

Minutes of the Open Meeting of the LRA on 4th August 2025

Leatherhead Methodist Church

People Attending: L. Herrity, M. Herrity, C. Brown, (Chair), R. Brown, M. Donelan, M. Young, D. Stoves, T. Russell, F. Smith, M. Williams, L. Pearce, D. Carr, R. Ward, H. Porter, K. Williams, H. Tribe, C. Webster, M. Sims, L. Davy, Lee Merricks, J. Day, Steve Day, Becky Sampson, Chris Evans, Judy Harris, Edward McArdle, Terry Richards, Paula Sabine Nigel Sabine, Bernard Hurford, Steve Barrow, Helen Keen, Lucy Quinnell, Tim Caffell, Vicky Wallace, Jane Pratt, Alan Williams, Pam Chouls, Ann Clark, Keira Vyvyan-Robinson, Tim Hall, Susan Hood, Nadia Thomas. (42 attending)

Letter of apology: received from Mr. Paul Sutherland-Waite and David Woodhead.

The meeting opened with a “Welcome” speech from the Chairman, Caroline Brown. She highlighted the fact that, for some, the meeting was a fresh start, but for others, like herself, it would be virtually the end of her chairmanship.

The decision not to allow a Banking Hub for Leatherhead was her first topic and she emphasised what a severe disappointment this meant for the inhabitants of Leatherhead.

The next topic was the Community Governance Review, something very new to most of the people attending, but very much in the plans of the new Government. Current divisions into Wards and Parishes may no longer match how people are grouped and comments and or suggestion are to be warmly welcomed. The changes, will, of course, also affect voting habits and results. Residents are asked to send in comments.

The next item to be highlighted was the Fun Day and Dog Show on the Bank Holiday in August, on the 25th, in the far end of the Fortyfoot recreation ground. It is to help some of the Lions Club’s Good Causes.

Another plan to please Residents is that of the Swan Centre on three consecutive Thursdays in August, (7th, 14th and 21st), when there will be some stunning classic cars on display, an opportunity to try out artistic handicrafts, live music and FREE strawberries and cream.

The chairman finally went on to remind people about the Mole Valley’s Heritage Open Days from 12th to 21st September 2025. At the Abraham Dixon Hall there will also be a talk on the ingenious design of the London Underground plus a display of Leatherhead’s Art Club paintings.

The meeting then moved on to the subject currently occupying the thoughts of most of the audience: **Transform Leatherhead (TL)**. A number of people made comments about different aspects of the plan:

The first person to speak was LRA Director, **Martyn Williams**. He outlined some of the underlying issues: He felt it likely that the Developer (Kier) would purchase the whole site with the exception of the grassed area which would then act as a Ransom Strip and thus ensure that the Council could retain some control over the site. He added that although a Building Height study had been obtained, it would not be accessible to the general public until the Planning Application was presented.

Tim Hall (Chair of the Council for Surrey County Council), informed the meeting that there were plenty of school places in Leatherhead for both younger and older children. The reaction was one of surprise. Currently, Trinity School had 30% vacant places.

He also added that no Planning Application had yet been received so, no "rules" could yet be described as "broken."

Tony Russell voiced a worry which is of great concern to everyone: The traffic on Station Road is going to be chaotic – with up to 7 private driveways on the LHS, traffic from the new road next to the railway, RHS, (in and out), an ingress and egress route to the houses at the s. end of the park, narrow Waterway Road itself and the low railway bridge.

Keira Vyvyan-Robinson assured the meeting that work on organising the traffic was in progress.

Ann Clarke felt that the sheer number of prospective inhabitants demanded a bigger playground.

Paula Sabine pointed out that a similar problem existed in Ashted, on narrow Ermyn Way.

A 20 mph speed limit is being proposed there, but whether that would help Station Road is very debateable.

The Meeting was then introduced to Michael (Mike) Herrity who is a (particularly active!) member of Leatherhead Pools Allotments Society. He started off with giving a particularly detailed, historic assessment of allotments in general.

With no precise dates, the idea of small-ish patches of common ground being given to needy families to help them not only with food but also with rents, tithes and even a mortuary tax, started in Saxon times. Some people may have heard of the "Surrey Diggers Trail" by which Allotments in Cobham, Weybridge and Walton were known. The Industrial Revolution caused hideous over-crowding and so Parish Landowners began formally allocating patches of around 25 acres for the poor of their Parishes. From 1896 this land was indentured to either a landlord or the local Council and in 1974 it was transferred to MVDC. The "Dig for Victory" slogan of the 1940s helped to support the movement as there were many returning soldiers, little employment and yet plenty of hunger. In fact, so great was the need, that even Parks and Verges were dug up, some of which subsequently became Allotments. However, in 1928 there was a Compulsory Purchase Order for about half of the "Barnett Wood Land" allotments of the time. So it is felt that we should be even more protective of the area that is left.

The current management is grateful for all local community support, like that from the L.R.A., C.P.R.E. local, N.A.S. Green Hearts and, recently, the BBC and even B&Q.

This talk was a particularly well-researched one and the LRA is grateful to Mr. Herrity for taking the trouble to prepare it so carefully.

The meeting ended at 9.45pm.

The next Open Meeting is likely to be Monday, 6th October 2025.