



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 33; January 2010

Welcoming Note

Welcome to the January 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 January issue.

A word from the Chair

Inflation – the latest threat to the UK?



In my comments in January 2009 I wrote of the problems which could arise with the funding of our public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR) – at that time the borrowing requirement was way down below the £180billion that was mentioned in December 2009.

Today we are told UK inflation is now 2.9% which is higher than anticipated but perhaps not a great surprise given the £200billion of quantitative easing (or buying UK monetary investments with newly printed money).

Over the past months I have urged us to maintain a property owning democracy – I would suggest that over the past thirty years the major influences to achieve an even more egalitarian society were the dropping of the top level of tax to 40% and, most importantly, the sale of council houses to their tenants. This last move provided the foothold on to the ladder which enabled the many to enjoy the security of owning their own home. It also indicated a change in the mentality of the average citizen; when I lived in Texas people drove past a nice house and said to themselves “if we work hard then one day we may own something similar”. The attitude in the UK was just changing from driving past a nice home and saying “if we tax them heavily they will not be able to afford such a home”.

An egalitarian society needs to aspire upwards – we do not want to level out downwards. I thought that even under Blair this was still the ethos but under Brown the old idea of hammering any signs of success seems to be back in vogue.

I hope that finance committees of all local authorities will bite the bullet and cut costs and address the fact that many, if not all, are running unsustainable pension funds for their employees. Local Government and State pensions cannot, in the longer term, be funded by current taxation or borrowing; particularly with an ageing population.

Roll on May!

Mr Colin Crispin
Chairman, Mole Valley Conservative Association



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News from the House of Commons

Supporting ex-UK service personnel



Last July, I introduced a debate in Westminster Hall on the relationship between UK-wide organisation Combat Stress, which treats ex-UK service personnel suffering post-traumatic stress disorder derived from combat, and the NHS.

Westminster Hall adjournment debates allow MPs to consider issues of local or personal interest which rarely have time to be debated in the main Chamber of the House of Commons. MPs can discuss a variety of issues and receive a response from a government Minister. As Headley Court Rehabilitation Centre is based in the Mole Valley Constituency, I had a particular interest in both the subject of combat stress and the organisation Combat Stress.

Recently it appears that both Government Ministers and Shadow Ministers have realised the importance of offering support to those suffering from combat stress. In a written ministerial statement, Mike O'Brien, Minister at the Department of Health, announced a package of measures to support service personnel who have received serious injuries while on active service.

Grant funding will also be given to the Combat Stress organisation to work directly with mental health trusts to ensure they provide services which are appropriate for and accessible to military veterans.

I am paying a visit to both Headley Court and Combat Stress in the near future and will be joined by members of the Shadow Cabinet.

Sir Paul Beresford

Member of Parliament for Mole Valley

Report from Guildford Borough Council

Budget Preparation



Budget preparation for the financial year 2010/11 is well under way and, thanks to careful stewardship, we are planning to increase the council tax by just 1.75% in the year ahead.

This year has been incredibly tough for the council, with income from our car parks and the Spectrum Leisure Centre down significantly. However, we have also delivered savings of £2m in the current financial year, recognising our obligation to minimise the burden on taxpayers.

This year's budget has been equally tough and the council's staff have had to share in the pain, with a 0% pay rise earmarked for the year ahead. We are also shaving an additional £308,000 from the council's staffing costs and generating an extra £391,000 through increases in car parking costs. Future years are not looking rosy either, with savings of £8m required in the next three years. Put in context, a 1% increase in the council tax will raise about £70,000!



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Nevertheless, we have been delighted to have retained our record of setting below inflation increases since coming into power in 2003 and have every intention of maintaining that record.

Like all local authorities in Surrey, collecting refuse and recycling the severe winter conditions up to mid January has been tough. Services were effectively suspended for almost a fortnight, coinciding with the post-Christmas collection period. However, we are slowly catching up and are now running a normal service again, although the collection volumes remain high. Let's hope that the rest of the winter is more benign!

Cllr Andrew French
Deputy Leader, Guildford Borough Council

Report from Mole Valley District Council

Mayor or Strong Leader?



Legislation has been passed by the Government requiring your Council to opt for one of two governance models, that of being led by a strong leader, or by a Mayor. If our council doesn't reach a decision by the end of December 2010, after taking into account the views of the electorate, we stay with the present system.

Since 2008, Mole Valley has been governed by a leader chosen by the ruling group, and an executive, appointed by the leader. The leader can be removed by full council at any time.

Under the mayoral model, the people of Mole Valley would elect a mayor, in a separate election, and he or she would hold office for a four year term. The Mayor would then appoint their own chosen executive from amongst the elected councillors.

So far, we have thirteen elected mayors in England. Living near to London, we have all, I'm sure, followed the Ken cavalcade and latterly the Boris bravura, some of you may remember the "gorilla" from Darlington, and Peter Davies, an English Democrat, was elected in Doncaster in June 2009. It must be borne in mind that ninety per cent of English council seats are held by Conservative, Labour or Liberal Democrat councillors.

Well, what's the way forward in Mole Valley? An elected mayor would presumably offer superior political legitimacy. But are mayors a solution to the perceived problems of local government? No new powers or responsibilities will be accorded to elected mayors. Perhaps, they will just be expected to act differently. Surely what is most needed is a re-assessment of the relationship between local and central government.

If you have any views or comments, write to Democratic Services at Mole Valley District Council, Pippbrook, Dorking, RH4 1SJ, or e-mail leaderormayor@molevalley.gov.uk

Cllr John Chandler
Mole Valley District Council



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Feature Article

Surrey County Council puts an extra £½ million into pothole repairs



Sir Paul welcomed Surrey Council's plans for extra spending to repair road damage caused by the recent adverse weather conditions. Surrey County Council is taking immediate action to tackle the increase in potholes following the severe weather by investing an additional £½ million into pothole repairs.

Leader of the council, Dr Andrew Povey, announced the additional funding saying: "For the past week our highways teams have been working around the clock tackling the snow. Now that most of the snow has cleared our top priority is to tackle as a matter of urgency the potholes that have been forming all over the county. We are aiming to fix at least 200 potholes a day until the job is done This extra money is on top of the annual budget for pothole repairs."

During such severe weather, the road becomes brittle because of the cold, and cracks can develop. If water gets in and freezes it expands and so makes a bigger hole and once the surface is broken deterioration is very quick. The repeated freezing and thawing process over such a prolonged period only makes this worse.



The council has more than 25 repair teams carrying out the repairs and will bring in additional contractors if necessary. Urgent repairs are being dealt with quickly then 'A' roads will be prioritised as they carry the most traffic. Once the A road network is in an acceptable condition the teams will work through other roads.

The General Manager of Polesden Lacey expressed her concern last week about the deterioration Polesden Lacey Road had suffered, leaving the road virtually impassable. With 1000 visitors to the estate each day and hundreds working or living there, it is vital that such repairs receive urgent attention.