

## **Minutes of the Open Meeting held on 4th November 2013 in the Institute.**

**Present:** C. Morgan, J. Morgan, Hubert Carr (Chair), Hilary Porter (Vice-Chair), Caroline Brown (Sec), Ray Brown, Percy Hawkins, Rosemary Henderson, Norma Tatum-Thomson, Cheryl Allan, Flip Cargill, AN Other, S. Fortescue, Kristina Kenworthy, Helen Tribe, A.L. Hutton, Ann Cardew, John Hayball, Jenny Day, Steve Day, Louise Herrity, Peter Humphries, Fran Smith, Margaret Ludford and Cllr. Philippa Shimmin.

**Apologies** were received from Bridget Lewis-Carr, Roger Hardwick, Paula Sabine and Cllr. Tim Hall.

**Minutes** of the last Open Meeting, 4th Sept. were approved.

**Matters Arising:** A spokesperson for the Allotment Holders, Jenny Day, stated that they had been offered three alternative sites but did not like any of them for not unexpected reasons: distance from home, quality of the soil and the air, size of the whole plot etc. This led to more comments about the feeling of North MV being treated unfairly and being given the lion's share of new developments. It was explained that the area around Gatwick and Crawley was also going to have sizeable developments because of the new runway, but this did not really console our group from N. Mole Valley. The Council's attitude to the whole plan can, however, easily be understood as (we understand) they stand to gain something in the region of £21,000,000 from the sale.

**Correspondence:** 1. On behalf of the LRA, HC had received an invitation to a presentation by Barratt Homes, just the date itself still needs fixing. The whole committee will make an effort to attend. Barratt Homes is hoping to build some 500 dwellings just south of the M25 over the allotments and some fields owned by Merton College, Oxford.

2. HC had received an invitation from the Surrey and South East Water Board to attend a meeting where they tried to explain their need to raise prices. These were to cover bills which remain unpaid and to finance improvement.

3. CA said she had heard back from the same company (S.&S.E. Water B.) after the site visit revealed how they had failed to keep promises made at the time of their Planning Consent. Other complaints are arising from noise emanating from the (rather old) machinery being used. She announced that the Water Company intends to invite a group of residents to visit their site for a presentation of their findings and to examine their proposal to plant a screen. However, before further steps can be taken, they need time to prepare some reports for OfWat.

**Meetings attended and to be attended:** 1. Norbury Park: CA said she would give a full report at the next meeting.

2. CB read out a report of the Leatherhead and District Forum. Most noteworthy was that overall crime in North M.V. had gone down 10% and the new venture of a radio station for this area had taken a few more steps towards becoming a reality because premises next to the Institute were going to be let to the directors.

3. CB also read out a brief report of the CPRE meeting held on 25 Oct in Dorking. Not unexpectedly, this contained strong opposition to the shrinking of the Green Belt by Mr. Shaun Spiers (C.E.O. for CPRE) and by Mr. Crispin Blunt (MP for Reigate). Mr. Jack Straw had the unenviable job of trying to find a middle way, while Mr. Alex Morton (from Think Tank Policy Exchange) called for the demise of both the Planning System and all Green Belts.

4. Environmental Committee: CA elaborated on how 4 of the LRA officers toured 5 pubs/restaurants in Leatherhead so as to present certificates to the Management Personnel expressing our appreciation of what each one does to make Leatherhead attractive. The recipients seemed pleased with their certificates which are now on the town noticeboard as well as in their premises.

**Highlights from sub-committee reports:** 1. HC explained the system whereby local organisations would receive money to attend to small, communal jobs like clearing footpaths and painting bollards. He had been to a meeting with representatives of other small towns and villages plus some Parish Councils. All were interested in this new scheme.

2. Given that an up to date Environment Report was already circulating in hard copy, CA decided that she would talk about action and activity yet to come. Trees are prized for their looks and the good they do to the environment so the next meeting of that Committee will try to list the most important trees or groups of trees in Leatherhead. Honey fungus is rather common and a list of suitable replacements will be drawn up. **Information from anywhere in the town would be useful and could be passed on using our website.**

3. FS reported that Surrey Highways saw no problem in 90 dwellings being created behind Cleeve Road and near Therfield School even though a further estate is planned for the other end of the same road. Those present gasped at this. It was also reported that Guildford Town Council felt that some small towns and villages should not be classed as being in the GB. Effingham, a village likely to be affected by such a decision, could not understand why more efforts are not being made to find and use Brownfield sites.

The meeting was then declared closed and preparations were made for the visiting speaker, Mr. D. Searle, to present his talk on the M.V. Housing Association.

Mr. Searle began his talk by explaining how "Council Housing" became the remit of the "Mole Valley Housing Association." From the mid-eighties, Central Government decided that Local Councils would be entitled to keep only 80% of the rents they received, the rest would have to go to the Government. This new rule, which did not apply to Housing Associations, made it impossible to finance any improvements in the stock. Therefore, this Council function was sold to the Circle Group, but to delineate its particular area of activity was re-named "Mole Valley Housing Association." Ever since, they have worked hard to

bring the stock up to modern standards. Mr. Searle showed us several photos of properties with very high standards, notably the tall blocks at The Goodwyns in Dorking, some flats in Clements Mead and some particularly attractive terraced houses in Clare Crescent (? The Fairway?)

He then went on to explain some of the technicalities in housing law and the difficulties in understanding these which has led his Association to appoint two Welfare Advisors to help their tenants. Wherever possible, volunteers are asked to come up with suggestions for re-furbishing or building from scratch. Decisions over bathrooms, kitchens and even staff can be reached this way.

We had several reasons for inviting Mr Searle to come to speak to us, all occasioned by actual happenings in our neighbourhood. Perhaps the most notable concerned what could be done if one tenant was being so intimidated by another that he felt totally unable to report the matter to any authority. The answer was that the H.A. was very much aware of situations like that and assured us of their utter discretion when dealing with the offending party. Another problem is the social and age mix of some of the housing groups. Sometimes variety does not help. Unfortunately, decisions about this (as with Waiting Lists) must be taken by the local Council and not by the H.A. A particularly poignant reason for the invitation was the fact that one of our members, who lives in a MVHA bungalow, had had his garden wrecked by the Gardens and Open Spaces contractors working without proper permission. Since then, he has, to some degree, been compensated by the gift of a shrub, but more importantly still, Mr Searle promised that these contractors would in future be much more closely monitored. In another block of flats, a tenant had his personal flower pots removed but no attention paid to a badly overgrown hedge. These types of unfortunate episodes must be quite rare because at the end, Mr Searle was able to show us at some photos of lovely gardens that other residents had been able to create.

Overall, It was felt that the MVHA was in caring hands where, in spite of some misunderstandings, much effort was being put into respecting the rights and allaying the fears of the more vulnerable members of our society.

#### **Report: ENVIRONMENTAL SUB GROUP Report after 13<sup>th</sup> September Meeting**

This report was available at the 13<sup>th</sup> September closed meeting and appears here with updates.

Present: Cheryl Allen, Ann Cardew, Flip Cargill, were joined by Hilary Porter  
Minutes taken by Flip Cargill

**Open Gardens for 2014** will be held on 8th June. Chris Evans, of Friends of the Parish Church, will be contacted to decide details of this joint venture. A list of possible open gardens was compiled. An appeal for additional gardens will appear in the Parish Church magazine and the Autumn LRA newsletter. Owners of all possible open gardens will be contacted asap so that improvements can be made if they desire over the coming months. They will be supplied with suggestions to make this a positive experience.

Update: Notification of request for possible open gardens has now appeared in the Autumn LRA Newsletter and will appear in the 2013 Report to Friends of the Parish Church.

Over 200 people signed a petition about **the Sutton and East Surrey Water Works site**. After 8 years of letters of complaint, appeals for camouflage, and a foliage screen, the Managing Director, Anthony Farrar, has met with a group of concerned residents to look for a way forward. Cllr. Tim Hall and 8 residents met the water

Company executives to put their case forward; the residents want evergreen trees planted, the buildings camouflaged and noise 'completely' insulated as promised. Cheryl Allen will be the resident contact with Stuart Hyslop designated as water company contact. Those present remain optimistic.

Update: Stuart Hyslop has reported that the Water Company is gathering information about the petition request. However, the company is busy preparing the Business Plan for 2015-2020 for OFwat that is due by the end of the year. Promises to communicate soon have been given.

**Poors Allotments** We decided we should continue to give moral support. Their solicitor is still trying to get documents from MVDC. Two possible alternate sites are being discussed: one in Ashted is closer to Barnett Wood Lane and thus not so remote, the other is on the Leatherhead side of the M25. There remains some concern that the J9 Merton green belt site is not being properly considered in the green belt release since it was not discussed when Leatherhead residents and their representatives met this summer with Jack Straw's team.

Update: The LRA Forward Planning Team met with Jack Straw's team to discuss this specific site that was overlooked in the earlier Green Belt Release Consultation. Hubert will report on the meeting.

**Leach Grove Village Green Application** On request of the NHS, the Commons Registration Authority has granted an extension until 27 September 2013, to provide a detailed statement of objection.

Update: This application will most probably not be discussed and dealt with until the Spring 2014 because of its place in the queue.

**Forty Foot Campaign** The Campaign is courteously but firmly keeping up the pressure on local authorities, and continuing with regular meetings and press coverage. The School was visited by John Furey and Tim Hall, who were driven there in a school bus to experience the potholes first hand. They were interviewed and filmed by BBC5 TV. The same TV crew are including the campaign in a four part series with Mr. Pothole who wants to see all UK roads well repaired and safe.

Update: Channel 5's Mr. Pothole- Four part series this month featuring Fortyfoot Campaign. Campaign has led to SCC agreeing £150 000 for repair by Feb. with the adoption of Fortyfoot between Poplar Rd. and Woodlands School to follow. The Campaign continues. Cllr Tim Hall is to write to each property owner on the Epsom end of the Road.

Because notification of **Brighter Leatherhead Awards** was issued late with no criteria for evaluation, it has been decided that the emphasis this year will be to highlight the work of all four pubs, which have had splendid displays this summer. To that end framed certificates will be issued praising their gardens and naming each best in a selected class.

1. The Edmund Tilney-The Pub in Perpetual Bloom
2. The Running Horse-Best Secret Garden
3. Duke's Head-Hanging baskets with the Wow Factor
4. The Penny Black-Best Hop Garden

Photos have been taken at each pub for further publicity.

Update--See Blog site for photos of presentations by Carolyn Brown and Hubert Carr. on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October. The certificates were graciously accepted.

2014 categories will include 4 commendations: one each for Bridge Street, North Street, High Street and Church Street for best all year display. This info will be given out with awards at the end of October 2013.

**Tree Identification** A initial effort to identify groups of trees in Leatherhead that add to the local amenity led to more questions than answers. Flip is concerned about the trees in the hospital grounds. CA is concerned about the trees in Church Street. Norma pointed out that the trees in Church Street provide shade in a special way that an umbrella can not provide. With the removal of the Church Street trees mentioned in Hague Investment's 'way forward' there was some conversation about their significance. AC suggested that we need a tree expert to identify and state the condition

of all trees. For further discussion at Committee: How can we help to make groups of trees safe? What Criteria? Who decides the amenity value a tree has? Can Caroline or Hilary find the list of trees resistant to honey fungus?

Update: Time at the closed meeting did not allow for discussion. Perhaps this should be an agenda item at the next meeting.

**Dog Poo** is back on the agenda. Particularly hard hit are Poplar and St John's Avenues. More doggy bins would be welcome at Leach Grove Wood and at least one on Poplar Ave. It was pointed out that on countryside paths it would be easier to pick up a stick and flick it into the undergrowth where it rapidly breaks down.

Norma has checked with the Council and found that the rule has changed. It is now permitted to place dog waste, in a securely tied plastic bag, in an ordinary bin. We think that dog owners should be informed of this information in our newsletter.

Update: Information was shared with our members in the Autumn 2013 newsletter.

**Community Garden the AGM is 28<sup>th</sup> September** There has been a bumper crop of berries in and around the garden. The raspberries have been particularly good. Vegetable and fruit preserves are made and sold to help fund the self supporting project. In addition, hanging baskets were planted in the spring to sell at various summer functions.

A raffle to win 3 hours gardening by three garden volunteers was a very good way to earn money.

**Teazle Wood** is two to three months from gaining Charitable status. Fund raising for the wood will be an order of business for a very long time due to substantial loans that need to be repaid. Various activities have taken place this summer. The selling of donated plants and bric-a-brac at the Fire and Iron Gallery is one income stream that can be further expanded. A small plant nursery area is in the development stage.

**Green Mole Forum** has been shut down and the money shared evenly between groups. The LRA Environmental Sub Group's cheque for £180.54 will be banked and join their current funds until a decision is made about how the money will be used.

Planning Report for the meeting 4 November 2013

### **Appeals**

Longshot and MVDC have been granted permission to appeal against the judicial ruling that removed the planning permission to develop Cherkley Court as a hotel and golf course complex. No date has yet been given.

12/0760 and 0761 Brook Willow Farm The appeal to retain units 9 and 10 for use as stables has been dismissed.

12/1682 Tall Trees, Headley Road. The appeal against the refusal of permission to build a bungalow in the rear garden has been dismissed.

### **Decisions**

13/1097 and 1098 61/61A High Street. The applications for change of use of the empty florist shop to either residential use or hot food takeaway have been refused on the grounds of the loss of a retail unit in this area would be detrimental to the town.

13/0942 Yarm Court Lodge, Reigate Road. The erection of a new house in the rear garden has been refused on the grounds that it is too close to the road and out of keeping with the area.

### **Applications**

13/1331 2 The Parade, Kingston Road Change of Use from retail (A1/A2) to hot food takeaway. This is a resubmission of a similar application (13/0403) in March which was withdrawn.

13/1352 The Chapel Reigate Road. I detached house and garage. The design of the house is very radical and the position is very close to the access road to the chapel.

13/1353 The Chapel, Reigate Road. Erection of a new garage block Alterations to create new doors and roof lights to convert the building from offices into 4 houses. The external changes have been kept to a minimum and the side visible from Reigate Road is not being altered.