



The strength to rebuild after a difficult year

The past 12 months have been challenging for everyone and will continue to be so.

To those who have been most badly affected by the events of the past year; losing loved ones, suffering long term health consequences (either directly or indirectly from Covid) or losing a job or livelihood.

We really do hope that everyone will soon have the opportunity to gain strength and to rebuild.

One positive thing to come out of the pandemic, has been the renewed sense of community spirit.

We must thank all who have gone out of their way to help those having to shield. Whether you did this as part of an organised group, or as an individual **gesture of goodwill** to an isolating neighbour, you helped to make what would otherwise have been an impossible situation, bearable for many.

If we choose to carry anything forward with us from the experience, it should be the sense that we can pull together as a community when needed.

Accepting a new reality

In terms of recovery from the pandemic, hopefully by the summer we will be well on the road back to 'normality'. Although inevitably what 'normal' looks like **may be very different** to what went before.

We will almost certainly see a reduction in commuting and 'standing room only' on **peak hour commuter** trains is unlikely to return for some time to come. It is widely recognised that **shopping habits** may have changed permanently, as the trajectory towards **on-line shopping** has been accelerated through the series of lockdowns.

The realisation that a large percentage of previously **office-based occupations** can be efficiently done from home, resonates with the concept of shopping from home. In both cases right now, making a tough decision feels somewhat easier behind the veil of a computer screen than it had done in a meeting room, or a shop full of people.

It's understandable that almost a year in lockdown will have inevitably made people feel **more insular** and perhaps quite isolated.

Of course, there are many jobs which cannot normally be undertaken from home; for instance, in the **care, medical, teaching, retail, construction,** and **hospitality** sectors. It is those who work in these professions who in general have had the most challenging time.

We are lucky to live in such a special area.
Let's work together to make the best of it.



With regard to the **retail sector** and how to create an environment in Fleet in which shops can thrive despite the shift to **online shopping**, we discuss this overleaf. What is clear is that, unless we all accept that the change in the **way people shop** has accelerated, it will be difficult to make further **changes in Fleet** which would help **support** our cherished retailers

Ready to talk

The Community Campaign are championing for Hart District Council to engage in a **meaningful dialogue with local residents** to understand your priorities and to explain the challenges, the constraints – but also the realistic and exciting **opportunities** which are open to us to **re-energise Fleet** as a retail and community destination.

One thing that has not changed throughout the pandemic is the fundamental principle held by those of us in the Community Campaign, that the place in which we live is very special to all of us.

We care about what happens here. We are not always going to get things right – and certainly you can't please everyone. However we promise that, with your support, **we will continue to do the best** for the communities in which we live. ■

Revitalising the heart of Fleet

by James Radley

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One of the consequences of the past year has been the acceleration in the shift away from traditional high street shopping habits to purchasing more online.

While we all value the variety and **personal service** we get from Fleet's retailers, we are still doing more shopping **online**, even if it is sometimes with a pang of guilt. This is **not unique to Fleet**; it is a systemic trend that is happening right across the country.

Traditional **high streets** will always have their place. It is human nature to enjoy the **ability to browse** physical objects and to engage with a trusted retailer. To 'pop in' for something and then **be inspired** by other merchandise is part of the experience and fun.

Time to embrace change

The Community Campaign believes that if there is to be a **viable retail** environment in Fleet, the town *must* attract people – and this *will* require significant **change and investment**.

Suggestions of 'change' usually provoke some form of adverse reaction especially, it seems, in Fleet. Some people find it very easy to say what they don't like, but are less forthcoming with suggestions they feel would be **acceptable**. Fleet needs a change that is viable and will bring **tangible benefits**.

Additionally, if Fleet is to retain its **attraction** and charm, something must be done to draw outside investment into the town. If the **District Council** is prepared to invest in redeveloping its **civic quarter**, this will show **outside investors** what is possible.

Fleet as a destination

We agree that any **redevelopment** must provide a **library**, one that is compatible with the expectations of the twenty first century. It must also continue to offer community **open space** and provide a suitable setting for the war memorial. There must be a place for both regular and specialist pop-up **markets**.

We need some form of **community venue** for the arts and public facing council services. Fleet must be **a place to go to** for *more* than just shopping, if it is to continue to be a place where we can shop!

As restrictions begin to ease and the focus of local government shifts away from the emergency towards planning for the future, the **Community Campaign**

will be looking at ways in which Hart can actively and constructively **engage with residents** in meaningful discussions about the future of Fleet.



Hart's 'civic quarter' includes the environs of the council offices, library and The Harlington

It is quite apparent that the **residents of Fleet** need to be **involved** with any such project right from the concept stage. Many people have **great ideas** and ambitions for the community which we want to capture, so that the best can be incorporated with, and integrated into, the final scheme. This engagement must be a **two-way process**, where **ideas are shared**, problems and constraints aired, and possible solutions discussed to reach agreement.

There is a strong desire to **get things moving**, an absolute willingness to invest, and an acceptance that it is now imperative that something is done.

All of us who **care about Fleet** as our town centre have to work together to come up with a scheme which the majority of Hart residents can support and recognise as a desirable outcome. Let us embrace the opportunity to **rejuvenate Fleet**, before it is too late.

Please look out for invitations and notices about opportunities to **join in the discussion**, to attend workshops (when social mixing is allowed once more) and even to join a working party. ■

Care about where you live? Join the Community Campaign

Contact our Membership Secretary, Gill Butler
on **786108**, email **GillB@cchart.org.uk**
or you can find out more and join us at:

cchart.org.uk/get-involved

What makes a **successful** Town?

by **Wendy Makepeace-Browne**
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We all agree that Fleet Town and the Hart civic quarter need regenerating, and we've said that we all need to work together to achieve it, but how do we know where to start?

To help on the commercial side, Hart District Council has set-up a working group to include representation from experienced architects, Fleet Town Council and Hampshire County Council. Hart are also engaging with a social and community development research organisation, Create Streets.

This collective brings hefty town and community planning experience, plus the ability to look strategically at the required relationships between space, design and usefulness.

Thought needs to be given to what we already have that can be improved, and where we need to start from scratch. A great town has a good mix of building usage for shops, offices, homes and the community. It needs every space to add value, either to the area economics or the neighbourhood feel.

We need an environment that makes people want to linger long enough to browse in our shops, use our cafés or restaurants and notice local events, so that they will come back again and again.

Whether we acknowledge it or not in ourselves, people like the feel of nature running through their environment, so trees and greenery will be key to making us feel happy with our regenerated area.

Change has to happen and needs to be achieved with a lasting feel of space, great aesthetics and safety, so that people feel happy to be here.

We all want a town centre which feels like home and which allows us to feel safe.

Now is the time to get your thinking caps on and develop your own ideas, so that you will be ready to participate, once the public engagement kicks in. ■

Pressing for Infrastructure

Lockdown has eased commuter pressure on our roads and rail – and it's not clear whether we will see the same levels of congestion we had before.

This does not remove the fact that prior to lockdown, our **road infrastructure was creaking** under the volume of traffic. So even if things don't immediately return to pre-2020 levels, we still have to ensure that **promised improvements** go ahead.

A roundabout at the junction of the **A287** and **Redfields Lane** was first promised when Zebon Copse was built over 30 years ago. Since then, the million or so pounds provided by the Developer has been diverted to other **highway schemes**, as it was always insufficient to complete the work. In the absence of the **needed roundabout**, this resulted in long queues at a very dangerous junction.

Roll forward to the present day and **Martin Grant**, the developer at **Watery Lane**, has agreed to provide the promised roundabout. The development for 300 homes to extend Zebon Copse was fiercely contested by the Community Campaign and **Crookham Village**

Parish Council. Despite detailed work by the parish council and the outstanding support of **FACE-IT**, the application was granted on appeal.

Based on the evidence supplied by Crookham Village PC and FACE-IT, the planning inspector acknowledged that the new housing would be untenable without a new **roundabout on the A287**. At least a partial victory for the objectors.

This complex project will require significant focus and effort by the developer to complete it within the prescribed timescale. Martin Grant have now submitted two applications to **defer** the roundabout completion date. Thanks to the efforts of your CCH councillors to highlight weaknesses in the Developer's **evidence** supporting this change, Hart's **Planning** Committee unanimously agreed that the original deadline should be met. Work should start by June.

We thank Crookham Village PC and local County Councillor **John Bennison** for their tireless efforts to get this roundabout signed into **legal agreement** and hold the developer to their commitment to provide this **much needed roundabout**. ■

Supporting our local communities

STAY SAFE, STAY PROTECTED This newsletter has a durable antimicrobial coating, to help it stay clean and reduce the risk of cross-contamination



Being a CCH councillor involves engaging in many different activities – and some of the most rewarding moments have come from helping our residents during lockdown.

Aside from normal duties, CCH councillors have been pleased to volunteer and help in any way we can. We've been actively involved in supporting residents who are shielding; with shopping and prescription collections, manning the phone lines, offering advice or just providing a friendly ear.

We quietly got on with helping set-up free parking for those who will be working or helping at the Harlington vaccination centre, as well as those who are attending. We are also volunteering as marshals ourselves at centres across the district.

We've been delighted to help Fleet Lions and other local charities with collections for the most vulnerable groups. Despite the pandemic, life goes on and local residents still need help with housing and planning advice. With council resources stretched in dealing with the challenges brought by lockdown, we have found ourselves stepping up more than ever to help residents navigate these challenges.

Practical help with local issues

An example is Fleet Spurs Football Club, that supports and promotes grassroots football within Hart and the wider community. The club is very popular, having over 30 youth teams signed with them.

The Club had been in negotiations with Hart District Council for over 2 years now, trying to agree a long term lease for their football ground. Recognising this,



CCH councillor Ange Delaney stepped in to help the club negotiate a conclusion to these talks.

The result is that the club was able to provide all the evidence and documentation required to secure their future with a 15 year lease agreement for the ground and facilities at Kennels Lane in Southwood.

This long-term lease will allow the Club to apply for grant funding in order to improve this important and unique community facility.

Improvements are likely to include an all-weather pitch, refurbishing and upgrading the Clubhouse as well as extending their car park. Not only will these be of benefit to Fleet Spurs FC, but also to other Sports Clubs within our District, for generations to come. ■

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