

**CHAIRMANS REPORT HORLEY & DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
MARCH 31ST 2008 HELD AT THE FARMHOUSE PUB HORLEY 18.00 HRS**

If anyone had told me what I would have been inheriting I wouldn't have believed them! The year has passed quickly, and we have seen many, many changes, all for the better I hope, but it has taken a very, very long part of my personal life to achieve this. Some have said my Chairmanship is leading us along the wrong path. Others have praised for me for my pro-active work. So let's recap on what has happened.

Firstly we got a dedicated phone line, which cost us £10 and we still have £9.87 left which is pretty good going in 12 months! However as there are so few calls it's not worth the effort to carry it around all day, therefore I am strongly thinking of changing the number to my personal one.

Then we had a dedicated PO Box. This works well except for the fact that the postman keeps delivering to the old address, which is similar. I have personally had to get the company who still receives our mail 5 yrs down the line to re-direct it to the correct address and not to our former one. After this we all received our Window stickers, which show the town and its visitors that we are united, this is also as reports go, giving the purchaser a sense of shopping with confidence, whether it be an article or a service.

Then the biggie!!! Oh boy I wasn't expecting this!!!!!!!
Updating, Collating, telephoning, researching, typing just to get our database in order!
The typos, were truly unbelievable!!!! And to top it all, it wasn't even in alphabetical order!!!!
To correct and make it an efficient workable database took 90, yes 90 of my personal hours! If my time was payable The Chamber would have been almost bankrupt! But now all info is so easily kept and accessible.

Then we had a 6 month battle with Barclays Bank, as the information they held on the Chamber was wrong. Form after Form after Form had to be filled in, to get the correct address and signatories on the cheques, and change over from the ones.....all 16 names they had on there, and 3 addresses!!!!
The exec committee is about to change banks due to the appalling waste of time, effort and the sheer incompetence we have had to suffer.

We now have a new accounting system that can be passed onto any new incumbent, Chairman or Treasurer. A simple, easy, understandable, pass on-able system, but again this took time and effort, all behind the scenes.

Also a system was introduced so that everyone of our members were kept up to date with what is going on, emails, newsletters etc, yes all for £25 per year! The members have benefited greatly from this, as many, had complained that they paid up each year and received the bare minimum of contact from the Chamber.

I personally deliver when in Town the newsletters and info the people that do not have email addresses or computers; you would be surprised how many don't.

This keeps a "hands on" approach to our members, who they are grateful for this service and it reduces our postage bills!

We try and have a meeting once a month, and the past year, we have virtually achieved this. Yet with all the new systems, a few dropped out as maybe it was too much to cope with, and we have had to say goodbye to members who will or who have moved away. It was very disappointing to see only 4 or 5 people at the meetings; but it is not uncommon to have 11 to 15 at a meeting, but obviously more are still wanted. Many companies thought that as they were not on the executive committee they could not attend, and only thought that the bosses / owners of the companies could attend. We now strongly encourage people that work for those companies to come along and represent their companies, and it's always good to hear a different view and prospective

Companies are joining us, regularly now as they see there IS A CHAMBER, THEY SEE WE ARE WORKING, THEY SEE A PRESENCE.

The figures prove it, although, the price has gone down from the £100 a few years ago that companies used to pay, our membership has more than doubled in some cases!

This year we have 88 companies (the 85 listed is because 3 people have second companies).

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
3214.60	3025.60	2453.60	2366.60	1483.00	1466.60	1948.00	2100.00
57	56	47	44	30	59	<u>101***</u>	85

Compared with other Chambers we are doing very well, especially for the price we charge compared to theirs. Other Chambers also have to pay for an office secretary out of their income. Horley & District gets this all in the same package! Sadly it's taking so much of my time and effort, I too have a life.....well I did have!

If I'm doing a bad job please let me know, I can always step down. But if you want me to stay and you want the Chamber to be efficient, then you all must help, even with the basics of filling in the forms correctly.

As for fund raising, which was thought to be a bit a No, No it seems; In the past year we have raised over £3600!

Out of that we have spent almost £2000 but we have yet to receive the money for SGD.

As for our stationary and office expenses etc, I run it all from home, so that is kept to a minimum and has approximately cost £230 for the year!

I now realise I cannot do it all on my own, the Chamber needs help. The Chamber needs your secretary's not to ditch emails, (because they think that their boss won't be interested). So many company owners have said they do not receive anything; this is mainly due to their firewalls not allowing it through, which is very easily remedied, and for reception to forward the emails to the owners / bosses.

We also have a directory which is printable and soon the directory will go live and be downloadable by anyone on the net.

This directory can help you to gain more customers, and to help you network. Please use it to your advantage, fill in the ways you can be contacted by a prospective customer, fill in your company email;

fill in your company web address. Your personal email addresses are wanted to inform you of all the Chamber stuff, personal info is not printed on directory unless you want it to be.

Please fill in your renewal forms correctly so we can keep the records up to date, and please pay promptly as it all takes a lot of time chasing cheques.

If the forms had been sent by email we could have just copied and dropped the info in.

Everything is there for all our benefits.....or should we go back to the ways of the past, of just taking the yearly subscription, and you get nothing for it? That the Chamber has no presence in the Town? That the Chamber is never seen? I doubt if any members really want this.

Right, I've had my moan, but I must never not forget those who have done tremendous work in the past, Graham Larcome for 13 yrs of hard work, and believe me it is hard!, and for all his statesmanship guidance, advice and encouragement. To Greg Cust for making sure our past accounts were there on time, on the dot, legal and faultless. To Adrian Grinstead who never battered an eyelid when it came to getting down to any task. To Ray Bateman for being our post box address and sorting out all the mail. I cannot leave this section without a big thanks to my rock, John Fisher for being there in my first year, and I hope he will continue, for I'd definitely be greyer and on Valium if it wasn't for him! Thank you John so very much.

To the other members of the Exec committee who have been there, supporting me, chucking out some of my wacky ideas, and pushing me to make Horley Chamber the envy it is, and for such wonderful encouragement. And to the members who have donated prizes, services, goods and supported us when we have fund raised; and to all those who have joined us. Thank you all.

St George's Day

Is underway and again, right at last minute, "can we have this please, can we have that please, Oh we didn't know about it". Well EVERY SHOP in the Town Centre, even if not members have ALL been informed, all have had flyers, lists of what they can buy to decorate etc.

I've even had art work, supposedly art work written on the back of an envelope. I'm not hot on computers, but I even know this is not art work! Granted I sold the advertising so cheap, no wonder it sold like hot cakes, but then I was expected to do most of the art work too! So a £150 ad cost £20 !!! with all the work.

Thank God for Mad Ideas, Larker-Sharville and Mole Valley Press for coming to the rescue!

“Homework” for Discussion The Chairman’s Thoughts

Our New town?

Ultra slow progress is taking place with the Regeneration of Horley, let alone the Town Centre.

A new town centre????????.....Its like trying to build the Eiffel Tower out of treacle!!!!

The new Horley..... will it happen in my life time? Or, for that matter in yours?

Yes the Town has been promised some funding towards a New Centre. We have 2 Horley satellites springing up in our vicinity with excess of 2000 homes: but what good will that do, if there is no Town Centre to come to? What we are doing is sending all the new homeowners to Crawley and Redhill.

If we don't have a new town, Horley will become a daytime ghost town with after 6pm yobbery!

Many big names have come to visit Horley in the past year and cocked a snoot at the Town, due to having nothing on offer to them. The Big names don't want to come and invest their money knowing that they won't have the footfall. We have totally nothing to encourage big names to come here for at this time, and will we honestly have in the future???

We have, and will have the population, but our two main outlets, which we have a plethora of are Estate Agents and Charity Shops, these do not bring people into town to spend. Horley needs investment, and to get investment, we need a Town centre; to get a Town centre.....it's all a vicious circle. Don't let Horley die, just because of lackadaisical attitudes.

I hope that Horley businesses and residents alike, will work for the good of the Town, and not hold Horley back from being a great place to work, shop and live.

Ask yourself, how many times has the centre of Redhill Town centre been revamped in the past 10 yrs or so? And what has Horley received? Nil, Denada, Zilch!

What are we offering the thousands of visitors that stay in our guesthouses every day?.....Nothing! There is nowhere for them to go and while away the hours.

We could have a great town here; no we don't need a new Crawley or Redhill, all it needs is a change and a total shake up of our thinking.

So ask yourselves, where does the Chamber and Horley go from here?

Back to the old ways of not being informed? Back to a sleepy Chamber that was?

If this is the case then I am not the man for the Chamber. I want to see the business's survive, I want to see Horley progress, I want to see Horley a safe place to live work and play in. I am sure you want this too, then work with the Chamber, don't leave it up to the few to speak up and be counted.

Work for and with the Chamber. Make Horley a place to live in, not a place to dump a car for a 2 week holiday in Spain or Miami. Bring the life back to Horley that once was here. You can do it if you want.....it's just a matter of wanting it! The Chamber has grown due to encouragement, it's up to you ALL to do your part! Please come and help, if we all do a little bit it will go from strength to strength, and hopefully Horley will too!