



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

Welcoming Note

Welcome to the July 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 July issue.

A word from the Chair



Our sympathies go to the family of the Liberal Democrat Councillor Anne Howarth and Chairman of Mole Valley District Council who died at the end of July, a very popular lady with all political parties.

Another very busy month for us across Mole Valley and I am delighted in the way that Mole Valley branches have responded to requests to fundraise to support our District Campaign for 2012. It has been a good opportunity for me to get out and meet members at these events and they have all been good fun with excellent food!

Before the first Executive at the end of July we had a good turn out in support of our Leatherhead North Campaign, a lovely warm evening to go out and hear the views of local people. What do they want to see improved in the neighbourhood, how to use the new online highways reporting system, schools, and of course national topics were part of the discussions we had on the doorstep as we went around the town.

We then gathered as an Executive to agree association matters and share with our colleagues, chairs of branches, councillors and activists, the strategy we are developing for our campaign for 2012 and the financial support we will need in order to fund it. I was very pleased to hear from so many of the Executive their views and advice; the meeting was extremely helpful both to us as officers and to our staff at South Street.

Members seem to be clear in their support for our current office organisation, particularly when we are campaigning on an annual basis. Gone are the days when we could campaign every four or five years and fundraise in between. After this year's nationwide referendum we will see elections every year for at least the next four years:

2012 District Elections 1/3 out across the District

2012 Police Commissioner Elections Countywide

2013 County Council Elections Countywide



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

2014 European Elections Nationwide
2015 General Election

This means that we will all be voting every year and all polling stations will be open.

This level of campaigning will cost more and that means we need more members and more funds!

I hope next month to tell you more about the Police Commissioner Elections, how we will participate in selecting a Conservative Candidate, and how we will be expected to support the campaign.

Have a lovely Summer Break for August.

Councillor Helyn Clack
Chairman, Mole Valley Conservative Association
July 2011

News from the House of Commons Gypsy and Traveller Planning



Back in April, Communities Secretary Eric Pickles announced proposals for a more localist and fairer way of providing sites for travellers, building on earlier commitments to strengthen measures to tackle abuse of the planning system. According to DCLG, in the new proposed planning guidelines, the Green Belt and countryside will have more robust protection, local councils will have more discretion, and local planning authorities will have a stronger hand in supporting appropriate development. Central guidance to councils on compulsorily purchasing land for travellers sites will be removed, and top-down Whitehall planning rules, which Ministers believe were counterproductive, will be abolished.

Ministers believe planning regulations have seriously harmed community relations over the last few years, by imposing targets for traveller sites on local councils, increasing the number of unauthorised sites, and compelling councils to encroach onto the Green Belt. At the same time the old planning rules created a perception of special treatment for some groups, undermining the notion of 'fair play' in the planning system and further harming community cohesion.

There was recently a debate in Westminster Hall on the 13th July which was proposed by Priti Patel, Conservative Member for Witham, to discuss Gypsy and Traveller Planning. Below is the speech that I made during the debate:

One thing that I like about the consultation is the sentence: "Many people think that current planning policy treats traveller sites more favourably than it does other housing and that it is easier for one group of people to gain planning permission particularly on Green Belt land."



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

Hear, hear. In my area, Surrey, 87% of the land is green belt. The situation is difficult for Travellers and Traveller sites, and it is also difficult for the settled community. My constituency has a number of official Gypsy sites. There are few or no problems and the Gypsies are part of the community. Everything is settled and clear. We have two planning authorities in my constituency, Mole Valley and Guildford. Because we are close to Epsom Downs we have trouble, particularly with Gypsies who come in from across a little patch of water, with a distinct accent—not mine; not even similar. They come and squat.

The Travellers tend to use expert legal advice. There are a couple of agencies involving solicitors that are expert in such matters, and they are paid for by Travellers' groups. They enable the Travellers to become the Artful Dodgers of the planning system. One of the techniques, in some of the better areas of my constituency, is to purchase a patch of land where there is no hope of any form of planning permission for residence. Either Travellers or people pretending to be Travellers make those applications, forcing the locals to panic, club together and purchase the land at an outrageous price. If enforcement was sure, and those local people knew that the inevitable refusal of the application would be followed by enforcement that really happened, those scams would fall apart.

The second technique that I want to mention is squatting, something which the Government are, I understand, looking at. Squatting in rural areas is done by Travellers. They do not squat in buildings, but they bring their buildings with them and squat on the land with caravans and so on. In my area, they also squat on the land with their animals—horses. The difficulty is that at the moment when the bailiffs arrive, after a court order has been obtained, at least one mare, if not everyone in the paddock, is about to give birth. A human would be put in an ambulance and whisked off to a maternity ward, but if the bailiffs approach a mare that is about to give birth, the rules apparently require the animal to be left there. Whether a birth happens or not is highly speculative—I am quite sure that it often does not. However, what happens is that some of the farmers in my constituency—I know of one in particular—cannot use the land, because it is occupied by a couple of dozen gypsy horses.

When, finally, enforcement happens, the mess that is generally left behind is unbelievable. Perhaps the way the site is left could be included in consideration of the matter, so the people pushed off by the enforcement order pay for the removal, clean-up and restoration of the site. That would be helpful and might encourage many of those who cover the site with gravel and other things not to do so.

The third technique is to buy the land, generally with cash, from whatever source. That generally happens at the weekend, when the people arrive with caravans, trucks, bulldozers, loads of gravel, piping and so on. By the end of Sunday, they are installed. The electricity and water are tapped in, whether legally or not, and then the nonsense starts—hopeless applications, refusals, appeals and more refusals. To be fair, the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol has been quite good in my area and has backed the local authority, mainly. However, when the enforcement notices are delivered, there is an



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

appeal against the notice. Then, as the Minister is obviously well aware, another, subtly different, application is put in. On and on it continues.

As has been mentioned, the people concerned generally do not pay council tax or taxes. They use the local system—the schools, health authorities, and so on—and the arguments start. The neighbourhood barneys are horrendous—there are accusations of theft and burglary—but I must be fair; I am sure that in one case, although the people who committed the crime might have been associated with the people on the site, they were not people from the site. Nevertheless, there is, to put it mildly, community disharmony.

I want to outline two cases. The first is in Guildford on the A246. It is a Greenfield pasture, which is fenced in. There have been three applications and three refusals, and at least two failed appeals. There are two derelict caravans on the site. As one hon. Member has mentioned, the council are wondering whether it should bother with its enforcement notice, because the cost will be astronomical and it can imagine that, once it gets part of the way there, another application will be made, and it will be back to square one. We need that side of enforcement to be pushed.

Anyone trying to sell or improve their property finds a big sign on the A246, which is the main road, saying “Romany Stables”. Opportunities to sell property have fallen in number because of that apparent threat. The situation is becoming disgraceful.

The second case involves a Gypsy who does not live in Mole Valley. He lives many miles away and used to—he probably still does—drive a lovely Rolls-Royce. He bought greenfield pasture land in the green belt. He sold it to his wife, who sold it to her cousin, who sold it too, and on it goes. Finally, a small group moved in there in the way in which I have described: gravel, electricity and water were built in over the weekend. There were five caravans, one of which looks like two mobile homes linked together. There was the usual pattern of enforcement notices, appeals and planning applications. The last appeal was quite a clever one. The order was to allow temporary accommodation, while the local authority looked for alternative sites over a period of time.

My concern is my local authority. I am worried that, having looked—not very well and in a limited area—and having weighed up the fact that a sympathy that has no grounds in planning is being generated, the local authority may use a sympathy consideration, not a planning consideration, and allow the application on a greenfield site to go ahead. If someone such as the local farmer had built a house on that site, it would have been bulldozed—even though his children go to the local school and use the local hospital and doctor's service—but that has not happened in this case because, as insinuated by the first sentence I read out, such groups are perceived to have an opportunity and a right that the rest of us do not. I ask the Minister to have a look before my local authority stubs its toes and gives permission, to the fury of many of us.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Robert Neill, gave the government's response to the debate:



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

Robert Neill: It is important to put the issue in context and say that we are in the process of consulting. I therefore hope that my hon. Friends will understand if I am at pains to ensure that the Government do not at this stage prejudge the consultation. We are consulting because we recognise that there is a problem. I appreciate, from the observations of a number of hon. Members today, that there is a sense of frustration, but I hope that they, too, will accept that, inevitably, the process of legislation cannot be gone through overnight. Some of the measures that the Government are taking to tackle this issue require primary legislation, which is currently in the other place. In addition, it is necessary to consult before we make changes to policy by way of guidance or regulation.

The Government thinks that it is more important to ensure that we get this right than attempt to rush it. In the past, things have gone wrong. We do not want a situation like the one that sadly we saw occur under the previous Government, in which the number of caravans on unauthorised developments increased from 887 in 1997 to 2,395 in 2010. No doubt the policies then were well-intentioned, but they were not thought through. We are determined to think this through, get it right and make it stick.

Gavin Williamson: I commend the Minister's keenness to ensure that everything is run professionally and well in his Department, but I am curious about why the consultation period has been extended. Twelve weeks is the usual consultation period. Why did the Department feel the need to extend that?

Robert Neill: The Department took the view—this is not a unique case—that sometimes it is better to be a little more generous and sensible in consultation than to rush at fences. I am sure that by the time my hon. Friend has been in the House for as long as my hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Sir Paul Beresford), he will understand that, sometimes, taking things at a gentle pace gets a better end result. We want this to work, and the reason why we want it to work was encapsulated in the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart). It is essential that we have a system that is both fair and workable in the interests of the settled community and of the Traveller community, because it is right to say that the vast majority of Travellers are law-abiding. The majority of Travellers want to live on authorised sites and have social issues that need to be addressed, so it is as much in their interests as anyone else's that we get something that is fair.

There is a very strong feeling that there is unfairness in the current system, which has caused the Government to take a number of steps to deal with the problem, all of which have been legitimately highlighted by my hon. Friends. Let me make clear what the Government seek to do. I know that time will not permit me to deal with every one of the legitimate points raised by my hon. Friends, but I undertake to write to them setting out some of the specific details for which they have asked.

I start with what the Government is doing, given the background. There is a real problem. There is a genuine sense in the country that the system is not fair and that it works against everyone's interests. What are the Government seeking to do? First, we are committed to abolishing the regional strategies under the Localism Bill, which clearly requires primary legislation. It is frustrating for many that it



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

should be necessary to take decisions in accordance with existing policies until they are revoked, but that is the law. When dealing with planning casework, Ministers have to act in a quasi-judicial fashion, but we are taking steps to abolish the regional strategies and the targets that go with them.

The Localism Bill also contains the primary legislation necessary to provide stronger enforcement powers to tackle unauthorised development. The Bill also contains important proposals to limit the opportunities for the abuse of retrospective planning permission. My hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley and others have referred to that important point. We are determined to ensure that retrospective permission is available if there has been a genuine mistake but not in cases of cynical manipulation, in which members of any community may be involved—I have come across cynical developers, too. We are taking steps to deal with that.

Simon Kirby: Does the Minister recommend that the consultation on legislation to deal with squatting should also cover unauthorised encampments? It seems to me that the two are closely linked.

Robert Neill: I hope that all who feel strongly on planning and on squatting will take part in the consultation. Indeed, I hope that all who have spoken in this debate, as well as getting their contributions on the record, will take the opportunity within the extended period of consultation to write on behalf of themselves and of their constituents. The Government take the matter seriously.

We have taken measures to ensure that supply problems are sensibly addressed. We have secured £60 million to help councils and other registered providers build new Traveller sites. The new homes bonus will apply to new Traveller sites to incentivise local authorities. We are applying the Mobile Homes Act 1983 to authorised Traveller sites to give Travellers who play by the rules a better sense of security. At the same time, we seek to deal with areas of abuse. We also want to deal with the fact that, at present, it is possible both to seek retrospective planning permission and to appeal against an enforcement notice. By manipulating the two processes, it is possible to extend the time for compliance almost indefinitely. The Localism Bill will remove that option and close that loophole. We are also considering strengthening enforcement powers.

The hon. Member for Derby North referred to the temporary stop notices introduced by the previous Government. They were a step in the right direction, but I know that concerns have been expressed about how effective they are in practice. We need to consider how they operate. It is critical that local planning authorities have implemented proper plans to deal with the needs of their areas. We are giving them the ability to assess what that need is. Hon. Members have spoken about the tests that should be applied, which is precisely what the consultation is for. We want to hear people's views on the appropriateness of one test or another, and I hope that Members will feed their views into the consultation.

It is a protection for local authorities to have an up-to-date plan in relation to all planning matters, including the provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites. Our approach, which involves an assessment of need and of supply over a reasonable period of years, will treat Gypsy and Traveller needs in a way



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

that is much more closely aligned to that for housing generally. That greater symmetry of approach is part of our attempt to secure greater fairness for both sides. A number of steps have already been taken.

I appreciate the useful points that have been made by hon. Members, and I shall write in detail on the constituency points that they raised. I also encourage them to participate in the consultation. Once the consultation is closed, the Government will want carefully to consider the points that have been raised on this significant matter. It is therefore our intention to put in place a replacement circular, if we conclude that that is the best way forward, although one option proposed in the consultation is not to replace it. Once we have come to a conclusion, we intend to move swiftly.

Sir Paul Beresford
Member of Parliament for Mole Valley

Report from Surrey County Council



At the last Surrey County Council meeting before the summer recess, the Deputy Leader David Hodge told the chamber that Surrey CC was making savings amounting to over £200 million pounds; the equivalent to £200,000 per day. Stripping away the previous Labour Government's over centralised and bureaucratic target setting, top down, patronising agendas and freeing up local government to make decisions based on the needs of local people. He

also added that all this is being done whilst protecting frontline services.

I have been out and about recently visiting volunteers who help young people get into the job market and out of trouble. Breaking the cycle of state dependency, giving them a future and pride in themselves, rather than relying on the great patriarchal state of government. I am greatly encouraged by these charitable organisations that have taken the time and care to help some very difficult young souls. Yet I can see that they are very dependent on the state themselves to provide them with the funding they need to carry out their caring roles.

If we are to encourage the Big Society in our communities, we will have to be bold in trying to encourage people to give more to support these organisations. It is difficult encouraging an organisation to take up residence in our neighbourhoods with youngsters resolved to escaping their drug and crime ridden childhood, it scares us; worrying about what kind of influence this might bring to our own children. But if we do not succeed in breaking the cycle then we will perpetuate it. According to Ken Clarke, Justice Secretary, it costs the state a great deal more to keep these youngsters in prisons than it does to try and rehabilitate them into our lives.

Surrey County Council is about to launch its youth transformation plan, which represents the Youth Service and the Youth Justice Service in Surrey and will delegate funds to local committees to provide youth services to young people locally. Not all boroughs and districts have the same needs and children and young adults need to find the services where they are provided.



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

It will be interesting to see how councillors decide to spend this funding in Mole Valley.

County Councillor Helyn Clack
Member for Dorking Rural

Report from Guildford Borough Council



Earlier in the year, the Government set out proposals for the reform of the council house finance system in England. It will result in local authorities like Guildford 'acquiring' a multi-million pound debt, in return for the ability to support the management, maintenance and development of our housing stock from the rental income we generate.

The price of the freedom to set our own council house rents and to determine how much to invest in the future is £190.5m, which is the amount that Guildford Borough Council will need to pay the Department for Communities and Local Government when the reforms come into effect in March 2012. We have no choice but to agree to this arrangement, although we believe that it will be cost-effective in the long run, as the rents that Guildford earns from its stock will increase over time, enabling the council to pay down the loan. It will also give back to authorities like Guildford the responsibility for managing its own housing stock without excessive central government interference.

As a result, Guildford will need to borrow for the first time in well over a decade, as the Borough has been debt-free since the 1990s. We are working closely with our advisers to ensure that the financing is cost effective and we are also securing a credit rating from Moody's, one of the leading rating agencies, to ensure that our borrowing costs are minimised.

On a different subject, Guildford Borough Council has been driving the development of a new credit union for Surrey, called Surrey Save. The new financial institution, which enables people on low incomes to access affordable credit and keeps them away from loan sharks, has attracted start-up funding from local authorities and other organisations all over Surrey and, last month, it secured authorisation from FSA. Therefore, the credit union will shortly be opening its doors to the public. This is a tremendous achievement, which has taken over a decade to make a reality, but it will be a really valuable service for the lower paid.

Cllr Andrew French
Deputy Leader, Guildford Borough Council

Report from Mole Valley District Council

Bright Future for Services in Dorking



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011



Better services for the elderly and a whole raft of new facilities for the voluntary are moving forward thanks to Conservatives on Mole Valley District Council.

Whilst alarmist claims have been made by the opposition that day care services for the elderly in Dorking were being closed, the reality is that Conservative Councillors have been at the heart of plans to secure services for the dwindling number of people who were using the Council run service and help the voluntary generally.

As a result, fitting out works have now begun to allow an improved provision of care and hot cooked meals will be provided, thanks to a ground-breaking partnership between the Council and the operators at the Dorking Christian Centre, in the heart of the town centre.

Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group, Cllr Chris Hunt explains: - "The Council is delighted to say that because of the partnership between the Council and the Dorking Christian Centre, a wider range of food will be available. This will be in a town centre building a level walk from the shops. In addition, we have pledged that the space freed up at the Mayflower Centre will be made available for charities or voluntary groups. We thought that this would be a good use of the accommodation, because of the fact that not only is this type of space not normally made available for such groups, but also because it is adjacent to the Dorking CAB offices and so it has the potential to create a vibrant hub of activity in the town. We can now confirm that the council has received many expressions of interest from groups both local and national. This is going to create a truly win-win scenario – a win for those who will have a better range of food for a mid-day meal and a win for anyone involved with those groups in the voluntary sector. Cllr Vivienne Michael has been heavily involved in this project, and we all share her excitement as this major step forward is now being progressed. I am so glad that the Council did not stop this scheme as the Lib Dems had wanted."

What a Year – Mole Valley Council performance shows major workload on behalf of local residents

1,226 Planning Applications.

117,274 telephone calls answered.

Over 46,000 benefit payments processed.

16,980 bus passes issued.

147,847 community alarm calls answered.



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

These are some of the facts included in this year's annual review report which were considered by Full Council on 19th July.

It has been a busy year and the fact that residents were able to recycle an average of 55% of waste over the year and the Council cut its carbon emissions at the Pippbrook council offices by 16% and reduced energy use at the Dorking Sports Centre by 10%, shows that being efficient saves energy and money.

Leader of the Council Cllr James Friend says "This report is a credit to staff and residents of Mole Valley, and I am grateful to all councillors for their work in helping to stretch challenging targets, scrutinize performance and help deliver these excellent results for local residents."

Cllr Chris Hunt

Ashted Village Ward, Mole Valley District Council

Mole Valley Conservative Councillors new Communications Officer

Feature Article

BSkyB, News International and the Murdoch family



In the adjacent constituency to Mole Valley, of Esher and Walton where Milly Dowler's family live, we have watched the unveiling events with considerable interest and disgust. Over the last few weeks I have received a phenomenal number of emailed letters regarding News International, the Murdoch family and a vote on BSkyB. Many constituents interest seems to have been expressed through a standard letter from a political website, in which most were asking for a vote on a motion.

Although, many were shocked by the revelations that 'phone-hacking' is common practice amongst many newspaper publications, some will not be surprised. In fact as early as 2006, the Information Commissioner, Richard Thomas, put a special report before Parliament titled "What price privacy?" which exposed an extensive illegal trade in confidential personal information and made recommendations to government and industry in an effort to halt a serious threat to individuals' privacy.

'What price privacy?' reported that 305 journalists had been identified during Operation Motorman as customers driving the illegal trade in confidential personal information. The following table shows the publications identified from documentation seized during the Operation Motorman investigation, how many transactions each publication was positively identified as being involved in and how many of their journalists (or clients acting on their behalf) were using these services. It should be noted that while the table is dominated by tabloid publications they are far from being alone. Certain magazines feature prominently and some broadsheets are also represented.



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

| Publication | Number of transactions positively identified | Number of journalists/clients using services |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Daily Mail | 952 | 58 |
| Sunday People | 802 | 50 |
| Daily Mirror | 681 | 45 |
| Mail on Sunday | 266 | 33 |
| News of the World | 228 | 23 |
| Sunday Mirror | 143 | 25 |
| Best magazine | 134 | 20 |
| Evening Standard | 130 | 1 |
| The Observer | 103 | 4 |
| Daily Sport | 62 | 4 |
| The People | 37 | 19 |
| Daily Express | 36 | 7 |
| Weekend Magazine (Daily Mail) | 30 | 4 |
| Sunday Express | 29 | 8 |
| The Sun | 24 | 4 |
| Closer Magazine | 22 | 5 |
| Sunday Sport | 15 | 1 |
| Night and Day (Mail on Sunday) | 9 | 2 |
| Sunday Business News | 8 | 1 |
| Daily Record | 7 | 2 |
| Saturday (Express) | 7 | 1 |
| Sunday Mirror Magazine | 6 | 1 |
| Real Magazine | 4 | 1 |
| Woman's Own | 4 | 2 |
| The Sunday Times | 4 | 1 |
| Daily Mirror Magazine | 3 | 2 |
| Mail in Ireland | 3 | 1 |
| Daily Star | 2 | 4 |
| The Times | 2 | 1 |
| Marie Claire | 2 | 1 |
| Personal Magazine | 1 | 1 |



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

| | | |
|--------------|---|---|
| Sunday World | 1 | 1 |
|--------------|---|---|

The recommendations in the report sought to tackle the illegal trade in personal information on a number of levels. The main recommendation was the introduction of a two year prison sentence but it also called for the key players to take steps to reduce demand and raise awareness of the problem. Yet the government of the time did nothing.

Turning to more recent events, although many of you, I am sure, have been following it in the newspapers, a series of disclosures were published about the way in which the *News of the World* had allegedly obtained information in the period 2002 to 2006, not only by hacking the phones of celebrities, but by paying police officers and hacking the phones of members of the public – including Milly Dowler and her family, and relatives of the 7/7 bombing victims. On the 7th July, the Prime Minister announced that there would be public inquiries into the police's investigation into the newspaper, and into wider issues relating to the media, while Rupert Murdoch announced the immediate closure of the *News of the World*. The paper published its last issue on Sunday July 10th and this was followed by NewsCorp formally withdrawing its undertakings in lieu on Monday July 11th and a number of resignations including Rebecca Brooks, Chief Executive of News International. This in turn led to the Secretary of State's announcement to the House a little while later that same day that he had decided to refer the bid to the Competition Commission.

Despite a debate being called by the opposition during their 'Opposition day' on the Tuesday 12th July to debate the BSkyB bid, the session was pre-empted by the company's announcement that it had, in fact, withdrawn its bid, subject to resubmitting it at a later stage. The company's deputy chairman, Chase Carey, stated that, "we believed that the proposed acquisition of BSkyB by News Corporation would benefit both companies but it has become clear that it is too difficult to progress in this climate". Sir George Young, the Leader of the House, commented during the Commons debate some hours later: "It was simply unrealistic to expect the public and politicians to separate all this from News corporations proposed takeover of BSkyB. That is why both the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister were right when they said earlier this week that News Corporation should withdraw its bid. Any hon. Member who was running the company right now, with all its problems, difficulties and the mess it is in would want to get their house in order first, before thinking about the next corporate move. That is why it was entirely right for News Corporation to withdraw its bid today. The whole House will welcome that decision."

Legally News Corp could make another bid in six months time, as this is the minimum time period for resubmitting a bid set by the Takeover Panel for mergers and takeovers in the UK. However, the *Financial Times* reported that "people close to the company doubted the political climate would cool so quickly". In an editorial the paper suggested that dropping the bid was "the only sensible (option) open to Mr Murdoch", but went on to make the case for a wider review of the way the media is regulated in this country: "This newspaper welcomes the bid's abandonment on broader public interest grounds. We have long argued that a News Corp takeover of Sky raises troubling questions about UK media plurality. It would give News Corp, which already owns 37 per cent of newspaper



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

circulation, around 35 per cent of the television market (including the public sector BBC). Such an extension of cross-media ownership would change the landscape permanently.

Moreover, the regulatory framework itself is deficient. The UK's laws on media ownership are not fit for purpose. Although they prohibit newspaper groups from owning the country's main commercial broadcaster, ITV, no such injunctions apply to Sky or Channel 5, even though BSkyB's revenue is three times that of ITV's and growing much faster. The rules regarding media plurality are unclear. Mr Murdoch's withdrawal may not be the end of the story. News Corp could be forced by the media regulator, Ofcom, to reduce its stake if the hacking allegations against it are proven. But if not, News Corp may renew its overtures. This is why the government must seize the opportunity created by its withdrawal to reform media ownership rules."

The Prime Minister has quite rightly launched an inquiry that will be split into two parts, with an investigation into the wrongdoing of the press and police, including the failure of the first police inquiry, and a full review of the regulation of the press. Additionally, two of the House of Commons Select Committees are running their inquiries into the phone hacking and alleged police bribery; and the Metropolitan Police have now launched two energetic (I hope) inquiries, one into phone-hacking and another separate one into computer hacking.

The section of the inquiry covering ethics and regulation of the press will report back within 12 months having begun public hearings in September 2011. The Prime Minister said the inquiry should be as "robust as possible and get to the truth fastest and get to work the quickest". Lord Justice Leveson, who will be leading the public inquiry, says he will use his powers to demand evidence from witnesses "as soon as possible". He said he will also invite all editors, journalists and media owners to flag up what they saw as "inappropriate" practices.

In a statement in the House of Commons, Mr. Cameron also announced changes to the ministerial code stating that ministers will have to record and publish details of all their meetings with newspaper and other media proprietors, senior editors and executives regardless of the nature of the meeting. Permanent Secretaries and Ministerial Special Advisers will also be required to record such meetings. Alongside the other steps the Government is taking, this will help make the UK government one of the most transparent in the world. The Prime Minister has already published meetings with media editors, proprietors and senior executives to bring complete transparency to the relationship between government ministers and the media.

Cameron also announced that the Metropolitan Police would appoint a senior public figure to advise them on how to interact with the media. The inquiry will be established under the 2005 Inquiries Act and have the power to summon witnesses including newspaper reporters, management, proprietors, policemen and politicians of all parties to give evidence under oath and in public. Lord Justice Leveson will be assisted by a panel of senior independent figures with expertise in media, broadcasting, regulation and government.



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

David Cameron made a statement on Wednesday 20th July, having called back Parliament from Recess, in which he announced the replacements for the recently vacated positions at the Metropolitan Police. The current Deputy Commissioner, Tim Godwin will replace Sir Paul Stephenson temporarily while a suitable replacement is found. He in turn will be replaced by someone outside the Met, Bernard Hogan-Howe, as the responsibilities of the Deputy Commissioner include general oversight of the vital investigations both into hacking and into the Police. Cressida Dick will take over from John Yates following his resignation as Assistant Commissioner. Cameron also made reference to his decision to hire Andy Coulson. He said that he takes full responsibility for his decision to hire him and that he did so on the basis of assurances from Andy Coulson that he had no knowledge of any illegal activity whilst editor of the News of the World. He said very clearly that if it turns out Andy Coulson knew about the hacking at the News of the World he would not only have been lying to the Prime Minister but to the police, to a select committee, to the Press Complaints Commission and would have perjured himself in a court of law. The Prime Minister has said he regrets and is sorry for the furore hiring Andy Coulson has caused and has said that with hindsight, he would not have offered him the job.

Having taken stock of the recent events, personally I would support the inquiries being broader to cover all news media, including all national newspapers, radio and TV. I have no evidence to support my suspicions but I doubt the *News of the World* was alone in using such scurrilous activity. I am also sure that many of you will agree that being “of interest to the public” is very different to being “in the public interest”. Many of the readers of the tabloid papers may disagree. I believe deeper thought should be given to the ethics of the media pursuit of individuals whether they are wealthy and well-known or not. Whether legislation is appropriate remains to be considered especially as there is a case for freedom of the UK Press.

Sir Paul Beresford
Member of Parliament for Mole Valley



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

National news in brief

New Enterprise Zone locations announced.

David Cameron and George Osborne have announced the locations of 4 more Enterprise Zones: Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds and Sheffield. This will accelerate local economic growth and could create over 24,000 new jobs by 2015.

The zones will benefit from discounts on business rates, new superfast broadband, lower levels of planning control and the potential to use enhanced capital allowances. The Government will announce the locations of a further ten Enterprise Zones shortly.

Olympic project is well and truly underway.

Thanks to the exceptional work and optimism of all involved, all Olympic venues have been finished a year ahead of time.

As the one-year countdown to London 2012 gets underway, widespread global support proves to be a driving force for positive change. Already, 12 million of the world's most disadvantaged children have been reached by 'International Inspiration', the international sports legacy programme of the London 2012 Organising Committee. In addition to this, national enthusiasm and excitement is clear with 3.5 million tickets sold and 250,000 people volunteering so far.

Further growth for UK economy

The office for National Statistics has today announced that the UK economy continued to grow in the second quarter of this year. The ONS added that the economy's underlying growth rate has risen.

This announcement, twinned with the news that businesses have created over half a million jobs in the past year, signals that whilst the Government continues to deal with the deficit the economy is improving.

NHS land sale: £2.5bn savings target.

The Government has asked NHS managers to identify land that can be sold off to raise funds for the health service. It has been suggested that the sale of the land could be worth £2.5bn over the next 5 years, the equivalent of 50,000 nurses.

The NHS is one of the largest owners of public-sector land and, according to the department; almost 8% of NHS space is under-used. As a result, the sale of this land is being seen as an excellent means of making the NHS more cost-efficient and comes after the Government announced that it wanted to release enough public land to build up to 100,000 new homes by 2015.

Increase for defence equipment.

Liam Fox, the Secretary of State for Defence, has announced a 1% year-on-year increase to the defence equipment programme. These new increases will give our armed forces the ability to remain a formidable fighting force for many years to come.

The budget increase will ensure the delivery of: 14 extra Chinook helicopters, the Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier conversion, new Joint Strike Fighter fast jets, and major new investment in Unmanned Air Vehicles and other Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance assets. The boost will also enhance the capability of the Reserves and allow a significant expansion.



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

Local news in brief

Waste site to be redeveloped

SCC have given permission for the Leatherhead waste and recycling facility, run by SITA on the council's behalf, to be redeveloped, which will benefit the Leatherhead Community Recycling Centre and Waste Transfer Station in Randalls Road.

The redevelopments include improved parking, reduced queuing and congestion and a drop-off area for garden waste carried in trailers. Local residents had voiced their concern about the impact the extension will have on neighbouring land however SITA have promised that it would make it easier for people to recycle their waste and help raise Surrey's recycling rates.

SCC conduct bus review

SCC have conducted a transport review and come to the conclusion that busses will be added where they are used most and taken away where demand is low. The changes will be made based on the views of the bus users and operators and will come into effect in September.

Ian Lake, the council's member for transport, said: "We spent a long time listening to the views of bus users and those views have shaped the changes. The review was an opportunity to take a fresh look at Surrey's bus routes to make sure they meet the needs of residents while providing value for money".

SCC approve Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's Safety Plan

On June 21st, SCC approved the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's safety plan, which they insist will mean better coverage despite the cuts, as resources will be used more

effectively and concentrated at the busiest locations and busiest times of day. It also includes a pledge to have one engine on the scene of "critical incidents" within ten minutes.

Changes were made to the original plan, following a public consultation, which means that Reigate, Lingfield and Oxted will keep their existing night time fire engines. However, Surrey Fire Brigades Union believes the changes do not go far enough.

Chief fire officer Russell Pearson backed the revised scheme, saying: "We have identified the times that demand is greatest and the plan reflects this, while maintaining suitable levels of cover throughout the day and night."

Arriva Mobile service

Arriva, a bus company that operates routes across Surrey is about to launch a new dedicated website for mobile users, which will allow people to use a simpler, faster and easier to use version of the full website.

Mobile user will have access to Arriva's m-tickets from the site, and the ability to download the m-ticketing app from within the mobile site, so they can buy bus tickets via their phone. Visit www.arrivabus.mobi

Homeless project completed

The 10-month refurbishment of the former Leatherhead Night Hostel in church Road has been completed and began welcoming visitors at the beginning of July. It is now known as Leatherhead Start and has new individual en-suite bedrooms, including a room for a couple, a lounge, dining and kitchen facility doubling up as training and activity rooms, and a larger office.



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 50; July 2011

The service will be available 24 hours a day and will provide better support and training to help vulnerable people live more settled, self-sufficient lives. The refurbishment was made possible by around £855,000 of funding from the Homes and Communities Agency, as well as funds from MVDC, Raven Housing Trust and the charity itself.

Councillor Vivienne Michael said: "We are proud to support the transformation of such an important local building which offers those who face a lower quality of life the opportunity to rebuild their lives. By supporting this essential service we can reach those in our communities who are most in need."

Guildford & Working's transport networks given funding boost

SCC has awarded Guildford and Woking £3.9million in order to improve their transport networks, so that they can become two of the most pedestrian, cycle and bus friendly places in the country.

It is part of Surrey Travel Smart proposals, a plan to make it easier to move around towns while reducing carbon emissions and stimulating economic growth. The bid was originally for £5million, and the Department of Transport has not yet said which aspects it has agreed to fund.

Cllr Ian Lake, SCC's cabinet member for transport, said the funding would make it "quicker, safer and easier for Surrey residents to get about. The way we travel has a big impact on our quality of life, the economy and the environment so it is pleasing the Department for Transport recognised the importance of our plans."

A second Surrey Travel Smart proposal for £16 million of sustainable transport improvements to Guildford, Woking, Redhill, Camberley, Egham and Epsom, has also been submitted and SS is waiting to find out if it will be asked to develop this proposal into a firm bid by the end of the month.

MVHA transform former public hall into flats

Having bought Chapter House, a former public hall in 2009 from SCC, Mole Valley Housing Association have converted it into 16 flats in order to reduce Mole Valley's shortage of affordable homes.

The proposals had promised to reflect the building's former glory and were approved this year by the district council. Thirteen of the flats have been sold for shared ownership and three made available for social rent.

The £2.77 million refurbishment was given a £675,000 grant by the Homes and Communities Agency quango and £270,000 by MVDC.