

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT LOSRA 2023 AGM

As most residents will be aware, LOSRA usually publishes 3 newsletters each year, in the early Spring, the Autumn and shortly before the AGM in June, which hitherto we have delivered by hand to over 4,000 households in the Lower Sunbury community through a network of volunteers. In common with many other voluntary bodies, in recent years, especially post Covid, we have had difficulty recruiting & retaining volunteer distributors, so from now on, we will be using Sunbury Matters to deliver our newsletters for us. I would like to take this opportunity to thank most sincerely all those volunteers who kept our newsletters delivered for many years. If you haven't seen the AGM newsletter there are some available at the back of the hall, or you can view it, or contact us for further information, through the website.

About 600 residents subscribe to our weekly e-News bulletin - if you haven't yet signed up for this, just go to the website – losra.org - it takes less than 1 minute. We also post items from time to time on the Sunbury Facebook pages, and we have a regular feature in Sunbury Matters. We try to keep people up to date with what we have been doing on your behalf, to meet our primary objective of “optimising and enhancing the quality of life for Lower Sunbury residents by all appropriate means”. A reminder of LOSRA's Aims is available on the website, together with a summary of some of LOSRA's campaigns and achievements since it's foundation.

We were delighted to be able to resume our stand at the Sunbury Regatta last August, and last December, we again took a stand at the Lower Sunbury Business Community Christmas fair. We sincerely hope that enough volunteers will come forward to enable the Regatta to take place in its customary form this year, not least because it is one of the few opportunities we have to give our Gazebo an airing – and this year we have a new one, generously funded by a grant from Buddhi Weerasinghe, our County Councillor, now also newly elected local ward councillor, from his County Community allowance.

LOSRA is composed of a management Committee, being a small core of Officers, and up to 10 other members, some of whom I shall be proposing for your approval to re-elect, shortly. We are all volunteers and give generously of such time and talents as we have on your behalf. Our principal motivation is a desire to help, as far as possible, protect, maintain and preserve for future generations the environment in which we

all so much enjoy living. Our constitution requires that we shall have no political or religious affiliations, and we strictly abide by that. We do however work in partnership with Spelthorne Council or other political representatives wherever appropriate but for no other reason than to meet our stated Aims. As you will have seen from the AGM newsletter, we currently have some vacancies for new members, so if anyone is interested in finding out more about what being a Committee member involves, please have a chat with me afterwards or come along to our next meeting.

Our committee meetings are open to observers, and we have continued our practice of inviting, when appropriate, a representative from our Sunbury Ward Councillors, and County Councillor to our monthly meetings. We believe this has broadened communication between ourselves and our elected representatives. Earlier this year, we also welcomed Daniel Mouawad, Spelthorne's Chief Executive, who gave us a valuable insight into the current issues and challenges facing our Borough at the time, and Andrew Scott, the newly appointed Surrey Community Link Officer, some of whose role replaces the old Surrey/Spelthorne Joint Committee, now disbanded.

In the last 12 months or so, we have been involved in one way or another with a wide range of local issues, including opposing the proposed 5G telephone mast in the conservation area in Thames St, liaising with Spelthorne on the removal of graffiti on the wall of Sunbury Park, meeting with the Police & Crime Commissioner to discuss local residents' concerns, meeting with the local Spelthorne Police to discuss anti-social behaviour, contributing to the call for Local Green Spaces, making representations at the Apps Court licensing hearing in Elmbridge, supporting the enforcement of Tree Preservation Orders, sitting on the Council Peer Review Group, objecting to proposed developments where we believe they would be overbearing or out of character with the surrounding street-scene, providing advice to individual residents and groups on various planning issues, discussions with developers regarding prospective sites, liaison with Hazelwood London Irish on residents' concerns, representation on the River Users Group, and making representations to TFL & Surrey on the provision of toilet facilities for bus drivers at Sunbury Park, to name a few. I'd like to mention 3 specifically:

Sunbury Ferry

I hope that by now, many of you will have had the pleasure of taking a trip across the river on the Sunbury Ferry. It is operated by a not-for-profit

community company run by two local residents, Neil Huntingford (a LoSRA Committee Member), and Simon Harris, and is crewed by local volunteers. It was part of an initiative from Spelthorne Council, through its River Thames Task Group, and won first prize in the Spelthorne Business Awards. LOSRA has also long championed the idea of a new foot/cycle river crossing in Lower Sunbury, and the idea is still a long-term objective, subject to securing the necessary funding, which we are actively pursuing through Surrey County Council.

Patient Participation Group

Two members of the LOSRA Committee serve on the Patient Participation Group at Sunbury Health Centre - indeed LoSRA was instrumental in setting up and developing the PPG, of which every patient is an automatic member, and Neil Huntingford continues to chair it, supported by a Core group of 5 or so patients who work closely with the Health Centre in the role of 'critical friend' to represent patients' opinions, and drive forward beneficial changes. You may have seen periodic updates published in LOSRA's Newsletters and e-bulletins and the PPG has its own website which got nearly 800 page views in the last 3 months. The Practice also has a regular slot in Sunbury Matters. The PPG is very keen to recruit users of the Health Centre not currently represented on the Core group and are looking particularly for patients from an ethnic minority background and also the younger age group i.e. under 30. The Core group meets around 6 times a year for a couple of hours, so it's not an onerous commitment. If you, or anyone you know could be interested, please encourage them to get in touch either through the PPG website, or with the Health Centre.

We are delighted to confirm that NHS Estates, who own the building, and Spelthorne Borough Council, have agreed a match funding deal utilising accumulated Community Infrastructure Levy funds for significant modernisation measures totalling £1.6M. Once the work has been completed not only will the environment for patients and staff be significantly improved, but also the Health Centre's capacity for appointments.

Local Plan

Due to unforeseen circumstances, it is not possible for Ann Biggs, Spelthorne's Strategic Planning Manager, to join us this evening – she sends her apologies. Like Ann, we have been engaged on the Plan for a very long time. Together with our friends Keep Kempton Green, we attended two sessions of the Examination in Public of the Plan by an Inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate, accompanied by a Kings Counsel we jointly retained to represent us. The Council's decision

to ‘pause’ the process leaves us in limbo and exposes the Council to opportunistic planning applications from developers. It is unclear what the full implications of the Council motion are. It said “Spelthorne Borough Council formally requests the Planning Inspector to pause the Examination Hearings into the Local Plan for a period of three (3) months to allow time for the new council to understand and review the policies and implications of the Local Plan and after the three month pause the Council will decide what actions may be necessary before the Local Plan examination may proceed.” This will be a very worrying time for anyone close to the two local sites most exposed – Stratton Road, and Kempton Park, and Green Belt in the Borough generally. Whilst the Planning Authority can always refuse applications, the reasons must be sustainable on appeal, and the absence of a current Local Plan makes this much more difficult.

As you have heard from this summary of our activities, we are involved in a multitude of issues, by no means all of which relate exclusively to Lower Sunbury, so LOSRA is emphatically not, as a local councillor recently suggested, ‘to a considerable extent a single issue group’.

As well as the main items I have mentioned, individual committee members have been involved with a variety of issues where LOSRA’s expertise has been helpful to residents and others in Lower Sunbury. I would encourage members to come to us when issues arise where they think we may be able to help. This might involve LOSRA taking it up on your behalf, or simply signposting you to where you can get the help and answers you need.

As you will see from the Treasurer’s report and accounts which follow my report, through prudent management of costs, LOSRA has accumulated reserves over the years against eventualities such as the need for expert legal advice so I am pleased to report that it will not be necessary to ask for additional funding this year. However, the current membership fee of £5 per household has not been reviewed since 2008, so this will be kept under review for the future.

In closing, I want to express my sincere thanks to the other Committee members for their continued help and support, and to John Carey and Sebastian Usher who stood down since our last AGM. We also welcomed Jyoti Banerjee. Thanks also to [Kevin Welling &] Nesli Ziler for the [sound, lighting &] technical assistance. I also want to thank you, our members, and our Corporate Sponsors from the Lower Sunbury Business Community, for your ongoing financial support.

Finally, I'd just like to mark the fact that 2022 was the 50th anniversary of LOSRA's formation. We had a very enjoyable celebration at Sunbury Cricket Club with about 100 people in attendance. I hope that we may continue to serve the community for a long time – but to do so, we need some fresh, young, blood, so if you feel youthful, keen and energetic, please do seriously consider putting your name forward for the Committee! We can always co-opt you mid year!