



### **Chairman's Address to the 2022 AGM of the LRA on 17<sup>th</sup> October**

Good evening everyone and thank you for coming to this meeting of the LRA, which is the AGM for the LRA's financial year January-December 2021.

Clearly the two biggest events in 2021, and continuing into 2022, are the progress of the "Transform Leatherhead " project and the formulation and eventual adoption of a new "Local Plan."

In respect of "Transform Leatherhead," 2021 saw much background work done by the Council in seeking development partners for the two major projects, these being the development of Bull Hill / the remodelling of The Swan Centre and the redevelopment of Claire & James House / the creation of the Riverside Park. Both seem to have been successful in as much as partners have been identified and contract negotiations are in hand.

The draft of the new Local Plan was agreed by the Council at the turn of the year and submitted to the Secretary of State in early this year. It is now being scrutinised by a Planning Inspector, and a member of the LRA will appear at a Stage 2 Hearing into the Visual/Spatial Strategy policies on the 30<sup>th</sup> September. This will be followed by the LRA appearing at a Stage 3 Hearing into Site Allocations and Delivery on the 26<sup>th</sup> October. It will be several more months before we know the outcome of the Inspector's findings.

At a more local level, the Community Hub on the Kingston Road spent much of 2021 formulating its plans for the conversion of the old school buildings into a Community Centre and this year the work has been completed. I went there to meet with one of our local Councillors recently and it seemed a very friendly, warm sort of place, a credit to those who put in all the work to make it happen. 2021 also saw the news that the URC Church on the Epsom Road would come to market and this was eventually bought by a developer of assisted senior living communities where those who need a degree of care can rent flats and make use of the on-site services provided by the operators. Finally there is a new magazine about to be pushed through all our letter boxes later this month. It takes the place of the "Look Local" magazine and covers a very wide area including Weybridge, Cobham and Hersham.

For some time I have been receiving adverse comment on the general appearance of the Town and so in June of this year I asked members for their ideas as to what improvements could be made. A long list resulted. Then came the announcement of the “Neighbourhood Fund.” As there was a deadline of the end of September for submission of applications for ideas and funds, I decided to use the opportunity to submit the most popular idea suggested, namely the cleaning up of the High Street plus the replacement of the existing planters with a lesser number of more elegant ones. Maintenance of the planters will need to be by volunteers and I have one, although more will be required. The repair of the high-level clock in the High Street, another idea suggested –with a donation –is now under way.

On the subject of improving the appearance of the Town, the LRA has continued with its “Litter-Picks.” The last one took place on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October. Julia Jarret met the volunteers in the Station car park on Saturday morning. They were offered pickers and bags and then they set off for their favourite messy areas.

And now a few words about a subject that has been geo-political in cause but local in effect and that is the war in Ukraine. The plight of refugees from the Russian invasion has led to much assistance being offered nationally and locally. Money has been donated and in that regard the LRA ran a stall in the Swan Centre in early June which raised around £200. A number of refugees have been offered local accommodation and jobs. One rather amusing result of a gardening job was that the two workers started to sing and the employers were amazed at their proficiency until they were informed that the people in question had trained at the opera house in Kiev. We are hoping that further work will result!

I will finish now with two comments: if you know of anyone who would like to join the Association, please do let one of us know as you go out and secondly, I am still intending to retire next year and to hand over to a younger person. Once the Planning Inspector has spoken, I think much of the really time consuming work will be over and we can revert to our more normal low-key activities.

Our next meeting will be in February, when I hope to be able to pass on the Inspector’s comments and opinions on our draft Local Plan.

I will now move away and give the floor to Simon Ritchie. Simon will give us a brief history of the Ordnance Survey and mention some of the many remnants of its work in and around our Town. This survey was a particularly huge undertaking when it first started on a national basis.

Caroline Brown