



Minutes of Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Leatherhead Residents Association (LRA)

on Monday 27th October 2025 at 7.30pm

at the Methodist Church, Church Road, Leatherhead

Present: Members = 45, Local Councillors = 1, Speakers = 1, Total = 47.

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Approval of the minutes of the last AGM, held on 21st October 2024 (Resolution 1).
3. Matters arising.
4. Chairman's Report.
5. Treasurer's Report and Accounts.
6. Re-election of the existing director, Caroline Brown (Resolution 2).
7. Election of new directors, Stephen Preston (resolution 3), Timothy Caffell (Resolution 4) and Metin Huseyin (Resolution 5).
8. Resignation of Hilary Porter as a Director.
9. Appointment of new Chairman.
10. Report on Transform Leatherhead.
11. Any other business.

Welcome: The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, including the Speaker.

She then announced that the meeting would proceed in accordance with the Agenda.

1. Apologies for absence-The Chairman noted that 3 had been received, 1 from a member and 2 from local Councillors

2. Approval of the Minutes from the last AGM (Resolution 1)

Martyn Williams (MW) stated that the Minutes from the AGM 2024 had been uploaded onto the LRA website and members were asked if there were any questions. One query was raised from the floor regarding item 6(b): Had the LRA applied to the Open Spaces Society in respect of Bull Hill. Francis Barnby-Smith replied that 2 applications had been made, but no protection had been afforded to the Bull Hill site.

MW sought a proposer and seconder to the Resolution and these were provided by Mr Herrity and Ms Pearce. A Members vote was then called and the Resolution was passed unanimously.

3. Matter Arising

MW asked if there are any matters arising and none were raised.

4. Chairman's Report

Caroline Brown (CB) reported that this was an important meeting for the LRA as four Directors require Membership approval to their re-appointment or appointment; Hilary Porter is to retire as a Director and the Chairman herself is to retire as Chairman (but remain as a Director) .

The Chairman confirmed that the most important issue facing the Town remains the Transform Leatherhead Project. There is still no news as to the Planning Application, despite this being promised by the Leret Partnership for this Autumn. However, this subject would be dealt with in more detail at item 10 on the Agenda.

However, she did want to refer to the recent Mole Valley Council Meeting where Councillor Slater had spelt out the apparent unfairness of some £14-15 million from Council funds i.e. Residents' Council Tax, being committed to the refurbishment of Dorking Halls whilst Leatherhead's renewed Swan Centre is required to self-fund via the sale of our park and Red House Grounds (£7 million)

The loss of this Park continues to be bitterly opposed by many, many Residents and the Chairman confirmed that as many as 1,600 had registered their opposition to the Bull Hill plans. Out of this has emerged the "Save Bull Hill" community action group and the Chairman reminded members of the "Gofundme" crowd-funding being carried out by the group in order to raise money to pay for a consultant Planner to scrutinise and submit a representation in respect of the Planning Application when it is finally lodged, (see the Gofundme.com link on the 'Save Bull Hill' website).

The second major Planning matter in the last 12 months was the eventual adoption of a new Local Plan for Mole Valley. Whilst it has many advantages, unfortunately its tolerable new house-building target requires to be reviewed within 3 years, which may lead to a substantial target up-lift.

And if such fundamental remodelling of our Town was not enough, the Chairman noted that the LRA and all residents need to consider the proposed restructuring of local government in our County, namely should our District Councils be wound up and their functions taken over by restructured County Councils and, if so, should Surrey be divided into two or three of these? And might this cause a democratic representation shortfall that necessitates the formation of Parish or Town Councils? As this is the subject of tonight's talk she would say no more.

The chairman noted a number of welcome improvements to the appearance of the Town.

Finally, the Chairman announced that after tonight's meeting she will have resigned as Chairman, after 13 years in the role. She hopes to continue as a director and a new Chairman and two new vice-chairmen will take over as dealt with at Item 9.

There was a presentation of flowers and thanks expressed by all those present for her major contribution to the LRA.

5. Treasurers Report and Accounts

The Treasurer, Paula Sabine, confirmed that the LRA Accounts and Treasurer's Report for 2024 had been uploaded some weeks ago onto the LRA website. Hence, she did not propose to read them out in full to the meeting. She merely explained from where various items of income and expenditure were derived and noted that once again the LRA generated a small profit and a

modest uplift in Members Funds. There were no questions from Members and as the Accounts are the sole responsibility of the Board there was no Member's vote thereon.

6. Caroline Brown re-election as a Director (Resolution 2)

MW stated that although CB has retired as Chairman, she wishes to continue as a Director. However, as this is the 3rd AGM since she was last re-elected under the LRA Articles she needs to be re-elected. MW asked if anyone had any queries before Members vote on the Resolution. As there were none, MW asked for a proposer and seconder, which were provided by Ms Webster and Mr Salsbury. MW then asked Members to vote on the Resolution, which was passed unanimously,

7. Election of new Directors (Resolutions 3, 4 and 5)

MW stated that three new directors (Messrs Preston, Caffell and Huseyin) have been appointed by the Board since the last AGM and in accordance with the LRA Articles their appointment needs to be confirmed by Members. MW introduced the three directors and asked if anyone had any questions. As there were none, MW asked if Members would be willing to have one vote in respect of all three appointment. There was agreement to this so MW asked for a proposer and seconder, which were provided by Ms Porter and Ms Pratt. MW then called for a Members' vote and the Resolutions were passed unanimously.

8. Resignation of Hilary Porter as a Director

MW announced that in view of the passage of time and her commitments elsewhere, Hilary Porter has decided to resign as a Director of the LRA as from this meeting. MW recorded the LRA's thanks for Hilary's contribution to the LRA both as an active member over many years and more recently as a Director. The meeting showed their appreciation to Hilary for her service and she was presented with a bouquet of flowers in recognition of this.

9. Appointment of a new Chairman

MW reported that when the three new directors were appointed by the board, each indicated their willingness to consider leadership roles within the LRA, once they had settled into their Board roles. After much discussion, the whole Board had agreed that Timothy Caffell should be appointed Chairman, to replace Caroline Brown and Stephen Preston and Metin Huseyin should be appointed joint Vice-chairmen. MW pointed out that under the LRA Articles these appointments are at the discretion of the Board and so there is no member vote but he asked whether there are any questions. There were none.

10. Report on 'Transform Leatherhead'

MW gave a short report on Transform Leatherhead. Since the public consultation on the last proposed schemes for the Swan Centre and Bull Hill, there has been no meaningful news from the Leret Partnership, apart from the fact that they had intended to submit a planning application by Autumn 2025. As yet, this has not happened.

In the meantime, the LRA has been supporting the 'Save Bull Hill' community action group and their crowd funding campaign, with the aim of employing a suitable Consultant Planner to analyse and critique whatever is in the formal application, notably in respect of Bull Hill. Anyone wishing to donate can find details in the Chairman's report on the website (and reproduced here in Item 4 of these Minutes), but MW was also prepared to assist at the end of the meeting, in respect of how to donate on-line or in the form of cash.

As far as the LRA itself is concerned, once the application is submitted, we will then carry out our own analysis and convene an emergency open meeting, to discuss it with all members, after which we can then make representations to the Mole Valley Council's Planning department.

MW then invited questions from the floor:-

Q1: Has a specific suitable Planning Consultant been identified?

A1: MW said that some options had been identified, which SBH were considering, but he believes a final decision has yet to be made.

Q2: Is it possible to establish the contents of the required "Tall Buildings' Study" that must be included with the Application.

A2: Mike Herrity from the audience said this might be possible using a Freedom of Information request. It was agreed he would lodge this.

11. A.O.B.

The Chairman raised 3 items, as follows:-

1. The next of our regular Litter Picks is due to take place next Sunday 2nd November in the usual format (meeting in the northern parking area of Bull Hill from 2pm onwards).
2. Regarding the Leatherhead Town clock, Richard Keel from the Swan Centre has given assurances to the LRA that the recently repaired clock will be corrected again and maintained in full working condition in future.
3. On this coming Friday, 31st October, a Halloween evening was taking place inside the Swan Centre.

Guest Speaker – Wendy Saunders, from Dorking Community.org.uk:

Wendy commenced her talk by clarifying that the Dorking Community are a non-political organisation, whose members perform a research function and then contact the current Local Authority over associated matters only. Wendy then presented a series of informative slides, outlining how the demographic structure of Surrey is made up of four tiers of government. Tier 1 are the 87 Parishes, although it should be noted that these are predominantly to the south of the District, with many areas of the north being unparished. Tier 2 are the various district councils, such as Mole Valley, while Tier 3 is the County Council itself. Tier 4 are the parliamentary constituencies. In the proposed reorganisation the District Councils will disappear with their functions being taken over by the County Council. In turn the County Council will be split into either two separate councils (East Surrey and West Surrey) or into three separate councils (East Surrey, West Surrey and North Surrey). Mole Valley District Council will merge into East Surrey regardless of a two or three-way split, probably with 4 or 5 other surrounding district councils.

It may be advisable for those parts of the County that do not currently have parish councils, to form these, so there is an adequate, very local representative body that can deal with very local issues and bring more important ones to the attention of the new County authority.

In terms of the timeline, this process began in May 2025 and is expected to run through to April/May 2027, although it is important to note that councillor elections are currently set for May 2026! Furthermore, many other aspects of the proposals are not defined yet, for example who will deal with non-statutory services or even what are the costs of the exercise likely to be? For instance, in 2020 it was estimated that the process across the UK might save the country in the order of £5.5bn but, today, these changes are expected to save the British taxpayer absolutely nothing at all or might even end up costing more..!

Further slides were presented by Wendy, providing further detailed information in support of the above data, after which questions were invited from the floor, as follows:-

Q1: It was noted during the presentation that NACs (Neighbourhood Area Communities) currently sit below Parish Councils, and it was asked if they would receive funding under the new regime?

A1: The answer was 'no', only Parish councils would receive funding although, in a detailed reply, Wendy clarified that NACs and Parish councils both contained pros and cons in their specific roles.

Q2. How will our Council Tax payments (currently to MVDC) be apportioned in the future?

A2: It was believed that these would be taken over by the new East Surrey Authority of which we would likely form part.

Q3: Where had these Council proposals and reforms originated?

A3: From Central Government.

Q4: Will the current MVDC Local Plan process be impacted?

A4: To the best of Wendy's knowledge, no it would not.

Q5: Do you believe that "shared services" that might save Councils money had been the driver for these proposed reforms?

A5: Yes, Wendy believed that this was indeed one of the drivers. But, there may be others.

The presentation concluded and the members showed their appreciation to Wendy Saunders in the usual manner.

The meeting closed at 9.40pm.