



Chairman's Speech for AGM on 27 Oct 2025

Good evening, everyone. Thank you all for coming. This is the LRA AGM for 2024, but I shall also comment on more recent events where matters have run on into 2025.

Needless to say, the biggest issue facing our Town during 2024/2025 has been the ongoing saga of Transform Leatherhead. Early 2024 saw the first "Forum" meeting between the developers (Leret Partnership) and Residents. This was followed by the release of the first draft proposals and a public consultation exercise. That part of the proposals relating to "Bull Hill" in particular, was not well received to the extent that some 1600 people signed a petition against it. An impartial Design Review Panel was instigated (to include the LRA), and, although a number of its recommendations were not incorporated, a revised "Bull Hill" proposal and public consultation still took place in early 2025. Although a modest improvement, much was still thought to be inappropriate, and there the matter rests as far as Residents are concerned. What will be shown when the planning application that is promised shortly is lodged, remains to be seen.

The second major Planning issue in 2024 was the adoption of the Draft Local Plan, which put the Planning Department at MVDC in a much stronger position to resist applications at variance with established planning policies. Unfortunately, while the Plan provides for a manageable housing provision over its life, it must be reviewed within three years, which may result in a very substantial up-lift to current numbers.

2024/2025 also saw the first discussions around the possibility of District Council functions being taken over by restructured County Councils, to be known as Unitary Authorities. Ultimately these may be led by new Mayors. The aim is to give greater control over local matters to local Residents and to remove the inefficiencies of the existing two-tier structure. Whether either of these objectives is achievable is a moot point and as if to confirm this, there is now talk of Parish or Town Councils being required to ensure adequate liaison between the Unitary Authorities and their electorate!

At a more local level, progress was made in respect of the appearance of the Town in a number of respects. Finance for a new pedestrian bridge and lift service at the Station was granted in 2024 and construction was completed this year. It is a considerable improvement on the previous tunnel! Less well received, initially at least, were the 24 huge planters that were installed in the High Street. Following public outcry, some were relocated, and others repositioned and thankfully they seem now to have settled into the townscape much better. The High Street was much improved with the comprehensive refurbishment of the old Santander building on the corner with Church Street and at long last work has started on the

ex-Building Supplies building at the top of the High Street. The LRA sponsored the painting of the mural on the underside of the Waterway Road bridge and all that is needed now is some asphalt on the path plus a handrail on the stairs leading up to the road.

As all the above suggests, “change is very much in the air” for our Town and District and the LRA will continue to seek to influence that change for the good of Residents. However, the time has now come for me to hand over the reins to a new leadership team, who will hopefully bring new ideas and enthusiasm to the role. So, my much-heralded retirement as Chairman will take place at the end of this meeting and a new Chairman and two new Vice-chairmen elected by the Board will take over.

It has been a real privilege to be the Chairman for the last thirteen years and I hope I can continue to make a smaller, but still worthwhile, contribution if I am re-elected as a director later in this meeting.

Caroline Brown,

(Chairman)

06/10/2025