



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 42; November 2010

Welcoming Note

Welcome to the November 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 November issue.

A word from the Chair

When Irish eyes are no longer smiling



Sounds utopian – a country in Western Europe where there is no income tax until earnings hit the equivalent of £15,500.00; the country is Ireland and probably accounts for the fact that the Irish people had accepted the first part of their austerity measures but are now beginning to resent the dictates of Germany, France and the European Central bank. At least they are being allowed to keep an unchanged Corporation Tax rate of 12.5% - had they not kept this rate, many international companies would have left and gone to Switzerland, Dubai, Singapore or Hong Kong.

We understand the U.K. is going to be very generous to Ireland and lend them £8 billion – lend may not be the right term, as it is unlikely to be repaid in the next decade. Our actions may not be just philanthropic, but as a result of U.K. banks exposure to not only Irish banks but to Irish Corporates (particularly in the property sector.) The total exposure is calculated to be £140 billion, which has led to suggestions that RBS may have to write down (not write off), some £10 billion next year and Lloyds (thanks to HBOS) will have to write down £1.6 billion.

With rumblings in Portugal and Spain, can the powerhouse of Europe, namely Germany, continue to support these ailing countries? The contagion does tend to indicate that for exporting nations, the weaker Euro is a good thing. Are holders of Sovereign debt again going to be bailed out by the taxpayer – if so, buying such investments will be a 'win win' situation with the European taxpayer forking out again.

On a more serious note, it was fascinating to read that David Laws – the eminent Liberal Democrat M.P. – stated that the tax structure was very bad for the middle classes – and remember that many public transport workers are very close to paying 40% tax on their incomes. The removal of family benefit from 2013 for those who have an earner paying 40% tax is not popular and the average person must wonder why they are being hit, whilst Ireland and Overseas Aid are being funded. As Mr. Laws says, the sooner we can encourage more industry by lowering direct taxation once more, the better. We all tend to aspire to an



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egalitarian society but I prefer to do it the American way, namely to aspire upwards so all can feel good and not by taxation to drag all downwards.

Much of the Labour Party will make strange bedfellows over the coming months as the debate about the 'Alternative Vote' referendum gathers pace. In the bill before Parliament at present – but not due to be in the referendum – is a clause making all electoral districts equal except for two of offshore island groups in Scotland. I was amused to see the Labour Peer, Lord Falconer, arguing against this proposal – perhaps he has forgotten that in 1838, The Chartists demands included “equal electoral districts”. The norm of 75,000 electors should see a reduction of 50 MPs in the Commons after the next General Election, which should be popular in the country.

Mr Colin Crispin
Chairman, Mole Valley Conservative Association
26 November 2010

News from the House of Commons

Coalition Government make a promising start



Following a commitment to work together to achieve a shared agenda, the Coalition Government has made good progress since May.

Key achievements so far:

May:

Tackling Britain's record deficit immediately

- The Chancellor set out details of how the Government will save over £6 billion from spending during this financial year, by cutting waste and low value programmes across Government.

Creating a National Security Council

- The Government established the council and appointed a National Security Adviser for the first time.

Scrapping ID cards

- The first piece of legislation the Coalition introduced was the bill to scrap ID cards.

Creating academy schools

- The Academies Act gave the Secretary of State the power to grant academy status to any school, marking the beginning of the creation of a world class school system in the UK.



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June:

Bringing Britain back from the brink

- The Emergency Budget set out plans to eliminate the current structural deficit by 2015-16.

Lifting lowest paid out of tax

- The personal allowance was raised so that 880,000 of the lowest paid were taken out of tax altogether.

Doubling pay for Armed Forces personnel in operation

- The Prime Minister announced that the allowance paid to service personnel for each day spent in conflict would be doubled, and backdated to 6 May, 2010.

Stopping garden grabbing

- Councils and communities are empowered to prevent 'garden grabbing' and to decide what types of homes are suitable for their area.

July:

Publishing top public sector pay

- The public can access details of senior Civil Servants and senior quango staff who earn more than £150,000.

Creating an Office of Tax Simplification

- Established to simplify the tax system.

August:

Ensuring efficiency across Government

- Sir Philip Green was asked to lead an external efficiency review into Government spending.

Fighting back against legal highs

- Giving the Government power to temporarily ban legal highs for one year, until a fuller investigation by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs can be completed.

Scrapping ContactPoint

- The database which held information on all the children in Britain was switched off.

September:

Cracking down on tax cheats

- A commitment is made to tackle tax avoidance, evasion and criminal attack. This will bring extra tax revenue of £7 billion a year by 2014-15.

Promise to keep council tax payments stable

- The Government pledged that council tax payers will not face unexpected hikes in payments for the life of this Parliament.



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Creating a green deal

- The Government's overhaul of energy efficiency in homes and small businesses could create up to a quarter of a million jobs by 2030.

October:

Publishing the Strategic Defence and Security Review

- The first review of its kind in twelve years, to ensure that our mission in Afghanistan is protected and that we emerge with a coherent defence capability in 2020.

Introducing a benefit cap

- By 2013, no family on out of work benefits will get more than the average family earn by going out to work.

Pledging funds for a pupil premium

- An extra £2.5 billion pledged towards a pupil premium which will encourage good schools to take on pupils from poorer backgrounds.

Creating a Regional Growth Fund

- A £1.4 billion fund which will target support at areas of the country that are particularly dependant on the public sector.

November:

Reforming higher education funding

- The Coalition Government will introduce a lower threshold of £6,000 and an upper cap of £9,000. All graduates will pay less per month than they do under the current system.

Capping immigration

- From April 2011, only 21,700 skilled and highly skilled workers from outside Europe will be allowed into the UK.

Reforming education

- The Secretary of State for Education set out plans to improve education standards. Cutting bureaucracy and refocusing on basics such as empowering teachers to maintain discipline are at the core of the strategy.

Approaching public health differently

- The Public Health budget is ringfenced in the Government's Public Health White Paper, which sets out how local authorities will put people's health and wellbeing at the heart of everything they do.

At a time when Government is confronting the bills from a decade of debt, these decisions have been taken to ensure that Government is moving forward to invest in the future rather than the bills of past failure.

Sir Paul Beresford

Member of Parliament for Mole Valley



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Report from Surrey County Council Winter weather preparations



The additional steps Surrey County Council has taken following last winter's severe weather conditions have come under test sooner rather than later.

The county council is encouraging residents, communities and businesses to work with them to keep Surrey moving. Residents are encouraged to use their community grit supply to treat local roads and pavements, remembering only to use as much as is necessary so that as many people benefit from the stock as possible.

The situation in Surrey:

- **A mountain of salt**

A stockpile of 13,000 tonnes of salt – this is 50 per cent more than last winter and will allow a further 21 miles of road to be treated;

- **A fleet of snow ploughs**

27 extra farmers with ploughs have been enlisted which brings the total to 35 volunteers;

- **An army of volunteers**

The South East 4x4 club's 90 volunteers will help people get around in harsh weather;

- **Increased efforts by the council**

The Highways Team have filled the 1,500 grit bins that belong to the council;

- **Increased efforts by schools**

Surrey's schools have made efforts to improve online services so that students can access work and advice online if their school has to close;

- **Working together**

Residents can help by looking out for elderly and vulnerable neighbours, clearing snow away from their own properties and using the grit supply responsibly.

The local authority sends the message that lessons learned from last winter's severe conditions alongside local people working together will make this winter easier for everyone.

Contacts:

Individual schools decide whether they will open, parents are advised to contact the school directly, use the schools own website, or visit

www.surreycc.gov.uk/education/schools.nsf/webschoolsbystatusall?openform

For more information on winter preparations please visit

www.surreycc.gov.uk/sccwebsite/sccwspages.nsf/LookupWebPagesByTITLE_RTF/Prepared+for+winter?opendocument

County Councillor Helyn Clack
Member for Dorking Rural



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Report from Guildford Borough Council Finding necessary savings



The process of setting the borough council's budget has begun in earnest this month, with the council still needing to find very substantial savings of £1.8m to balance the books in 2011/12. This is one of the most demanding targets in many years and we face a similar challenge in future years.

Guildford, like other local authorities, will suffer a significant reduction in formula grant from central Government next year, as part of sharing the pain of cuts outlined in the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review. Although the figures have not been finalised yet, officers have assumed that the grant will be reduced by 16.7%, equating to around £1.3m in cash terms next year. If this was to be replaced through council tax (which is not being proposed), then the Borough Council precept would need to increase by over 15% next year to make up the shortfall.

Other major impacts on the budget include the opening of the replacement venue for the Civic Hall, which will require some council subsidy, together with a significant increase in employer pension contributions for the pension fund. On the plus side, the council is in the process of outsourcing the management of its leisure facilities, which is likely to result in considerable savings and it is working hard to rationalise and streamline council services in order to take costs out and avoid placing a further burden on local taxpayers.

As a Conservative controlled council with an excellent record on council tax, we are determined to find the savings necessary, but it will be hard work for both the officers and councillors to get there. Watch this space!

Cllr Andrew French
Deputy Leader, Guildford Borough Council



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Feature Article

Early Day Motions or “Parliamentary graffiti”



Recently Paul Beresford MP has tabled written questions to reveal the cost Parliament incurs to administer Early Day Motions (EDMs) and to ascertain their value.

The Early Day Motion is a much used device to publicise the views of single issue groups. Supporters are asked to write to their MP, or more often send a circular letter or card on an issue of the group's concern. The volume of letters and cards can be considerable and mean that the MP has to divert valuable time to assembling an answer and going to the expense of writing back. To make matters worse at least one single issue group has been found sending cards in the name of constituents without their knowledge.

Constituents are often under the impression that an EDM will be debated in Parliament and that it may bring about a change in the law. This is so far from the truth that EDMs are commonly known as “Parliamentary graffiti”. Unless they are used as a stopping device on secondary legislation, they are never debated and therefore obviously never change the law. At best an EDM can attract public and media interest for a campaign. At worst they are trite and gather little or no support.

During the last session there were approximately 11,200 EDMs. In an average session the majority of EDMs will attract only one or two signatures. In exceptional circumstances, six or seven EDMs may reach over 200 signatures. By convention, Ministers and Government Whips, Parliamentary Private Secretaries and The Speaker and his Deputies will not usually sign an EDM.

Many MPs, including Paul Beresford refuse to sign any EDMs. If the constituent feels the matter covered by the EDM is of value and needs Government consideration, he asks the constituent to write, expressing their own personal feelings and experience, along the lines of the EDM and requesting the letter be passed to the Minister related to the area under discussion. This means the Minister will see his letter, the constituent's letter and sign a considered reply. The chance for real influence is much greater than an EDM.

EDMs are expensive to process and to be regularly printed. The estimated cost to the House of Commons of administering and processing Early Day Motions in financial year 2009-10 was approximately £1 million. Paul Beresford is on the Finance and Services Committee that at the moment is looking for savings in the administration of the House of Commons. The Committee will pass its recommendation to the House of Commons Commission for consideration. The Commission is chaired by the Speaker and Paul Beresford is a member as well. There are sure to be changes to enable savings on EDMs. In Paul Beresford's opinion, removal of EDMs would be the logical solution; however some MPs sign a considerable number of EDMs and use this as an example of their diligence on behalf of their constituents.



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National news in brief

Students protest against finance reform

In early November the Coalition Government announced a reform package to change the current system of tuition fees, delivering a fairer system for all students that is sustainable for the UK.

The progressive reforms will replace a large part of state funding for teaching, giving way to graduate contributions as well as benefitting the poorest 25% of students due to revised interest rates on the loans.

The announcements triggered debate among politicians, students and teachers. There have been a number of protests in London and other university cities since Wednesday 10 November.

Although the most recent protest was more peaceful, the earlier protests will be remembered for the violence and destruction a minority inflicted.

British economy out of the danger zone

The latest forecast from the Office of Budgetary Responsibility (OBR) has confirmed that the British recovery is on track.

The OBR makes independent assessments of the public finances and the economy. Growth this year was revised upwards from 1.2% to 1.8%, and growth for 2011 was revised down slightly from 2.3% to 2.1%.

The Coalition Government's decisions in the October Spending Review meant that the OBR revised downward its forecast of public sector job losses, from 490,000 to 330,000.

Chancellor George Osborne responded to the positive economic news in the House of

Commons and welcomed the confirmation that the British economy is rebalancing.

A clear, rational approach to immigration

Government plans to bring the UK's immigration system under control, involves taking action on all routes of entry into the country whilst protecting businesses and institutions which are vital to our economy.

The Home Secretary, Theresa May, announced plans to take action on economic, student and family visas as well as the link between temporary migration and settlement.

The Government has worked closely with businesses in designing the new system and have made it very clear that during an economic recovery, employers should look at those already residing in Britain and are unemployed.

EU lock

The Government has introduced a new bill to Parliament which if passed will provide an EU lock to ensure that any further handover of powers from Britain to the EU will require a national referendum.

The referendum will consult the public before handing over further powers. The EU Bill will place the common law principle that Parliament is sovereign on a statutory footing so that EU law can only take effect in the UK by an Act of Parliament.

The Coalition Government fully understands that people in Britain feel disconnected from the EU and the introduction of the sovereignty clause will mean the British people must give consent for any changes to go ahead.



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Local news in brief

Guildford gets festive

Around 7,000 people visited Guildford on Thursday 18 November to share the festive mood.

Visitors watched Boyzone's Shane Lynch switch on the Christmas lights from the Guildhall balcony and later enjoyed a spectacular fireworks display provided by the White Lion Walk shopping centre.

MP supports Sainsbury's fundraising

Mole Valley's MP recently visited a local supermarket to learn about its work with the community.

Sir Paul Beresford went to Sainsbury's Leatherhead store to support a fundraising day for Norton House.

The property, owned by the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association, houses injured service personnel and their families.

St Martin's Walk sets good green example

A Surrey shopping centre has earned praise for its efforts to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.

St Martin's Walk in Dorking was presented with a Green Apple Environmental Award at a ceremony at the House of Commons, Monday 15 November.

Prime Minister awards local group

Health workers who set up Central Surrey Health have received the Prime Minister's first Big Society Award in celebration of their innovation and commitment.

The award was launched on Monday 22 November to recognise successful examples of the Government's Big Society in action. Central Surrey Health is an employee-owned health provider which runs Dorking and Leatherhead hospitals, as well as other health services in the region.

Make nominations at

www.number10.gov.uk/big societyawards