

Brief report on BLeAF

Meeting on 1st November 2011 in Fetcham

Future of Pippbrook

It was agreed that we should inform all our members of the situation, and that we should respond to David Howell expressing our support for a new office building subject to further financial details becoming available.

We have examined the options given us as well as the option for moving some of the main departments back to the Leatherhead area. However the important factor is that the present building is almost twice as large as is now required for the Council functions, including the front desk of the Dorking Police. Hence a new building would cost little more than the renovation of the existing one, and would still provide the Police function.

The running costs for the present building are about 10% of the Council Tax revenues, but a new building they should be half of that. The new building could be sited in the north area of the car park, near the telephone exchange, so that the present building could provide accommodation until such time as the new building is complete. The removal of the current building would open up the site and provide a view over the bowling green and tennis courts to Pippbrook House. Housing could be provided on the east side of the side facing Deepdene Avenue. However we felt that the site layout is more of a issue to Dorking than for those of us resident in the north of the District.

We would like to peruse the financial figures and building estimates in greater detail, when these can be made available, as we do have much talent and expertise amongst our membership. We noted that all capital building works seem to run over budget and time, despite assurances to the contrary. (The Leisure Centre had the original Climbing Wall deleted so as to stay within the overall budget).

Future of the Leatherhead and District Forum

We do not see a future for the Forum in the present circumstances. After the failure of the ill-conceived Area Forums we sought council support in terms of administration costs and attendance by Council officers. We regret the outcome of the recent motion to the Council, which was modified at the request of some Dorking councillors who then failed to support it. The help which was requested is not to be implemented until after the Olympics, next year. However the Forum can have free use of Park House.

Bookham Vanguard

Bookham have a £20,000 grant to set up a Neighbourhood Forum. Initially it was prescribed that they should have 3 members for the start-up group. This has been increased to 14, and the Forum should have a minimum membership of 21, rising to 40 so as to be representative of the different sectors of the neighbourhood. However the definition of these sectors is undefined. Furthermore the requirement is to be representative – not the requirement that they should represent the various sectors.

Section 106 money and Planning Infrastructure Charges

Andy Bircher has issued a spreadsheet showing the monies available under various headings and a table of suggested projects – copies are to be requested by all the RAs.

One suggestion that has been made for Bookham is the establishment of maxi-wifi stations so that Town Centre areas can provide direct Internet connections to those in the vicinity.

Next meeting to be in Mid January.