

# WEYBRIDGE SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING APRIL 6<sup>th</sup> 2017

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It is my pleasure to present the Chairman's annual report for the year just ending. This is my fourth year as Chairman and I would like to thank Richard Marshall as vice chairman and all those on the Main Committee for their support.

On May 9<sup>th</sup> 2016 the Weybridge Society became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered charity # 1167053. I would like to thank Richard Marshall for all his efforts in preparing the necessary documentation which enabled the Society to become a charity. Becoming a charity is a significant milestone for the Society and I believe heralds a time for when the Society should start to expand its activities. I will say more about this at the conclusion of my report.

To complement the activities of becoming a charity I mentioned last year the need to cleanse and validate our membership database. Under the Chairmanship of Steve McCarthy a small working group comprising Trevor Lewis, Sally Bean and myself reviewed options for upgrading the current membership database and enabling future members to join the Society electronically. Sally, Steve and Trevor have spent a considerable amount of time and effort evaluating the options available, selecting the preferred solution and then implementing it; we must thank all three for their efforts. Later this evening Steve will give us all an insight into the workings of the new system.

The Planning Panel has spent another active year in reviewing a multitude of planning applications and additionally reviewing the draft local plan recently issued by Elmbridge Borough Council; and we must say a special thank you to all those involved. The panel continues to make a significant number of comments to the South Area Planning Committee where it believes that planning applications do not meet the needs of Weybridge and in particular where proposed developments are not consistent with maintaining the characteristics of the local environment. We are all aware of the differences between Oatlands, Queens Road Village and the town centre and the Society wishes to support developments that maintain and enhance these differences. Although this stance is not inconsistent with the stated policies of Elmbridge the Society feels that the treatment of Planning Applications by Officers and sometimes the planning committee enables developments to take place which with more robust determinations would not be allowed to take place. The development of 5 storey block of 51 flats plus two retail outlets at the junction of Queens Road and Princes Road is a case in point where it was allowed on appeal.

The draft local plan, issued in late 2016, specifies a requirement of just under 10,000 new homes to be built in Elmbridge by 2035, equivalent to nearly 500 homes a year and doubling current plans. The review by EBC officers concluded that the preferred option to provide this level of new homes was to use "low grade" greenbelt, namely two sites in Cobham and one in Weston Green. However recently the government stated that Green Belt is sacrosanct which would suggest that the preferred option would be considered unsound. As a consequence, EBC has written to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to seek clarification and if necessary agreement that the timescale of the submission of the plan could be delayed beyond February of next year. The outcome of this letter is unknown as this report is being written. We expect the pressure of increasing the density of developments to continue especially in town centres whatever the outcome of the deliberations on the release of green belt. The Planning Panel will be monitoring developments and we will keep members up to date. I would like to thank all those involved which are: Raymond Spary, Eric Hammond, Barry Judd, Richard Marshall, Tim Williams, Alan Wright and Steve Whittle.

In association with the work on the members' database our email contact list has expanded; now we have email addresses for around 60% of our members. Naturally we would like this to be more. Steve McCarthy looks after our brief news alert service using email; last year some 25 alerts were sent. Steve also looks after the website and we are indebted to Steve for all his efforts. The Society's Twitter account continues to keep people informed of local events and news; many thanks to Sally Bean for managing the account for the Society.

Haley has edited and published 4 newsletters this year all to a high standard including a bumper 16 page 2017 Spring edition. As last year Haley has done a magnificent job as editor and I extend our thanks to Haley for her massive contribution. We must also thank Nick Tripp and Jane Ward in helping Haley throughout the year. Unfortunately for us, Haley recently increased her work commitments resulting in her having to stand down as Editor, a sad loss to the Society. We do though wish Haley all success in her expanded career. Fortunately I can report that one of our members has offered to take up the role of Editor; more news on this in the near future.

Yet again we are indebted to Anne Lindsay for all the effort she made in ensuring that all the newsletters are delivered. You may have noticed that we are also using this delivery method on occasions to deliver letters to members for whom we do not have emails. This does save the Society significant amounts of money so many thanks to our distributors for delivering both newsletters and letters. In certain areas of Wweybridge Anne would like volunteers to help with delivery; we'll send out an eblast asking for volunteers. As I have mentioned before in many ways the distributors are the 'face' of the Society to our members and the committee welcomes any feedback that you may have as a result of delivering the newsletter, especially about missing or potential new members.

Since the AGM we have only had one talk on September 29th and that was by Gail Walker, the Principle of Brooklands College. Gail gave us an insight into the history of the College, its plans for the future and a summary of the subject areas it covers.

Some of you will have attended the very successful Summer Party last July. We were blessed by the weather and all enjoyed the tranquil setting of Anne and Ray Lindsay's home. We again must thank Anne and Ray for allowing us to enjoy a summer afternoon in their garden and to Margaret Wicks for all her help. This year we were joined by Rachel Lake, the then deputy mayor, and her husband Ian. Rachel picked the raffle prizes and total proceeds from the party were £450 which were donated to Sam Beare Hospice. I am pleased to say we will be holding the Party again this year on Sunday July 2<sup>nd</sup> so please make a note of the date in your diaries.

Last year I mentioned the support that the Society was giving to the refurbishment of the Weybridge Point car park and our thanks go to Tony Davis who has continued to lead the Society's involvement and support for the project. Success was achieved just recently when Thames Landscape Strategy was awarded a grant of £72k for the implementation of a design to improve the parking facilities and the general improvement of the local environment. We hope to publish details of the scheme in the next newsletter. An additional part of the last submission for CIL funding was for new signage between the Thames path and the start of the Wey Navigation, which has now been approved.

In 2016 we continued to support Heathside School's Year 13 Award for "Sixth Form Contributions to the Community of Weybridge" Trophy at a sum of £48. We congratulate Emma Clarke, who is now studying Biomedicine at Lancaster University.

At our last AGM we heard from Paul Povey the Chairman of the Weybridge Town Business Group (WTBG). The Society, through Barry Judd, has maintained close contact with WTBG and made two contributions of £100, one as a membership fee (which covers miscellaneous running expenses) and another for the Christmas tree lights. The WTBG is partnering with the Society in undertaking a parking review for Weybridge; the Society's involvement is being led by Mike O'Sullivan. The purpose of the review is to collate the parking demands of residents, business and visitors and then determine how the demand can be met by a mixture of on and off street parking. I am pleased to say that this initiative started by Mike has received the blessing of our local councillors.

I am sorry to report a couple of months ago Sue Ells resigned from the committee due to significant other commitments. Although Sue had only been a committee member for a short time she did make a significant contribution and I am pleased to say that she has indicated that when circumstances permit she is keen to join the committee again. I am pleased to say that all the other current committee members have agreed to be put forward for re-election to the committee and on your behalf, I would like to thank the current committee for all their time and effort during the year; without them the Society would not function. However, I must re-emphasise yet again the need for new blood in the committee; we have been without a secretary for several years now and some on the committee are indicating that this could well be the last year that they will be available. So please any of you who could offer their services to the Society and become a committee member please contact one of the committee. As a first step please come along to one of the regular committee meetings; the dates for this year can be found in the Spring newsletter and on the website.

Now a few words about the future. For many years the Society has focused its efforts organising talks on local issues, responding to planning applications and generally keeping a watching brief on policies and issues related to local government which may affect our local environment. We believe that these should still be part of our main objectives for the Society. However, the advent of becoming a charity does open up a new route for attracting additional funding which could be used to benefit the local community and be in-line with our objective of "keeping Weybridge special". As an example, one of our members, David Bounds, is exploring the possibilities of providing permanent flood lighting of the war memorial at Temple Market. Such a project would require funding for the installation of the necessary equipment plus a plan to ensure that future maintenance is covered. This could be the first of a series of initiatives led by the Society to improve the environs of Weybridge. We would welcome any suggestions from members on suitable projects that the Society could initiate and from anyone who would like to lead the Society's interest on this topic.

Finally, thanks to all our members for their friendly support and open discussion.

Dave Arnold  
Chairman Weybridge Society

## WEYBRIDGE SOCIETY OBJECTS

For the information of members the following details the objects of the Society and is taken from the Society's constitution. The full constitution can be found via this link:

[http://www.weybridgesociety.org.uk/media\\_weysoc/160905%20Weybridge%20Society%20CIO%20Constitution.pdf](http://www.weybridgesociety.org.uk/media_weysoc/160905%20Weybridge%20Society%20CIO%20Constitution.pdf)

### 3. Objects

The following objects are for the public benefit of Weybridge residents with membership open to the whole community, while being independent from all political parties and aiming to take a balanced view to protect and enhance the character and amenities of the town of Weybridge and the surrounding area for the benefit of the public:-

- (i) To promote high standards of planning and architecture in or affecting the area of benefit;
- (ii) To educate the public in the geography, history, natural history and architecture of the area of benefit;
- (iii) To secure the preservation protection development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in the area of benefit, including parks, open spaces, footpaths and facilities for recreation, health, education and transport.

Nothing in this constitution shall authorise an application of the property of CIO for the purposes which are not charitable in accordance with the Charities Act 2011.