



Once again, I wish you all “Good Evening” and thank you for coming.

My report is divided into two main sections: the first is a summary of our activities during the year 2020 to 2021 and, more recently, the second concerns the changes that are happening to our Committee and Board right now, this year. Before moving on, though, I would like to make it clear that a number of us here on the Board, including myself, would like to step down next April. I have done 20 years on the Committee and then seven years as Chairman and would like a rest. More of this later.

Our last AGM was held just before the second lock-down, and, from then on, many of our usual activities were not possible, like the January get-together and the social side of our Litter Picks although, in fact, we did manage a stall selling Christmas decorations in December. From the Cheryl Allen Memorial Fund, we were also able to donate to The Meeting Room in Bookham (formerly run by Graham Peddie), and to The Leatherhead Revival Trust for the theatre and also to the Leatherhead Start in Church Road.

But, in contrast to those rather low-key events, there have been three very notable ones: First of all there was the reaction of you, our members, to justify and thus protect all our Local Green Spaces which I highlighted last March. I received an absolute avalanche of letters, with many people writing about each and every one of them, plus, what I had not expected and which may, in the end, have helped to turn the tide, were the almost equally prolific rejections of some of the housing sites included in the first draft Local Plan of 2020, but now dropped. Let’s hope it stays that way!

The second excellent outcome is the advent of the “On demand” bus service from West Leatherhead. At the beginning of the campaign for this, in spite of Tim Hall’s efforts, the silence was deafening. Flats and houses were being built from Cleeve Road along Randalls Road and, to get to the station or to the town,

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residents had either to walk or to use their car (if they had one). One of our members, Pam Wilson, was particularly instrumental in achieving this.

The third “good thing” to come out of our sad disarray, is the appearance of Tim Dunsford of Belmont Road, who, with his good friend, Val, has offered to take over the planting and the weeding of the planters outside the windows of the Natwest bank. This, as I am sure you all realize, is no small undertaking and on behalf of you all as well as on my own, I must thank him most sincerely. Percy Hawkins too has promised to continue to see to their watering which is another essential job. But, Tim is not just good at planting, he is also good at the intricacies of computing and he has promised to help us improve our membership records.

And now for future plans and or ideas: The Ward Boundaries discussions are continuing. This, of course, affects the number of local councillors each ward is allowed to have, 3 for North L’head, 2 for South L’head and so on. It has nothing to do with members of Parliament. I have looked at the figures for now and for those projected, and they do not seem to suggest any urgent need for change.

Turning now to the everlasting subject of Transform Leatherhead, I have been informed that three daring firms have been selected as possible development partners for the Swan Centre and Bull Hill. It is such a complicated issue that I think there is unlikely to be any further information for some months. You will realize that by putting the two titles together, they are going to be seen as one. I do worry about that because **if** the road – Bull Hill – is altered significantly, then all the traffic will have to be re-directed elsewhere, right across the park, for example. I also understand that the site occupied by Claire and James House has got some developers interested in it.

Finally, while dealing with future plans, The North Leatherhead Community Centre (TLCH) is seeking a 25 year lease so as to be able to draw up in depth plans for the whole building (not just one part) so as to give it a brand new future and not just a face-lift for a year or two. I heard yesterday that the lease has been granted so, one day, this will be a building to be proud of, as well as being useful.

Returning to the subject of the LRA, we will not, I think, be needing about 8 Open and 8 Closed meetings per year. No other local R.A. has or had as many. I can see us needing, perhaps, 3 or 4 Open and 3 closed meetings per year.

With thus obtaining more time and energy, I can also see us venturing into schemes for protecting the environment and furthering the friendly side of social interaction. By protecting the environment I mean small groups of residents taking up some of the Biodiversity ideas currently being widely promulgated and, of course, the task of litter picking. This latter used to be organised by Dorothy Stapleton but she is unfortunately no longer able to do it.

By using the words “friendly side of social interaction,” I mean organising events like “Open Gardens” and a “Race Night,” both previously run by Cheryl Allen and Sue Leveritt. One person at the centre of a small group of friends could enjoy arranging one or other of these activities and, of course, local charities frequently benefit. I do hold much of the necessary printed material for this.

Another function, currently performed by two Board members is that of examining all the Planning Applications and listening out for big schemes which have not yet reached Planning Application stage. At the moment, we have two people who do an excellent job of this but they would be happy to see another person or persons take over now. This could be particularly interesting when the new Local Plan results in individual planning applications.

Going back to the core activity of the LRA I see this as getting meetings together to review our town and finding and inviting relevant, interesting speakers. To do this we need a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, a Secretary plus the people leading the various groups I have outlined above. These volunteers need to have a clear idea of how the year progresses and what is expected of them. They also need to be self-motivated and enjoy what they are doing, viewing their extra social activity as a plus factor in their lives.

And now, back to what I said earlier. Our current committee is suffering from either exhaustion, age or, dare I say it, death? Hubert Carr, my former vice-chairman, has already resigned from his post, but in the past he has been invaluable, with comments on our roads and highways system. I am sure he is even now evaluating these aspects of our Local Plan. Susan and Cheryl I have already mentioned.

Currently, our Board/committee is as follows: I/we have had wonderful assistance from Martyn Williams, and dedicated, reliable help from Fran Smith. These two have read and evaluated all the Planning Applications, both large and small,

throughout the last seven years. They have written about them and spoken to you about them. In addition Martyn has proof read (and improved!) every public statement I proposed putting out. Our Treasurer is Paula Sabine and she also is responsible for keeping the list of you, our members, up to date and has recently offered to take over the WordPress computerised version of this, for which I am very grateful. Louise Herrity has been the epitome of reliability in seeing to the attendance list of each meeting and my thanks go to Irene for writing up some of our Minutes at Open Meetings, just as she is doing right now! Louise is one of two members who have worked unceasingly in the argument to retain both the Allotments and the field behind 5 to 33 Randalls Road. The latter has been the assumed responsibility of the indefatigable David Woodhead for a good number of years. I write a Newsletter, which I call a Bulletin, and I would be quite happy to continue doing this as it keeps me in touch with people and with what is going on in Leatherhead.

But now, I and some, but not all, of these people would like a rest, and it would wonderful for us, and for Leatherhead, if a small band of volunteers could appear on the scene between now and next April so that they could be “inducted” into our ways and generally shown the ropes. Some people have indicated an interest, but not enough! I would aim to have a personal chat with these people so they can see where best they would fit. They will not feel isolated – Mole Valley is excellent at offering inclusive meetings for Residents’ associations where problems can be highlighted and explanations given. In addition, the Ashted, Fetcham and Bookham Residents’ Associations all meet about 3 times a year to pool problems and pass on concerns to Mole Valley. I will be writing to people who have shown an interest. If I miss you out, please do let me know.

7. A.O.B. Is there any AOB?