



Leatherhead Residents' Association

The Chairman's Report for 2018

Over the last 12 months, we have been indebted to the hard work and enthusiasm of our former Company Secretary, Susan Leveritt. From duplicating various sheets (like for the Race Night, or our publicity posters), to getting on her two feet and calling on shoppers and retailers to support the campaign for late afternoon free parking in the High Street, nothing has been too much trouble for her.

Do you all recognize these? They are the product of Cheryl Allen's wonderful artistic imagination during 2018. As I am sure you all know, the compilation of a Newsletter is not at all easy. Formats have to be changed, articles arrive late, dates have to be double checked and the cover has to be designed. Cheryl has done all this expertly.

Our secretarial problem of last year has been more or less solved with a tri-partite share between Sheila Baddeley, Susan Leveritt and Irene Seifert. It does seem to be working quite well and I am very grateful to these three noble members.

Not to be omitted from our role of honour are Fran Smith and Martyn Williams whose careful and concise summaries of current planning applications and future plans make the work of our Association in this field so much easier.

And this brings us neatly to the single most time-consuming subject that we have dealt with over the last 12 months, and that is the issues surrounding the development of our Town.

One of the biggest threats in this regard is the formulation of the new Local Plan. I am sure you will have heard that Mole Valley District has to provide some 6000 new homes by 2033. We have argued that more of these should be in the south of the District, but it appears that far too many are likely to be allocated to Leatherhead and surrounding centres in the north. The first consultation report from the planners is due out in the summer and, if it proposes what we think it will, we will be lobbying for amendments to it.

The other big project is of course Transform Leatherhead. This has already produced some welcome improvements to the Swan Centre and some renovation works to the "waterless feature." Other improvements may follow once the councils' consultants produce their report on the High Street. We hope they will support the trial of free late afternoon parking that Susan has canvassed for so assiduously. The other Transform project that we have been less happy about is the proposed development of Claire/James house by the River. It is clearly too high and bulky and we have objected to it for these reasons. A decision on the application is awaited.

Another planning application on which we have expended much time has been Kingston House Gardens. Again, the developer has tried to put too much on the site, to the detriment of the site's neighbours. We have objected, suggesting revisions, and the outcome is awaited.

One of our outstanding successes in the planning field was our fight against the building of further warehouses on the local water company's prominent site on Hawks Hill. As you may already know, the water company's proposals were rejected outright by the Council.

Through the tireless work of Cheryl Allen we have lobbied hard for the Environment Agency to come up with a comprehensive plan to solve the town's flooding issues. Alas it would seem that Nature may have defeated all our efforts, in that there appears to be no one total solution. Solutions for individual properties are it seems the best that can be expected.

Finally on this general subject we have made several suggestions as to how CIL money may be used for the benefit of our community and we continue to argue for their adoption.

On a lighter note, may I recommend to you our forthcoming Race-Night, which is being held on Friday, 26th April. Last year's was a great success and helped raise much needed funds for the Parish Church and theatre entrance. This year's we hope will be just as successful and the money raised will be used for the upkeep of the Parish Church and the LRA project fund.

The accounts will now be presented and the elections will take place.

The Speaker will be the well known business woman and activist in the Campaign for the protection of rural England, Lucy Quinnell. Tonight, she is going to speak on the various grades of protection available to our countryside, and the differences between them.