

#### **4. The Chairman's Annual Report:**

**Like last year, we have had a particularly busy 12 months. A very large proportion of our time has been spent with Transform Leatherhead followed by careful discussion of the idea to Incorporate. The reasons for this particular item are summarised on the sheets we have distributed here and put online. Other areas of our activity were around various discrete planning applications, attempts to cut the rising tide of litter while improving the appearance of our town centre, following the plans for Leatherhead hospital, supporting the campaign to keep Leach Grove Wood as a village green, (there is still £1000 shortfall there), trying to improve or even increase (slightly) the current parking provision and last but not least, maintaining the high standard of our Newsletter.**

**The Masterplanners for MVDC have now produced their final report and further details will be on display in April and May. Our Forward Planning sub-committee, led by John Wilson, has been meticulous in attending the meetings and disseminating such information as was permissible. Precise detail is still missing, but much of the earlier drafts has been carried through, i.e. the areas needing attention are still the High Street, Church Street, the riverside and the Red House Gardens plus, of course, more parking. It would seem that the Red House Gardens are being viewed almost as a miniature town because the idea is to put shops, flats and parking there while retaining some of the valued green space and we have also submitted a tree survey of the area. Although the idea is to increase the attractions of Leatherhead,**

**we at the LRA are concerned that it will have a negative impact on the High Street, the very area people want improved. The residential aspect will help because it will mean more salaries coming into the town but the sheer numbers will need restraint because our infrastructure, health, schools, roads etc. will not be able to withstand too great an upsurge. This area could be among the first projects to be tackled because it is owned by MVDC. More parking is also planned for this site, but we have pushed strongly for a proper traffic survey to be completed before any alteration to the roads and thereby to the parking can be finalised. This survey is currently being planned by SCC.**

**Other, less enormous but often equally contentious planning applications have been decided by MV and each of these has been carefully evaluated by our Planning sub-committee headed by Fran Smith. Incentivised, no doubt, by the lack of any need to provide a levy to the council, office blocks like Challenge Court and Prime House are being converted at a rate of knots into residential accommodation. Another example of pressure on the land round here is Beechcroft Developments' unsuccessful application to increase the residential housing up from 70 to 85 on the corner of Cleeve and Randalls Road and, on a smaller scale converting Devonshire house (currently offices) to 9 flats which involves building on the car park.**

**Our anti-litter stance rose to new heights with the Art from Litter exhibition last April which attracted over 300 people and also resulted in requests to borrow the work to show it elsewhere. Cheryl Allen, our Environmental sub-committee chairman is tireless in her efforts to promote attractive surroundings and to that end is**

**organising again this year an Open Gardens event together with a vintage coach to take viewers around to the more remote ones. She also made sure we did our bit in the national rubbish collection called "Clean for the Queen." Unfortunately, rubbish is still around and so you may hear about more of these. Motorways and A roads are particularly affected by plastic bags and drinks cans, as is, most unfortunately, our railway station.**

**A spotlight on our own local version of the problems currently besetting the NHS is being shone by Hilary Porter who has recently been appointed Patient Representative to the Clinical Commissioning Groups and Volunteer Patient and Public Service User representative for Planned Care. At the last meeting of the SDCCG, she learned that Leatherhead Hospital seems to be on its way to becoming a centre for day treatment only and, annoyingly, she was unable to discuss the transport issue as that was seen as another group's responsibility.**

**Regarding some of the smaller aspects of transport in the town, Hubert Carr (our "Highways man") is delighted to tell you that complaints about the double decker going around Cressell Mead have now been addressed, the misleading sign regarding parking for the general public in Elm Road is about to be sorted out with the additional help of Councillor Dickson and an additional on street space has been created in North Street. There are still problems on Gravel Hill and, of course, the supply in general is not adequate.**

**Our members and others will have seen and, I hope admired, our new covers for the Newsletters in full colour designed by John Wilson. Their timing this year was a little awry because of the extra work occasioned by Transform and we can only apologise for this. In 2016 we are hoping to produce one in July and one in early November. We are also planning to update our website sometime this summer.**

**Finally, another cliff hanger: Although we are not part of the group, the Friends of Leach Grove Woods, we do support their aims. Sadly the landowner of the woods, (NHS Property Services Ltd.), is challenging SCC's decision-making process to award Village Green status to the woods so there is to be a Judicial Review in June. The Friends of Leach Grove Woods will have legal representation at the hearing to support the council. We are hoping that this will safeguard probably the last remaining wild piece of land in Leatherhead. On a rather brighter note, the Allotments in BWL have now been designated as an Area of Community Value. Let's hope they stay like that.**