

## Draft of speech to LRA Members on 6<sup>th</sup> February = Chairman's Report

First of all, good evening to everyone and thank you for coming. Before starting our discussion about Leatherhead, I would like to thank, most sincerely, those people who have seen fit to make a Donation to our Association. They always arrive completely unexpectedly and have all the attraction of a rather large Christmas present! So please know, that we are very grateful.

I have received apologies for tonight from Cllrs. Moss and Brinker who have another meeting requiring their presence and also from our Minuting Secretary, Geoffrey West and our Planning Watcher, Fran Smith. The following also sent apologies: Cllr. Tim Hall, Julia Jarrett and Andy Ryan.

Much of what we discussed at our last meeting is still continuing to evolve and I will endeavour to bring you up to date with where things are at the minute. Our Agenda this evening is divided up into some smaller items (no. 1 to 5) which I shall bring up, then another of our Planning Officers, Martyn Williams will talk about the Riverside Park (no.6). I will then resume with some smaller items of interest (no.7) and Martyn will continue with an update on our Local Plan, (no. 8) and the implications of a possible loss of GB for housing. We will finish with Tony Russell's description of the Ashlea Medical Practice, what they have and what they would like.

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HSBC have now confirmed that their branch in Leatherhead will close on 4 July 2023, leaving only the Nationwide. . The need for a Banking Hub of some description is becoming overwhelming and we have passed this on to our M.V. Officers and Councillors. They appreciate the need and will press for it. Keira tells me that she has been working with the Economic Development Officers at MVDC to start putting together a bid for a Banking Hub in Leatherhead, to be seen as a 'North Mole Valley' Banking Hub, servicing not only Leatherhead, but also Bookham, Ashted, Fetcham and Headley. We have spoken with the Chamber of Commerce and local Residents Associations to get their support and hope also to have the support of both local MPs, so that the strongest possible case can go forward to LINK for review. We will keep you updated.

In the town itself there is the dire necessity of improving the Presentation and Look of our High Street. We have been asking/petitioning for attractive Planters for a long, long time. Cllr. Keira Vyvyan-Robinson, as I mentioned last Autumn, has sourced both plants and planters plus some money from a CIL fund to go ahead with the plan. But, apart from deciding where each one is to go, there is the question of other priorities holding things up: It seems that that lime trees outside the theatre need to be attended to first because of the slippery sap they exude. Do we have any idea of a time scale for these two items?

However, planters in the High Street are not the only ones being sought: a resident of our town living very near the Plough Roundabout has offered to do the maintenance of any planters which could be placed on this roundabout. Plans have been drawn up to use plants that would eventually send their roots right down into the soil and thus avoid their drying out in hot weather. The request, which has gone into the CIL, covers the sums required for insurance and occasional road management if large vehicles need to access the site.

Regarding the buildings in the High Street, there are two pieces of reasonably good news: Firstly, a Planning Application has been received for permission to redevelop what we all know as "Building Supplies." As expected, it retains Commercial Space on the ground floor, but above that there are five flats, most of which benefit from facing south. The distinctive 30s tiling is also to be retained but, happily, the ivy covered floor will be removed! It is hoped that the construction will not be too uncomfortable for the neighbours.

Another hopeful sign, but shining less brightly, is the former Santander building, where the dormer windows have at last been closed which should keep out the rain that must have been entering the building for all the time the windows were left open, i.e. about last September. However, part of the roof still remains without any tiles.

And now, the last of the changes in our High Street, and one whose lengthy implementation has surprised me, is the repair of our town clock. A generous resident has offered to foot the bill for its service but I had thought that this would be held up until the Transform project started. However this is apparently not necessary and so, with the agreement of our Councillors and

Officers, I will take some steps to get permission from the owner of the current site and find a suitable person to carry out the work.

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I am now going to ask Martyn Williams to say a few words about the Riverside Park. As you may recall this is one project within the overall “Transform Leatherhead” masterplan and about 2 weeks ago Martyn attended a consultation workshop with the landscape consultants appointed by our Council. Martyn ,over to you- (**see “Minutes” for 6 Feb for details**)

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And now, I am going to quickly cover a few local changes.

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a) The Kingston Road Recreation ground is going to continue with their “Public Spaces Protection Order” which prohibits anyone using drugs, being verbally abusive or harassing others or failing to comply with a request by an authorised officer to stop drinking alcohol. Incidentally, a similar PSPO also covers the centre of Leatherhead.

b) Lidl has been in receipt of letters from a resident regarding their lack of lift. This is an ongoing problem and is being closely watched.

c) Apparently the Fairfield Centre is looking to increase its membership. I am sure everyone knows that it is situated on top of the Swan Centre.

d) Finally, our Spring litter pick will take place on Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> April in the Randalls Road car park. Please look out for messy areas that you, personally, could do. A Start time of 2pm will mean that a couple of cars containing the equipment, pickers, bags and plastic gloves will be parked and ready to give out anything required. If you wish to do a clear up earlier and need some of these items, do let me know. We would aim to finish between 4 and 4.30.

Turning now to a major subject of concern to us all. You may have heard of some fairly radical proposed changes to our Draft Local Plan. Once again. I will call on Martyn to explain these and their implications for Leatherhead. So, Martyn over to you once more –

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**Please see Minutes for 6 Feb for details**

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And now I propose to give the floor to Tony Russell who has been striving to help our much appreciated Ashlea Medical Practice solve their accommodation issues at their surgery on Upper Fairfield Road .

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Tony, over to you- AR speaks (Again, please see the **Minutes** for 6 Feb)

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Thank you Tony, and I am sure we all wish your little group well with their efforts .

Well that is the end of our reports to you .I wonder if anyone now has any questions they would like to raise on what we have discussed or indeed whether there is any other issue they would like to bring up ??

**Speakers from the floor.** One member suggested we push for a Bandstand in the Park. This idea was met with approval.

Well that brings us to the end of the meeting and I have only one further announcement to make. For many many months I have been telling you of my wish to step down from my roles as both a Director and the Chairman of the LRA, in the hope that someone will volunteer to take my place .That has not happened yet and so at the advanced age of 81, I really feel that I can postpone my retirement no longer. So I will resign in October and if no-one volunteers to take my place by then, then I am afraid we will have to wind up the LRA. Does anyone have any thoughts in this regard? If you have any ideas, an email might set the ball rolling.

**Speakers from the floor**

Well it now only falls to me to announce that the next meeting will be in May, either Monday 15<sup>th</sup> or Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> and I will confirm the precise details as usual in my monthly bulletins. For reasons beyond my control, the February Bulletin may arrive at the beginning of March. Thank you for attending and I now pronounce the meeting as closed.