

Chairman's report for the LRA AGM June 2018

First of all, I would like to welcome everyone here tonight, especially our two Speakers, Ms. Karen Brimacombe, Chief Executive Officer of Mole Valley District Council and Mr. Tim Jones, the "Interested Party" from the Leach Grove Wood court case. I am also delighted to see so many residents interested in the development of our town here tonight. However, before hearing our speakers, let us do the expected business of an AGM.

We have the following apologies for absence: Martyn Williams

And now the Draft Minutes from our last AGM, in April 2017. Can I ask for your approval?

Are there any Matters Arising from them?

I will now give my Report for the past year, 2017.

I think we at the LRA can be proud of our record this year. In four areas in particular, I feel we have been a strong influence for the good. In fact, one of these areas is Leach Grove Wood and our second speaker, Mr. Tim Jones, will enlarge on this a bit later.

Another sphere where we have had conspicuous success is in the obtaining and organising of the "Star Signs" outside the Leatherhead Theatre. This was the brainchild of our Environment Chair, Cheryl Allen, and she was enthusiastically helped by both Susan Leveritt (our former Secretary) and by Lucy Quinnell in one of whose barns these stones were being stored for an advertising company. It was not just a case of grabbing the nearest dozen. The full list had to be scrutinized to check on who had actually performed in Leatherhead and then their or their agent's permission had to be sought. Unfortunately, there were no women who fitted this criterion and so our list, to the disappointment of some, contains no ladies. Permission for this use of the stones was only given against a promise by us to donate to the Actors Benevolent Society and that was one of the reasons we ran the very successful Race Night a month ago. We are also obliged to erect an explanatory plaque which will be designed shortly.

There are also two other matters where I believe the LRA has had a significant effect: the first is with Titan Properties whose plan to develop the Food Research Laboratories behind the station involved six blocks of flats of varying height but where the tallest of six storeys would have been visible from a considerable distance and altered the very muted skyline of Leatherhead. Titan had invited us some six months ago to comment and although the parking was adequate and the spread of type of flat between owned and rented seemed acceptable, we did not like the heights and told them so. The latest we have now learned is that the tallest blocks are going to be reduced by one storey so the number of flats will reduce from 239 to 218. The car parking provision is to remain as before, and so will be more generous.

The other matter concerns the ERA site along Cleeve Road. The developers' idea was to intermingle office use with residential but we pointed out that office hours and office traffic, often heavy and late or early, did not make for peaceful co-existence. They also planned for a large car park that would be barred to residents, even at the weekend and a small but densely populated corner of Housing Association flats at the far end. We wrote with the obvious objections (as did many of the people who live in that area), and I am pleased to say MVDC has turned it down. Whether an appeal will be forthcoming is, as yet, unknown.

Before asking our speakers to start, there are a couple of "Housekeeping" items which I would like to bring to your attention. The first concerns the General Data Protection Regulation. We have taken advice on this matter and have decided how we will meet its requirements. A notification to all members has already been sent by email or letter. The second concerns the Abraham Dixon Hall. Unfortunately for us, another booking has been offered to the Trustees for most Monday nights from now on. Our number of attending members has grown and we are too many for G6 downstairs and so we are looking to secure another venue for 2019. Talking of Members, I would like to use this opportunity to commend the efforts of Tony Russell who has been indefatigable in his efforts to bring to people's attention the lack of a police presence in Leatherhead. He is producing a petition which requests that this be corrected. Finally, if you have not already done so, please do look at our new website. You will see the date of the next meeting on the first two pages and on another called "The Association" you will find a link to the archived records, like Minutes, Reports and, under Miscellaneous, the AGM Minutes and so on.

And now to our Speakers: The LRA is very reliant on Mole Valley's CEO listening to our ideas, hopes and, sometimes, our complaints. Ms. Brimacombe, Karen, is relatively new to this post but has already had more than her fair share of challenges. I have met Karen on a few occasions now and have always been impressed by her sincerity and speed when dealing with these particularly difficult ones. Karen:

Are there any questions?

And now a few words about a most unexpected and welcome result concerning Leach Grove Wood from Tim Jones I vividly remember going to Kingston County Court, sitting round a table and listening to all the arguments. It was another of our members, Flip, or Philippa Cargill, who initially seized on the opportunity to get this Wood declared a Village Green and was most upset when her return to Australia forced her to abandon the fight. However, another member, Tim Jones, who lives near the wood, took up the case as an Interested Party and many from the LRA contributed to his fund to cover financial loss.

..... Any questions?

I will now close our meeting and, once again, thank you all for coming.

Caroline Brown, Chairman.