

Chairman's Speech for 7th Oct 2019

1. Good evening and welcome to all our members and to our guests and Councillors. Could I ask our Councillors to stand up so that those members who have not met you may at least see where you are sitting!
2. My remarks stem chiefly from the meeting of MV's Chief Executive, Karen Brimacombe, with the chairmen of the local Residents' Associations which are not Parish Councils. We were told, as you probably know by now, that the new Local Plan would not be revealed until sometime between 3rd February next and 15th March. This is to allow a "purdah" time before a strongly anticipated General Election. The Plan will come into formal operation late 2021.
3. There is a worry that this delay will be a field day for developers because until an agreed Local Development Plan is in place, there is a "presumption in favour of development," making it easier to get planning permission. A further unknown element is the fact that the plan could change from what it is now, so we are all completely in the dark! However, basic planning rules and regulations remain so anyone tempted to flout these should be aware that MV has recently been awarded £50,000 to help finance Planning Enforcement cases. This will reduce any hesitancy to prosecute.
4. And now something a bit more solid: Claire and James House (the empty office building down by the river) has a developer interested in the plan but that is as far as it goes at the moment. Council has also decided that the Swan Centre development is too expensive for them to do on their own and so they are going to look for a developer to do both that and (what they call) the Bull Hill development. We might call it the Red House Grounds. Completion of that has a very vague date, between 2015 and 2030.
5. And now for something even more solid! Rubbish collections by name and deed came up for some detailed explanations or excuses. The appalling pile of plastic bags at the bottom of the High Street has now been given a permanent home in Elm Road. But Amey does seem to be quite good at missing bins and the only really effective recourse is to ring or write to MV. At the next Cabinet meeting they are going to discuss the Re-cycling centres and their opening hours, plus the feasibility of on-street parking charges.
6. At this same meeting, we also had a presentation by Stuart Cole, our Community Support Services Manager. He is in charge of a scheme called "Living and Ageing Well," which organises all sorts of activities for those who no longer go out to work. In particular he explained about the Community Transport Scheme which has taken over from Dial a Ride. More information can be obtained from the Fairfield Centre. Looking at the other end of life, the beginning, I am pleased to see that our support for categorising the Aperdele Road Children's Centre as an Asset of Community Value has succeeded so the building itself is safe from development. However the funds for this kind of work are now flowing to Dorking and urgently need to be re-directed.
7. A little bit of really local good news: the wilderness down Randalls Road caused by the felling of several large trees is about to be rectified, to a certain extent, anyway. The landscapers started last Monday with some earth moving equipment and will soon be planting several lorry-loads of new trees!
8. Finally, after these brief mentions of Claire and James House and of the Swan Centre etc. I would like to remind you all about the 4 sessions of discussions being organised by Transform: One has just gone, on Sat. 5th Oct, the next is this Wednesday between 5 and 8 pm in the Institute, then on Mon. 14 Oct

between 9.12 midday and 2 pm in the Fairfield Centre and finally on Thursday 17 Oct between 9am and 12 pm in the All Saints Café.

10. My next and penultimate snippet concerns our hospital group. Some of you may already be aware, but last weekend the Government confirmed that hundreds of millions of pounds of funding is to be made available for Epsom and St. Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust to develop a new, major, acute hospital. The money will also be used to invest in and re-furbish the older parts of all our hospital buildings and to improve the experience of the 6,000 committed staff working there, as well as improving staffing levels and, thereby, improve patient care. This is Bulletin 12 and I have put it on our LRA website under Health Report.

11. And now a plea from the Board and committee of the LRA: we urgently need a minuting secretary for about two meetings a year. This job does not involve any letter writing, just noting down any questions or comments that come from you, our members on the floor during the Open Meetings like today. All Reports are typed out and I put them online. Please do catch me at the end of this meeting or write later.

12. And now really finally, I have some information for EU nationals who may need to register to stay here in the UK. Please see me afterwards.