Summerfield, J. Summerfield, A.D. Rousen, P.T.R.L. Musoke, Percy Hawkins, A. Howard, N. Howard, W. Hughes, Paula Sabine, Nigel Sabine, Roy Allen, P. Brodmile, Cheryl Allen, Annette Russell, J. Bird, Bridget Lewis-Carr, Alun Thomas, Rosemary Henderson, Fran Barnby-Smith, Andrew Morek, Margaret Ludford, Jane Pratt, Poppy Fox, Ann Cardew, Patricia Noonan, Valerie Butler, Chris Leveritt, Susan Leveritt, Mike Johnson, Lucy Kellet, Flip Cargill
Visitors: Christine Smith, Colin Langley, Sylvia Sharland, Cllr David Sharland, Sam Blackledge (Leatherhead Advertiser), Rodney Shaw, Paul Fairweather (Fetcham RA), Caroline Cardew

1 Apologies

None

2. Minutes of Meeting on 7th June

Accepted

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

re Item 7 (A.O.B) fourth point raised by Tom Musoke:

Mike Lewis reported that planning consultation was going on regarding Nos. 4 & 6 Reigate Road. If this development is allowed, it will exacerbate existing parking problems.

re Item 7 (A.O.B) first paragraph:

Cheryl Allen reported that she emailed Cllr Tim Hall about this, but has received no reply; that Dennis Wickham is still trying to get recompense for the costs he incurred; that she had learned that tickets were still being issued to people parking in the evening, which could well affect Theatre patrons.

4. Police Report

None of the South Leatherhead Neighbourhood Team had been able to attend and had held their Police Panel at 6.00 pm. In the absence of PC Fran Davey, PCSCO Hermione Pilbrow had given the report. According to Caroline Brown, who had attended; Hermione had reported that:

- there have been four allegations of assault; people have been arrested and further enquiries are ongoing;
- there have been four burglaries;
- there have been six thefts from cars;
- a male consuming alcohol and sleeping rough on the War Memorial site on Gravel Hill has caused problems; the person has moved away from the site but still frequents the area; this is being monitored;
- Street Meetings, where residents are meeting police, are proving successful; any street that wished to have such a meeting should contact their Neighbourhood Police team.

Caroline reported that in the discussion following the report, the following were raised:

- There are problems being caused by placing young and difficult people in the Kingston House Gardens flats with existing older residents. the flats were never intended to be used this way and the Mole Valley Housing Association (MVHA) does not seem to be supervising the situation; the police are to meet with Julie Beach of the MVHA.

- There are parking problems at the junction of Middle Road and Upper Fairfield Road; double yellow lines are needed to prevent cars parking on the corner. (Cllr Bridget Lewis-Carr said she was aware of the problem)

- There has recently been an increase in noise and disturbance from the Duke's Head. Who owns it?

- the Police Station on Kingston Road is to be sold; the police will have an office in the Swan Centre.

It was also pointed out that no information about North Leatherhead had been provided in order to report to the LRA. Cllr Bridget Lewis-Carr offered to supply the printed statistics for North Leatherhead.

5. Andrew Bircher (Corporate Head of Service, Planning at MVDC) on consultation process for the future of the High Street and its environs.

There is about £250 000 from monies collected from developers' contributions to be spent on environmental improvements in the centre of Leatherhead.

What we have done so far:

- met with various groups and have had discussions and have reported back to Surrey County Council (SCC) and Mole Valley District Council (MVDC);

- the politicians of both councils have given the 'green light' to start the consultation process.

We have been looking at the following areas:

- consulting with SCC regarding highways;

- number of things need repair;

- range of possibilities concerning traffic on the High Street - we need feedback & need to know the problems;

- there is a history of a scheme for Church Street-High Street area. Can some easy improvements be incorporated? Can we create a focus there?

- there is a contribution of up to £50 000 for works of art and craft; some consultation has already taken place.

Time table outline:

- first consultation will be with businesses along the High Street;

- secondly there will be consultation with businesses around the Leatherhead area;

- we will consult with local groups such as the LRA;

- a survey will be put on-line;

- we will the spread consultation to other northern Mole Valley residents' associations.

- eventually, about September, we will have drop-in publicity in a shop.

- then we will pull ideas together and go back to the relevant Council Committees.

At this stage there was a pause for question and answer. At some points several discussions broke out at once and some questions were repeated at a

later stage. The following attempts to summarize the main points:

Q. Will the ideas put to the Committees be referred back to the public for consultation?

A. Yes, that is the way it has worked in other places I have been involved with.

Q. How many more consultations? Why have an archway in Church Street as it is not the entrance to the town?

A. we don't want to prolong consultation period longer than necessary which is why we aim to pull ideas together and put them to the Committees in the Autumn. As for Church Street, the aim was to improve the somewhat tatty gate that now exists; the archway is only one idea.

Hilary Porter expressed concern the proposed temporary traffic order assumed the removal of the gate in Church Street and that the police would be expected to control infringement of the access to the High Street. Other members shared this concern.

Q. Is there to be any involvement from schools?

A. There are no plans for this and schools tend to be difficult to get into. Is there a Leatherhead Youth Forum?

Colin Langley suggested children could be given a questionnaire.

Cllr Bridget Lewis-Carr said there was a Mole Valley Youth Forum and that there is a meeting place for youngsters in the BFree Café in the old All Saints Church.

Q. Is the £25 000 which SCC has approved for allocation from 106 fund in addition to the £250 000 you mentioned?

A. Yes.

Q. And is the £50 000 allocated for the Public Art Project also additional?

A. Yes.

Q. So there's about £325 000 available in all?

A. Yes.

Q. Will you be consulting with businesses outside of Leatherhead and asking what would bring them in?

A. Leatherhead is a good place to locate business because the road and rail networks, the proximity of Heathrow and Gatwick, and it is in easy reach of London. That is why many businesses have already located here.

Q. How will you ensure that what is done will not look tatty in the future? It is all very well consulting businesses, but shouldn't you be consulting the people who actually live in the town centre?

At this point a 'vision for Leatherhead' was given:

"To make Leatherhead a lively, economic town with an active night life. We also need to make sure it is easy to get in and out of Leatherhead."

Q. Are you aware that St John's School has been carrying out a survey of the High Street?

A. No, but it would be interesting to see the survey.

Andrew was then asked about the time-scale. He gave a brief resumé of what he had outlined earlier said and stressed that he did not want the consultation unnecessarily protracted.

Cheryl Allen said that without consultation the Council had made a decision to close the High Street for up to eighteen months and to use £50 000 of a small budget to pay for the necessary traffic orders to carry out that closure. She asked whether this was wise, considering that the High Street is the most controversial subject in Leatherhead, and suggested that because of the experiences of the past that a compromise should be the only option.

Q. What proposals are there to increase the number of businesses which are not eateries?

No direct answer, but a restatement of the desire to attract business to the town. Roy Allen observed that businesses were put off the High Street because of rents which are far too high, a footfall which is too low and the lack of maintenance.

Q. Where are residents of the High Street expected to park their cars during this trial period?

No answer - but it was stressed that the proposal was an enabling one given by the politicians so that a trial period could be carried out if deemed desirable.

Q. Could the High Street be reopened to traffic generally?

A. We do not have sufficient money for this.

Colin Langley said SCC had already decided it would not reinstate the High Street.

Fran Barnby-Smith observed we keep spending money and going round and round in circles; there is no overall plan.

Q. Is the website the preferred method of carrying out consultation?

A. Yes, personally.

Q. How did you arrive at 18 months for the experimental traffic order?

A. Because that's the maximum.

Q. Why the maximum?

A. A shorter period could not be lengthened, but a longer period can be shortened. It was therefore sensible to go for the maximum, but the trial could well be shortened.

Q. Are you suggesting that repairs come out this money?

A. They could.

The questioner replied that that should not be the case; repairs should come of monies set aside for *maintenance*.

Q. Is the decision definitely made to close the High Street?

A. No.

The Chairman stressed that we do not want to make the same mistakes as in

earlier schemes.

Q. Could money be used for making the High Street safer?

A. Yes, but that is best done after the consultation process.

Paula Sabine volunteered that the LRA would be willing to leaflet every house in Leatherhead with a questionnaire that would have to be a joint effort between the MVDC and ourselves to assure that we could not be accused of being misleading in our questions; Andrew said that any such questionnaire would need to be distributed within the next month or so as we need replies in time for pooling results together by October/November.

Colin Langley said that he had attended Action for Market Towns meetings and assured us that Leatherhead was not unique; small independent businesses are suffering in market towns generally. Mike Lewis expressed that hope that *facts* would take greater priority than emotional issues and Caroline Brown suggested that money could be put aside for maintenance. Ann Cardew said that when she moved to Leatherhead a year ago she thought how ugly the place seemed and said that passing empty shops in Church Street as one approaches the centre does not give a positive impression.

Paula Sabine pointed out that the Local Committee who would be responsible for deciding any plan put forward for the High Street, had only 1 Leatherhead councillor, Tim Hall, who is a Surrey Councillor for Leatherhead and Fetcham East. Out of the other 11 committee members, there are 6 members from the Dorking areas (3 x SCC and 3 x MVDC), 3 from Ashted (1 x SCC and 2 MVDC), the SCC councillor for Bookham and Fetcham West, and a MVDC councillor for Fetcham. This, she said, was hardly a fair representation to make decisions about Leatherhead.

At this point several people tried to express opinions and an attempt was made to take a straw poll on whether to make no change to the High Street; it was pointed out that without knowing what changes might be proposed, this was not a valid poll.

The Chairman brought the discussion to a close at this point, saying that Andrew had spoken and answered questions for more than an hour and a half and that we were now just repeating points. He thanked Andrew for giving up his time to address our meeting and answer questions.

6. Brief Reports from subgroups

(a) Membership

Fran Barnby-Smith said that five new members had joined us on the Safety Day (July 2nd) and we had had another new member joining before in June; thus there were six new members since the last meeting..

(b) Planning

Caroline Brown reported that:

- An application has been made to extend the summer opening hours of the Randall's Road Community Recycling Centre from 7.30 am till 7.30 pm on

Mondays to Saturday and from 8.0 am till 7.30 pm on Sundays;

- A major application to demolish nos. 82 & 84 Cleeve Road to create an entrance to a site on the Therfield School grounds and build 90 one and two bedroom dwellings. The application came up three years ago and was refused.
- Mr Hayes & Mt Burgess have applied to build two dwellings at the rear of the garden of 1 Farm Cottage on Randall's Road.

(c) Highways

The Chairman reported that the next meeting of the Highways Forum would be on 27th July.

7. Any Other Business

Paula Sabine reported that the Institute Caretaker was being disturbed at night by lorries delivering to Sainsbury's and by unruly behaviour by those leaving the Duke's Head.

Tom Musoke asked what the legal status of the LRA was. The Chairman said we would look into it.

The Secretary reminded the meeting that the next LRA meeting would be on Monday, 2nd August at which Graham Fyson will talk on "Bees and Beekeeping."

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.52 pm

Minutes by Ray Brown (Secretary).