



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 45; February 2011

Welcoming Note

Welcome to the February issue of the Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter.

To unsubscribe to this newsletter, please contact us through the website 'Contact us' page with a subject line of 'unsubscribe'.

Our aim is to provide you with a monthly update on the work of the Conservative Association and your elected representatives. We would value your feedback or comments.

We hope you enjoy reading the February issue.

A word from the Chair

Who would be a Politician?



The Arab World is presenting a series of tough calls which make for very difficult political decisions. The changes in the Magreb and in the Middle East are having a profound change to the balance of power in many of these countries and we have to hope that the changes do not go on to prejudice the world's supply of energy and further compound the price of raw materials – including food. Many of the Middle East countries have long had a close relationship with Britain – many of their armed forces have officers who were trained at Sandhurst, Dartmouth and Cranwell. I can understand the frustration of many of the younger members of society – well educated but not enough jobs to satisfy

them, particularly as ex-patriot workers are brought into the wealthier countries to do the more menial tasks (sounds like eastern Europeans in East Anglia). As a confirmed Arabist, despite my three and a half months as a prisoner in Iraq, I hope that the Western countries protect change but do not push change too far. Do we really want a Shia dominated area with Bahrain, Southern Iraq and the eastern seaboard of Saudi Arabia all under the influence of Iran? If this were to happen then it would not be necessary for the Iranians to block the Straits of Hormuz. The countries seem to have a much closer relationship with Britain than with the U.S.A. and perhaps we can encourage change without being seen to interfere with the internal affairs of sovereign nations.

The demonstrations in the Arab world are a far cry from the riots seen in London over the changes to University fees or to the well ordered marches against cuts in local government employees. The former problem has been addressed so that the poorest are protected, and sensible local authorities can cut much of the fat accumulated since 1997 and reduce the many layers of administration without prejudicing front line services. I would prefer to see cuts to local government and to the Civil Service rather than the armed forces being reduced to their lowest numbers since 1830. Should there be a tidal wave of would be illegal immigrants trying to get into Europe from North Africa, we could see our resources – as a probable final destination target – overrun. It is easy to cut, it could take years to rebuild. I understand the procurement side of the M.O.D. has been inept but boots on the ground are still vital in these uncertain times.



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There have been ill formed protests against the corporation tax paid by Barclays, the sums were all paid as a result of best accountancy practice and also take into account double taxation clauses. Why is it that bankers are always being questioned when Bart Brecht – the boss of Reckitt Benckiser was able to receive £93 million in a year and no one raised an eyebrow. The ever intensive pressure for banks to improve their capital ratios is at odds with the pressure to increase loans, let us hope that credit criteria are paramount unlike the period from 2003-2008.

Also looming is the AV Referendum to be held on May 5th – we have to be aware of the two thirds of the Mole Valley District Council area which will be voting on this but will have no local elections to fight – so all parties' resources will be stretched. If the proposals were to be adopted then we could expect to have nothing but hung parliaments in the future.

Mr Colin Crispin
Chairman, Mole Valley Conservative Association
February 2011

News from the House of Commons

Private Medical Insurance (Pensioner Tax Relief) – Ten Minute Rule Motion



I was given the opportunity to present a Ten Minute Rule Motion on the Floor of the House and chose the topic of Private Medical Insurance (Pensioner Tax Relief). A ten minute rule motion provides an opportunity for Members to make a short speech on the floor of the House outlining a legislative proposal. The title of my Motion is 'That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for tax relief on medical insurance premiums for people above a certain age; and for connected purposes.'

The first reading of the bill was on Wednesday 2nd March and this is the argument that I presented:

As in much of the south-east, life expectancy in Surrey is somewhat higher than the England mean. The average male life expectancy in England is about 78 and it is 82 for females. In Surrey, it is about 82 and 86 respectively. Additionally, the proportion of people aged 65 and over in my Mole Valley constituency is about 20% or slightly more – one in five.

Speaking as someone with a professional interest in health and as an MP observer of my constituents' health, it is obvious to me that longevity brings with it a high demand for health care and large demands on the health services, especially cardiac, carcinoma and orthopaedic services. A plane load of Surrey Saga tourists would really set the airport metal detectors buzzing as they passed through with their hip and knee replacements.

The Mole Valley constituency is served by three good NHS hospitals: the East Surrey, the Royal and Epsom. These hospitals have expanded in certain health areas to meet the increasing demand for elderly health treatment. The best example is the Epsom hospital special orthopaedic unit that carries



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out more than 3,000 hip and knee replacements annually – and the number is increasing. Almost all those 3,000 – plus are elderly people from surrounding areas, including my constituency. Local medical problems have been looked at, but there has also been a call for an enhanced and enlarged cardiac unit at Epsom as part of the retention and refurbishment of the NHS hospital.

I provide those two examples as they represent a sample of the increased health demands for NHS health care that come predominately from the over-65s. This is not special or specific to Mole Valley or to Surrey, but to a greater or lesser degree is nationwide for the 65-plus age group. In addition to being served by those three hospitals, my elderly constituents are served by private hospital services. Some are relatively local, but others demand travel to London and beyond.

Approximately 12.5% of the UK population are covered by private health insurance. Approximately 70% of that cover is corporate, leaving about 30% of it individual. At retirement, many people may wish to take over their corporate private health insurance, but the personal cost of course becomes a factor. Additionally, many who have personally funded their health insurance might not feel able to do so when a regular personal income is merely pension or savings. This means that, as the over-65s' need for health care increases, individuals will increasingly turn to the NHS and absorb the facilities they would not have taken if they had been covered by their health insurance at a private hospital.

Before March 1997 when tax relief was available to the over-60s, it was estimated that tax relief was paid in respect of 400,000 contracts to cover 600,000 individuals. Over a seven-year period from 1990, tax relief for the over-60s cost £560 million. However, that included a period when the relief applied across all taxpayer rates. In 1994, this was reduced to apply to the basic rate tax only. Unlike my proposal, the relief started at 60, not 65, which affected the call on the taxpayer. The Western Provident Association estimated that 40% of pensioners would discontinue their private health insurance when the cut came into force in 1997. *Which?* reported in 2002 that private health insurance coverage was lowest for the high-demand 65-plus age group.

Those who choose to have personally funded private health insurance pay twice for their health-in premiums and tax. As I have already stated, this applies to 30% of those insured, as corporate payments cover 70%. However, it would be safe to assume that nigh on 100% of those aged 65 or more are personally funding their health insurance. It is their choice and, for many, it might mean sacrificing other things that affect their lifestyle.

My Bill would allow basic rate tax relief for pensioners at 65 and above, with the age rising as and when the pensionable age increases. It would encourage people either to keep their health insurance or to take out health insurance just as they reach the period in their life when demand can be expected to increase. If they did not have or ceased their insurance, they would add to the call on the National Health Service. The Bill in no way degrades my or their respect for the NHS, but is intended to take some of the load, in numbers and cost, off our tax-paid national health service. As the UK population's life expectancy increases and as the wonders of medical research improve our pensioners' life expectancy and well-being, this would provide an incentive for more people to



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choose not only to pay their taxes to support the NHS, but to use health insurance to take an increasing load off our NHS to the benefit of others.

There were no objections to the proceeding of the bill therefore it will have its second reading on Friday 18th March; coincidentally the same day as my Private Members Bill's second reading.

Sir Paul Beresford
Member of Parliament for Mole Valley

Report from Surrey County Council



With the annual budget setting process agreed and behind us and a welcome 0% increase in council tax for the coming year along with extra money for children in care and a helpful extra sum to fill in the pot holes popping up from this last winter, we will now be monitoring spending in the council through the scrutiny process.

There will still be plenty of difficult decisions to be made by Cabinet members over the coming year and the County Council's scrutiny process is there to ensure that the decisions taken are properly understood and practicable. The process allows for Scrutiny committees to 'call in' decisions for further investigation and consultation with stakeholders and the residents of Surrey. This also ensures that the Cabinet engages with the Conservative backbench members at Council about the policy directions they take.

I was talking to some colleagues on the Surrey Police Authority to find out more detail about next year's process for electing a **Surrey Police Commissioner**. This will replace the current Police Authority with a directly elected Commissioner with responsibility to secure efficient and effective policing of the Surrey force as well as monitoring the budget. It is suggested that the new Commissioner role will be supported by a £3 million budget to manage the administration and will expect to receive a salary out of this of around £100,000.

Whilst I was at Conservative Campaign Headquarters (CCHQ) last week - I asked whether the Conservatives would be putting up a candidate of our own for the role of Police Commissioner, and it is expected that all the main political parties will run a candidate, plenty to vote for then as no doubt there will also be several independent candidates. Hopefully, we shall see hustings in the autumn as candidates emerge to vie for the job.

So the way campaigning is currently, we have district elections this year along with a referendum on the Alternative Voting system (NO I hope will be the answer); next year, 2012, we will have the directly elected Police Commissioner for Surrey plus the Mayor in neighbouring London; 2013 sees the County elections and the European elections and then 2014 another General Election maybe? Whatever, we will not be getting rusty on campaigning any time soon and thank goodness for our



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active and generous membership in Mole Valley who help to deliver success to the Conservative candidates!

In the meantime the Conservative Group will be having its own annual general meeting in March and we shall see if there are any changes or reshuffles out of the process. I will report back next month.

County Councillor Helyn Clack
Member for Dorking Rural

Report from Guildford Borough Council

Council outlines budget plans



At our budget setting meeting on 10 February, Guildford Borough Council froze its council tax for 2011/12, a terrific achievement given the savings that had to be made to deliver the budget.

However, this did not stop the Liberal Democrats making a cheap attempt to score political points with some ill considered last minute changes to the budget. These included attempting to reopen the Riverside Centre in central Guildford for community use at a cost of £44,000, even though the facilities previously provided there have since been made available elsewhere. They also proposed to request that the Chief Executive and Directors take a voluntary pay cut of 10%. This sounds fine in principle until you consider what signal it sends to officers in terms of performance management when they have just delivered one of the tightest and most efficient budgets ever. One assumes that, had they failed, they would have been asked for a 20% cut! Interestingly, the Liberal Democrats were not prepared to cut councillors' allowances to match.

We are delighted that it has been confirmed that the men and women's 2012 Olympic cycle races will be passing through the villages of West Horsley, East Clandon, Gomshall and Ripley, in Guildford Borough. As these races take place at a weekend, we are hoping for a good turnout of spectators, as, no doubt, is Mole Valley when they lap Box Hill!

Cllr Andrew French
Deputy Leader, Guildford Borough Council

Report from Mole Valley District Council

Latest News from Mole Valley

The London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games has announced that the men's and women's Olympic cycle road race for the 2012 Games will come to Mole Valley. This is



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fantastic news for Mole Valley and will certainly be financially beneficial with one million spectators expected to line the route. Kent's hosting of a leg of the Tour De France in 2007 generated an estimated £40million. This event will also draw the world's attention to Surrey and all it has to offer.

In order to guarantee that this cycling event is a triumph the District Council is actively working alongside Surrey County Council and other Boroughs. These sentiments are echoed in Councillor David Sharland, Mole Valley Olympic Cycle Race Lead Member's words when he said "The cyclists have a real challenge in having to climb Box Hill several times which will clearly add to an exciting race. Preparations are already under way and we are determined to make this a successful event for all involved – competitors, residents, visitors and businesses."

The Council's Carbon Management Programme has also been shortlisted for the Environmental Innovation Award at the Government Business Awards 2011, which recognise projects in local and central government that demonstrate effective business practice. The programme has led to the Council reducing its carbon footprint by 6.3% since it was launched in April 2009 and making annual savings of £45,000 in energy bills.

Turning to the affordable housing programme, a report on the progress of MVDC demonstrates that from 2008 to 2012 around £4.1million will have been invested in building affordable homes and 225 new homes will have been built. MVDC's Executive committee will receive the report on the 1st March in which it recommends that the Council should maintain investment in homes for social rent to meet the needs of low-income households.

MVDC's target is to create an average of 50 homes per year, which it will exceed: over the four year period the annual average will be 56.25. From 2008 to 2012 118 homes will have been built for rent and 107 for affordable part rent, part buy homes. Councillor Chris Hunt, Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, said: "Securing the future of our affordable housing programme is one of our main priorities. Our significant four-year investment in new affordable homes enables us to continue providing homes for people most in need, despite the challenging economic climate."

Feature Article

Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims (Amendment) Bill



Last year I was lucky enough to secure a Private Members Bill through the ballot procedure in the House and I have proposed a Bill titled, the 'Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims (Amendment) Bill'.

I presented this Bill to the House of Commons on 30th June 2010 and the second reading is fixed for the 18th March this year. At the second reading, as I am quite near the bottom of the order paper, there will not be enough time to debate the Bill so it will just be a matter of reading out the title of the Bill and the MPs present will vote to either send it through to the committee stage



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or not. If it makes it through to the committee stage I will have the opportunity to outline the arguments in favour of the Bill and invite people to speak on the issue.

The PMB seeks to amend section 5 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 to include serious harm and to a child or vulnerable adult; to make consequential amendments to the Act; and for connected purposes.

In 2004, the government of the time introduced the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act. In the words of Baroness Scotland, in opening the Bill's second reading in the House of Lords, said: "The Bill represents the most radical overhaul of domestic violence legislation in 30 years. It reflects the fact that domestic violence is unacceptable, that victims must be protected and offenders punished."

Within the Act, the protection of victims was increased by the creation of an entirely new homicide offence of "causing or allowing the death of a child or vulnerable adult" where that person is a member of the same household, in Section 5. This means that under Section 5, members of a household who have frequent contact with a child under 16 or a vulnerable adult will be guilty of the offence if they either: caused the death; or allowed the death. With this legislation the prosecution does not have to prove which element of the offence. In other words 'caused' or 'allowed' deaths apply to the respective defendants. Suspects can be additionally charged with offences of murder and/or manslaughter if they are suspected of 'causing the death'.

A recent example of this legislation in practice is in the case of Baby P who died in August 2007. Peter's mother, Tracey Connelly, her boyfriend Steven Barker, and Jason Owen, Steven's brother, were all convicted of causing or allowing the death of a child, even though it was never established who dealt the fatal injury. This prosecution would not have been possible without the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004.

However, although this legislation has gone a long way to improving the prosecution of those who cause or allow the death of children and vulnerable adults, there is a need to extend this legislation to include those who inflict serious injury on victims. If a child survives or there is no cause of death, and the prosecution team cannot prove who caused the injuries or if the other party was aware of the injuries then there is no case. In fact at the earlier stages of the Baby P investigation there were problems establishing the cause of death despite all the horrific injuries. If a cause of death had not been established then a prosecution for other offences could have been very problematic or even impossible. Luckily a cause of death was eventually established and a conviction under the familial homicide legislation achieved. These scenarios face the same predicament that gave rise to the original legislations introduction in 2004. Without a change to include 'or serious injury' into the legislation there is no alternative viable charge.

In relation to the scenario that the child has not died but suffered grievous bodily harm, scrutiny was undertaken in London of all allegations of intra-familial grievous bodily harm between 2005 and 2008.



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There were 179 allegations of which 69

- a) Involved more than one suspect in a 'which of you did it?' scenario and
- b) Did not result in a prosecution

Additional analysis of these 69 cases acknowledged at least 39 that a prosecution would have been likely had the section 5 legislation been extended to include 'or serious injury'. Although this is partly theory, the analysis has identified a hefty number of cases, over 20% of allegations of grievous bodily harm, where no prosecution was possible under any legislation, including child cruelty/neglect and that 'offenders had not been brought to Justice'. This could possibly be rectified for future cases if the legislation were extended.

The original contributors to the legislation, in particular the NSPCC, wanted to include 'or serious injury' in the legislation but this was rejected in the final stages. They believed as do I, that a child who is left with severe brain damage has suffered as great an injustice as one which has been killed. During the Committee stage Baroness Scotland responded to the call for the inclusion of 'or serious injury', stating that this legislation was in itself ground breaking and that extension to serious harm cases might be considered in the future, when it had been seen how the new offence worked in practice. There was also an issue that 'serious harm' had not been clearly defined, however this is no longer the case.

Now that we know for certain the workability of the original legislation and its limitations, now is the time to set about extending the legislation to include serious injury so the protection of victims is further improved.



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National news in brief

Cameron's case against AV

David Cameron has given a speech against the Alternative Vote explaining why we should vote 'No' in the AV referendum on May 5th.

He outlined three big problems with AV:

1. It would lead to outcomes that are unfair
2. It is a voting system that is unclear
3. It means a political system that is unaccountable

"When it comes to our democracy, Britain shouldn't have to settle for anyone's second choice."

DWP unveils welfare reforms

The Welfare Reform Bill has been introduced to Parliament by David Cameron and Iain Duncan Smith. They say that these reforms will "deliver the most ambitious, fundamental and radical changes to the welfare system".

The Bill hopes to make savings of £5.5 billion in the next four years. A single 'universal credit' will replace the old system of separate benefits and payments to any one family will be capped at around £26,000.

Cameron said "never again will work be the wrong financial choice. We're finally going to make work pay."

US Treasury Secretary backs economic reforms

Tim Geithner, US Treasury Secretary has expressed his support for the steps that the Coalition Government has taken to deal with the deficit.

He praised his UK counterpart's "remarkable" strategy to restore sustainability.

He was also critical of the "deeply costly strategy" of "light touch" in place before the financial crisis, which he said was "designed consciously to pull financial activity from New York, Frankfurt and Paris to London".

Retail sales bounce back in January

Recent ONS figures demonstrate that retail sales have bounced back strongly last month following a poor pre-Christmas period.

Sales volumes rose 1.9% from December to January, the biggest jump on record and three times faster than analysts' expectations.

High-speed rail has support of business leaders

Sixty-nine business leaders have written to the Financial Times to highlight their support for the high speed rail plans which aim to link London, the Midlands and the North.

Government figures show that the scheme will provide 40,000 new jobs from construction work and regeneration around stations alone. The government will launch a consultation on high speed rail next week.

DCLG believes bloggers should have access to council meetings

Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for DCLG believes that Councils should open up their public meetings to local news 'bloggers' and increase filming of public discussions in order to accelerate transparency.

This move builds upon the Private Members Bill, Public Bodies Act 1960 which Mrs Thatcher sponsored 50 years ago and guaranteed press access to council meetings.



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Local news in brief

Development of Dorking

A discussion paper regarding the future development of Dorking has been published this week following an earlier consultation in February 2010, when comments from more than 350 people, businesses and other groups were submitted.

The paper for the Dorking Area Action Plan will form part of an eight-week consultation on development sites and potential ways of improving the town and its infrastructure and transport links.

To express your view call 01306 885001 and ask for the planning policy team, or email ldf@molevalley.gov.uk

SCC announces Council Tax freeze and cuts

At a full council meeting on 08.02.11, SCC announced a freeze in council tax (the first in Surrey's history) but they also made £60m worth of cuts.

SCC's grant has been cut by £37million; however the council was eager to not let this affect residents too much and have therefore maintained 89% of its budget to frontline services. An extra £5million has been given to children's services.

Councillors join the fight to oppose pay and display machines

In response to SCC's proposals to introduce pay and display machines on ten streets in Mole Valley, two different councillors have joined a campaign group to urge SCC to reconsider.

Chris Hunt, Conservative district councillor for Ashted village said, "We feel the charges would drive shoppers away and it seems crazy to charge more than in the district council car parks anyway."

A petition opposing the plans has been drawn up by Councillor Hunt, which is available in local shops. Independent Councillor Chris Townsend, a member of both the district and county councils, said he is planning to speak against the plans at a county council meeting on Tuesday.

Boxhill part of Olympic cyclist route

Jonathan Edwards announced at the National Trust centre on Box Hill the route for the London 2012 road race.

The route will start and finish in The Mall near Buckingham Palace and will enter Surrey from Hampton Court Bridge, taking in 130 miles of the county's roads in Dorking, Westcott, Mickleham and Leatherhead as well as several loops of Box Hill.

The 250km men's race will be on Saturday July 28th, 2012 and the women's 140km event will be the following day.

Malthouse pub converted into youth centre

The site for the former Malthouse pub in Mill Lane is set to be transformed into a youth and community centre, since the closure of the Mulberry Centre in Junction Road.

SCC has bought the former pub and Waitrose will fund the refurbishment. The centre will be open from 9am to 10pm Monday to Friday, 9am to 9pm Saturday and 10am to 6pm Sunday. For more information call Mark Haythorne on 01372276912.