



Minutes of Meeting for the 2022 AGM of Leatherhead Residents Association (LRA)

held on Monday 16th October 2023 at 7.30pm

at the Methodist Church, Church Road, Leatherhead

1. Present: Caroline Brown, Martyn Williams, Ray Brown, Louise Herrity, Paula Sabine, David Stoves, Fran Smith, Paula Sabine, Julia Jarrett, John Holton, Sarah Buttery, Hilary Porter, Daphne Vallins, Jenny Christie, Tony Russell, Jenny Day, Audrey Cleeve, Jane Pratt, Lesley Pearce Maureen Conrad, Margaret Sims, David Brett, Mike Herrity, Carol Webster, Tim Caffell, Alison Houslander, Steve Barrow, Nigel Sabine, Chris Goddard, David Slater, Anna Graham, Nathan Andrews, Cathy Anderson, Geoffrey West, Cllr Bridget Kendrick, Cllr Tim Hall, guest speaker Robert Edmundson.

2. Minutes Silence: The Chairman asked for a minute's silence in remembrance of LRA member, Pam Wilson, who had died about 2 weeks previously after a painful illness. She would always be remembered for being full of energy and ideas, especially for the LRA.

3. Apologies Received From: Mrs. G. Hack, Mr. Ronald Buttery, Mr. Paul Sutherland-Waite and Mrs. Lesley Pearce

4. Approval of the Minutes from the last AGM dated 17th October 2022:

Had been posted on the LRA's website for many months and no objections were raised. Ballot papers were then distributed throughout to all attendees, with item 1 addressed accordingly.

5. Matters Arising:

The Chairman briefly mentioned the status of 2 items associated with last year's AGM, that the High Street seemed much better maintained these days and that the Town Clock has proved harder to get mended than anticipated, but otherwise no items were raised from the floor.

6. Chairman's Report for the Year 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2022:

The Chairman commenced her report by confirming that the somewhat belated details reflected the activities of our last financial year, but Covid had done a good job of separating our end of year from our AGM, hence some points may seem rather like ancient history!

Firstly, the Local Plan, which was drawn up by July 2022 and was then presented for discussion by the Autumn of 2022. However, before the Inspector could make her decisions known regarding certain aspects and in particular the use of Green Belt land, the Government, represented by Mr.

Gove, decided to reconsider the loss of the Green Belt. So our Local Plan and that of many other Authorities is now in limbo awaiting further direction.

In terms of development of our Leatherhead town, the original chosen developer for Claire and James House has decided not to go ahead and so it remains as it is now. Just recently a new company, ME, had been engaged and we should be hearing more quite shortly. The improvement of the land adjacent and all along the riverside path is going to be upgraded by Messrs. Allen Scott. For the largest and most significant change in the town of Leatherhead, known as “Bull Hill” and “the Swan Centre”, we were told in May 2022 that the well-known firm “Kier” has been approved by Mole Valley but, as yet, no details have been released. It is an 8 to 10 year development, so we will be in for a long haul.

While still considering the buildings and structural make-up of Leatherhead, our Chairman and, indeed, others too found it painful to witness the deterioration of the Santander building in its prominent position in the town centre as it falls victim to all the elements. It was noted that it has Planning Permission to create 3 flats above the ground floor, but with large parts of the roof missing, its ancient floorboards stand little chance of survival after two years of rainfall. This sad state of neglect in our area is, unfortunately, not the only one because last year we also learned of the sewage release happening in the River Mole on a regular basis. But since then, news has surfaced that many other rivers the length and breadth of our country have suffered the same fate. The accumulation of this knowledge is at last coming to the Government’s notice and we here in Leatherhead had been invited to attend a programme called “What’s Stopping Us Stopping Change” on 28th September. River watching is continuing in Mole Valley and throughout the country, with a dedicated group in Fetcham called FoRML.

Several smaller but useful changes have occurred: Leatherhead now has a total of six ward Councillors who share the difficult task of achieving local objectives. Our Chairman stated how she admired them all, for stepping up and accepting such proposals and then trying to have them implemented!

Last year also saw the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and how we, in the LRA, were able to raise some funds to help refugees. A stall had been set up in the town and furnished largely by goods supplied by Hilary Porter, rescued over the years with some such good cause in mind. Another successful venture, this time initiated by Mole Valley district council, had seen help and advice being made available to new Retail Managers, the “classroom” for which is the former Next Shop in the town. A variety of art work and crafts all produced by skilled workers is quite amazing, but the upstairs was not to be forgotten either, being unexpectedly spacious and the goods are many and varied.

The Chairman expressed the feeling that one of the joys of living in this part of the world, and in Leatherhead in particular, is the sheer variety of other local activities to look at or partake in: Mole Valley has drawn up a list of 24 lovely walks and Heritage Week opens up doors, normally closed, to the general public. Early booking is often essential and now Arts Alive performances are

in full swing. The full list of offerings can be found at Google <Arts Alive> and many of the activities are both free and open to audience participation.

The biggest and most serious item on the current agenda, as far as our town is concerned, is the proposed development on Headley Road east, on the far side of A243. This is not just a small collection of houses, but instead a very large estate badly placed in the Green Belt, on the far side of an open and exceedingly busy road with no local amenities like shops, surgeries, schools etc. The LRA are currently working with other local groups to get this Application dismissed.

To end on a positive note, the Chairman informed the meeting that Cllr Keira Vyvyan-Robinson had suggested that the LRA put in a bid to have a Mural painted on the brick structure (the 'tool house') on Station Road, next to the half dozen free parking places. It will probably have a large swan on it somewhere and should improve that rather messy and overgrown area. The Chairman did point out that when builders Kier get going it might have to come down again, but Kier's work is, apparently, going to last 8-10 years so it will have a reasonable life span!

Also, the Community Hub is thriving and ideas are being assembled to deal with the perennial Roundabout problem nearby. It does seem like other hopes and objectives, such as stylish Planters in the High Street and the Banking Hub, will just have to wait a bit longer.

Finally, the Chairman reminded attendees that the Statement of Accounts, pertaining to this AGM, had been dealt with at the August meeting and so will not feature further at this time.

The Chairman then made way for Cllr Tim Hall to independently conduct Voting items from the Agenda.

7. Voting matters including election and re-election of Directors:

In the process of handing over to Cllr Hall, our Chairman addressed the floor by stating how pleased she was that all existing directors had agreed to serve for another term, if elected, and that we also have Hilary Porter and Tony Russell offering themselves for election as new Directors. If elected, Hilary would retain her interests in Health problems generally in our town and will also continue with the Access group and report back on any significant changes that she hears about. She would also continue with designing her excellent posters and using the barrow in the Swan Centre prior to special meetings to alert both members and non- members.

Tony is to continue to let us know about serious traffic accidents and problems, keeping us abreast of any further changes in medical provisions within our area. This is very likely to involve the Ashlea Practice at Linden House, although we were unlikely to hear more until Transform Leatherhead makes its official appearance! This same document is likely to include changes in our roads layout and Tony will study it and then bring the results to our notice.

The full list of voting matters were confirmed as:-

Resolution 1: Adoption of the last AGM minutes.

Resolution 2-4: re-election of Paula Sabine, Fran Barnby-Smith and Louise Herrity

Resolution 5:- re-election of Martyn Williams

Resolution 6:- election of Hilary Porter

Resolution 7:- election of Tony Russell

Cllr Hall then went onto the floor in the collection of voting forms, followed by the count, the results of which are given towards the end of this meeting, within section 9 of these Minutes.

The Chairman then gave a warm welcome in the introduction of our guest speaker.

8. Guest Speaker: Mr. Robert Edmundson, with a presentation in respect to Local Flora and Photography:

Robert opened his talk by stating that all wild plant and flower varieties in his presentation were taken within 3 or 4 miles of Leatherhead. These were:-

Cowslips – related to primroses, found early in the year and referenced by Darwin for cross – pollination.

Rosebay Willowherb - (fireweed) – tall spikes of pink flowers found on roadsides and riverbanks.

Bluebells – some found with white flowers, taken on Ranmore. Not to be confused with the invasive Spanish bluebell.

Dandelion clock – recommend taking the pictures into the sun!

Celandine – (stinking hellebore) is also part of the buttercup family but is not the same plant - found on slopes on the outskirts of Dorking.

Guelder rose – this has “false flowers” on its outside, to encourage pollination of the small inside flowers.

Wild carrot – (very common in the area) has one dark flower in the centre of the white flower.

Toadflax – with yellow flowers like snapdragons, and found growing in meadows, roadsides and open grassy places.

Yellow Rattle – (the conservationist friend) to be planted where invasive plants are a problem.

Ribwort Plantain – grows on roadsides and meadows.

Teasel – on local hillsides (guides insects with “lines”)

Rose of Sharon – attractive, but is actually non-british and an invasive species.

Deadly Nightshade – beautiful flower but poisonous.

Alkanet – quite attractive with red buds opening into blue flowers.

Greater Bindweed – beautiful white trumpets but very invasive!

Wood Anemone – a very common ground cover plant.

Sweet Woodruff – delicate and common.

Greater Stitchwort – commonly found close to bluebell woods.

Early Purple Orchid – often grows between bluebells.

Pyramidal Orchid – purple in colour.

Common Spotted Orchid – pale pink, almost white

Bee Orchid – very colourful.

Musk Orchid – strong smell of honey, but only when close.

Ivy-leaved Toadflax – found on walls around Dorking and Leatherhead, but from Italy.

Eyebright – small white or lilac flowers.

Corn Salad – grows as a weed but is also cultivated as a salad crop known as lamb's lettuce.

Spindle Tree – small, but beautiful red/orange flowers.

Common Vetch – attracts ants and they work together to repel harmful insects.

Robert recommended The Collins Book of Wild Flowers for anyone interested in learning more.

9. A.O.B. and Closing Address by the Chairman:

Our Chairman gave a vote of thanks to Robert Edmundson on behalf of meeting, with our great appreciation being shown in the usual manner.

Our Chairman then provided a closing address under A.O.B. raising a number of items, as follows:-

Two members, Anna Graham and Carol Webster, had volunteered to perform other tasks.

Anna, like Tony, is to keep a watchful eye on our local environment, including some roads, but this will also include our Public Gardens, particularly concentrating on the “green” areas in Leatherhead, like the Mansion Gardens and other public areas. Carol has nobly volunteered to overhaul our website and to get rid of inaccurate or outdated material, and has already started with the Bulletins, putting them in chronological order.

The Local Plan, which, of course, is delayed because of the Government's announcement in December 2022, has still not been formalised. Hence our undefined housing targets make Mole Valley an attractive proposition for speculative builders and developers, a position probably reinforced by the Labour party speech at their October Conference. The Appellants in the Headley Road Appeal fall into this category, although this was not quite finished and results are unlikely to appear before Christmas.

Another long drawn-out battle is that of the Plough Roundabout, where it is agreed that it should present a well maintained, attractive entrance to Leatherhead, rather than just a stretch of grass very occasionally tended. But even when money is offered by Mole Valley, along with muscle to maintain it, Surrey County Council will not then permit anyone to work there, because of the risk! Undaunted, we are to try one more solution, namely to offer our grant money to the Groundsmen of Surrey County Council, namely ‘AC Verde’, to get the work done through them. It is hoped that they have the imagination and sufficiently high standards to successfully complete this task.

Our Chairman mentioned how the Mole Valley area is extremely active at this time of year, with Heritage Open Days in September and now a whole month of Arts Alive, so we are not short of

things to do! A talk next Saturday 21 October at 11 a.m. was highlighted at the Institute and called “A Celebration of Ukrainian Heritage”. Flyers had been placed on chairs throughout the meeting room in support of this event.

Reference was also made to another event, this time in St. John’s School from 21st to the 28th October (from 10-4pm) is the Autumn Exhibition of the Leatherhead Art Club, where free admission and parking is on offer.

Finally, the Chairman confirmed that the LRA will be holding our next official Litter Pick on Sunday, 29th October starting at 2 p.m. and finishing at 4 p.m. The starting point is the car park opposite the Station as usual and you can either pick up a bag and gloves etc. there (then start on whatever is your chosen area) or alternatively just drop off a bag that you have filled earlier in the week. Julia will be there with bags and pickers. All borrowed equipment must be returned.

CLlr Hall returned to the podium, to provide the voting count and confirm that all Resolutions had been unanimously carried. The Chairman welcomed all re-elected and new Directors, looking forward with working with them all in the months ahead.

The Chairman called for any other items of A.O.B. – whilst at the same time pointing out that 2 further Flyers had been placed on the chairs throughout the room. These related to:- The MVDC “Have we got it right?” consultation on their draft Council Strategy, running from 25th September to 5th November 2023, and The “Royal Coat of Arms” Conservation programme running at St Mary’s Church, Fetcham.

David Slater stepped up to the podium at the invitation of our Chairman and spoke briefly on this latter subject of the “Royal Coat of Arms” Conservation programme, explaining that it was affixed to the church wall, dated back to 1660 and marked the accession/restoration of our Monarchy. A request for donations was made, by either cash, QR code (on the Flyer) or directly to the Treasurer at Fetcham Parish.

Sarah Buttery, a resident of Beech Holt, Fortyfoot Road, then took to the podium to highlight local traffic and parking problems being experienced in the area, including the blocking of pavements, where the disabled and the blind were being particularly disadvantaged to the point of being house-bound. Should the need of a Fire Engine ever arise, it was considered unlikely that it would be able to reach the event! In addition, noise levels on the nearby A24 in Leatherhead now had an assigned Action Group and a petition was in the process of being raised, so the future support of the LRA in such local issues was requested.

Finally, Tony Russell wished to acknowledge the wonderful contribution of our Chairman, where great appreciation from all those present was shown towards Caroline Brown.

The meeting closed at 9.05pm.