

The Meads

On 29th September, a large number of Farnborough Society members and their guests assembled to hear a presentation from Andy Wynn, Manager of The Meads.

During his talk he outlined the desire of his company to fill the available retail units as quickly as possible as part of a strategy for the development of a lively shopping centre in Farnborough. At this point several members of the audience asked what type of shops were to be opened in the near future. The answer was that whilst he had an agent whose staff are specifically dedicated to marketing the Farnborough development to retailers, many of the spaces had not been taken up although he could tell us that 'Poundland' would be opening in time for Christmas.

A number of people expressed dismay at this news and a lively discussion ensued during which people stated they were hoping that rather more quality shops such as a decent ladies and gents clothing shop or that an enlarged version of Debenhams could be encouraged. Also, a nice kitcheware or Cath Kidson type shop. Many people stated that they did not necessarily wish to travel to Guildford or Reading to shop and noted that for some people, travel out of Farnborough was physically impossible. Some members of the local Women's Institute were present and, along with Society members, suggested they might be involved in formally surveying public opinion on the type of shops residents of Farnborough would like to have. A Society member further suggested that an online survey could be put on the Farnborough Society website and the results passed on to Andy Wynn. Neither of these suggestions was met with enthusiasm by him.

However, it was explained that the managers of both shopping centres had come together with other retailers and the vicar of a local church, who had been asked to join a committee of five to lend the voice of public opinion, since they were keen to make Farnborough an attractive place to shop. To this end a sum of money had been put aside for local projects. In addition a Christmas lighting scheme had been planned and the meeting was shown photographs of what it was likely to look like.

Despite the obvious enthusiasm of the Manager of The Meads for making Farnborough a shopping experience, the meeting, ultimately, concluded on a rather disappointed note as those present were too well aware of the effects of the current economic recession and the disinclination of many well known quality brands to commit to setting up in Farnborough in its current state.