

## **Chairman's report**

**Good evening to you all and thank you for attending. We have a busy evening so I will start my summary of last year's activities without further ado.**

**The biggest change for our organisation during 2016 was our conversion from an informal association to our incorporation as a company limited by guarantee. This was done to free our members from any risk of financial liability, in the event that the LRA could not meet its financial obligations for any reason.**

**This conversion and the fact that we have extended our insurance cover did increase our cost base slightly but as you will see from the accounts we ended the year comfortably in the black.**

**We decided not to seek any increase in membership fees at this meeting. However, we acknowledge that in order to hold fees at the current very low level we do need not only to maintain but increase our income in other ways. In this regard we have just sent out a reminder to members who did not renew for this year and we have launched a drive for new members. If any of you can assist us by persuading existing members to renew or persuading non-members to join us that would be much appreciated. Everyone is needed.**

**Turning now to our work on your behalf, I am sure it will come as no surprise to you to hear that one of our biggest tasks in the last year has been liaising with and making representations to our council about "Transform Leatherhead." You may have noticed that many of our suggestions regarding the Sustainable Transport proposals have been acknowledged in the report. Whether they will be used, is, of course, another question. We are not convinced that our input on Church Street was greatly heeded.**

**We have a few other concerns too; one is, of course, traffic and another is parking but a more insidious one is the height of the proposed buildings. We have supported local residents in their dealings with the owners of Kingston House Gardens, where the suggested redevelopment plans originally contained blocks of six storeys. We believe this design was based on an artist's impression of what the Red House Gardens could look like where buildings of up to 9 storeys are currently proposed. Even our Riverside at the bottom of Bridge Street, the site of our own Local Nature Reserve, is depicted with a very tall building, three to four more storeys than is currently the case. Originally we were told that these tall buildings were just artist's impressions and were not to be taken literally, but now we are told that this is exactly what is going to be built. In the case of The Riverside, did the public realize that they were approving something twice the height of what is currently there? The Bull Hill developments look more akin to the Goodwyns in Dorking than to anything else.**

**Over the last year via Fran Smith's excellent letter writing skills, we have also continued to make representations on domestic planning applications, where we think appropriate, and I am pleased to say that in most cases our arguments appear to have been accepted by the planning office.**

**Our environmental group has had a busy year organising planters in the High Street, arranging "litter-picks" putting on an excellent "Open-Gardens Day" (which will be repeated on July 9 this year,) complete with vintage buses as transport. Cheryl Allen, the chair of that group, has also been tireless in her support for and attendance at the Fetcham Flood Action Group in conjunction with the National Flood Forum.**

**Our health committee continues to closely monitor the apparently ceaseless debates that rage as to the best way of organising local health services /and I fear that once again we hear rumours that the future of the Epsom A & E and Maternity units may be open to question. However, the Rt. Hon. Christopher Grayling was contacted and he has replied unequivocally to the effect that neither hospital department is in any danger.**

**Whilst I could say more, I hope this gives you a flavour of our activities over the last year, most of which we will be continuing with during this current year. So, before handing over to our treasurer who will present and answer questions on the accounts for 2016, I would like to point out a few areas where we could do with some more help: once again we need a Tree Officer and our secretary could do with another pair of hands to keep publicity and other articles properly covered. One of our directors has had a serious illness and we shall miss her when it comes to the Newsletter delivery rota and the watch over Environment issues like the Allotments.**

**Meanwhile, before finishing, I would like to thank all my very hard working committee members and Directors for their unstinting efforts. Wanting the best for Leatherhead is not just a question of thoughts or words in that direction, you also have to DO things, things which take up time and energy. Our Board is at present 7 strong, but to be really efficient and to spread the load, we could do with 2 to 3 more people. The activities can be demanding but are also friendly and interesting.**

**Now, over to our Treasurer, Paula Sabine, whom I also wish to thank for her ceaseless hard work in the field of membership and accounts:**