



# Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 10; January 2008

## Welcoming note

Happy New Year! 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

### Interest rates stay the same



Happy New Year.

On Monday 7<sup>th</sup> January Gordon Brown gave an indication that interest rates in Britain were about to fall. Fortunately, the Bank of England made up its own mind and decided to keep them at 5½%. I use the word fortunately as I am more concerned with inflation than with the inability of people to spend money they have not got.

With the decline in Sterling against other currencies, including the US\$, the cost of imports to this country is going up and utility bills are going up at well above the rate of inflation. The Bank of England's major brief from the Government is to keep inflation down and therefore it cannot be seen to put people's personal debts before this requirement - if inflation were to get out of control everyone would suffer, particularly those on fixed incomes.

The drama of Northern Rock continues to haunt Mr Darling. The press report that business at Northern Rock is at one third of the volume before the crisis hit - are we taxpayers, keeping some of the 6000 staff in work whilst the bill for each of us, because of the fiasco, reaches £2000 per taxpayer. The bank is based in Newcastle!!

The general incompetence of the Government alarms us all but we have to sit in our armchairs feeling impotent to bring about change as the next General Election seems so far away. The Conservative voters in Mole Valley, however, do have the opportunity to assist the Party by working to ensure that the seats being fought at the Mole Valley District Council Elections on May 1<sup>st</sup> elect Conservative Councillors. The local opposition is Liberal Democrat, whose leaders have even more dangerous tax proposals than the Labour Party.

The Vice-Chairman (Political) of Mole Valley is James Friend and he and his team need your help on an ongoing basis - be it delivering leaflets, canvassing, manning committee rooms, helping out on the day of the election or even just having a poster outside your house. If you do feel you wish to help to make a difference please contact Kate Seymour or Adam Takla at Mole Valley Conservative Office, 86 South Street, Dorking RH4 2EW or telephone 01306 883312.

**Mr Colin Crispin**  
**Chairman, Mole Valley Conservative Association**



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## News from the House of Commons

### Government's Intention for new planning quango



I am concerned about the Government's new Planning Bill which had its second reading in the House of Commons on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December. The intention of this bill is to set up a new and expensive quango called the Infrastructure Planning Commission or IPC which will examine development applications for nationally significant infrastructure projects. This body can not only give development consent but also rights of compulsory acquisition of land to fulfil these consents.

Speed is of the essence and the Commission will have a deadline of six months to carry out the examination procedure and a further three months to take its decision. While there is no doubt that major infrastructure planning decisions, such as those for Terminal Five, took far too long there are deep concerns that this will rush decisions with little or no detailed consultation and consideration of issues, particularly local issues.

The Bill is a classic skeletal bill in that the actual mechanisms will be in the secondary legislation which follows the passing of this legislation. For example the fact that there is no definition of "development applications of national importance" is deeply worrying.

Having won the long term fight against a second runway at Gatwick Airport the possibility that BAA may apply under this new quango and rush through the application in nine months must be of deep concern for all of those living anywhere near Gatwick Airport including all of Dorking.

On the other side of Mole Valley constituency, residents near Wisley need to watch this legislation and the new quango with deep concern. Gordon Brown is very interested in his new idea of Eco-Towns. These towns will have many thousands of dwellings in the form of a town built around a source of energy. Fears and concerns in Wisley were raised when a planning inquiry on Surrey's draft waste plan, a group led by ex-Putney MP David Mellor, tried to persuade the Inspector that an incinerator producing energy from waste to support an Eco-Town should be introduced into the waste plan at Wisley.

This new legislation could allow developers, such as those that David Mellor represents, to override normal planning rules and rush through an application to build thousands of houses around an incinerator near the Wisley Royal Horticultural Society gardens and on Wisley green belt land.

Sadly it is well-known that the Government wishes to vastly increase the numbers of houses built in the southeast of England, without funding necessary infrastructure such as schools and hospitals. This piece of legislation that seems barely noticed by the general public could have long term disastrous effects on our green and pleasant Surrey.

**Sir Paul Beresford**  
**Member of Parliament for Mole Valley**



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## Report from Guildford Borough Council

### Arts Council withdraws grant



The Government has announced that Guildford Borough Council will receive an increase in central Government grant of just 1% for the year ahead, which is a cut in funding, once inflation has been applied. As a consequence, the Borough has to work extremely hard on the budget to deliver an acceptable increase in council tax for the year ahead.

However, since Guildford Conservatives came to power in 2003, we have delivered very small council tax increases and we are determined that this will not change in 2008.

The Yvonne Arnaud Theatre received a devastating blow from the Arts Council just before Christmas. The Arts Council has decided that, after 2008/2009, its grant of in excess of £400,000 will be withdrawn. This grant was provided in order to allow the theatre to generate its own productions and to co-produce with other theatres. Sadly, the Yvonne Arnaud is not alone as the Arts Council is withdrawing funding from 194 organisations, including one theatre that has only just reopened, having been supported with a capital grant from the Arts Council to undertake a refurbishment!

The final decision is due to be made by its Board in late January and the theatre and the Borough are making representations to the Arts Council, but we are not optimistic. Sadly, it seems that political correctness is given a higher priority by the Arts Council than high quality theatre.

**Cllr Andrew French**  
Deputy Leader, Guildford Borough Council

## Report from Mole Valley District Council

### MVDC announce plans for 2008



#### A first rate Leisure Centre for Mole Valley

In December, the Conservative Council announced a complete modernisation of the Leatherhead Leisure Centre. Plans were presented to renovate the Centre and provide modern sports facilities for residents of all ages.

Conservative Councillor Clare Curran, chairman of the cross-party Leatherhead Leisure Centre Working Group said:-

*“Soon after the all-party working group began in February 2007, we concluded that a partial refurbishment of our centre would be insufficient and even a waste of public money. We need a well designed leisure centre that will give our residents the high-quality service that they expect from this high quality council.”*



# Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 10; January 2008

*"No facilities have to be discontinued. We listened to what our residents wanted and now we can ensure that excellent provision continues to be made for our groups, clubs and minority sports."*

## **Mole Valley Conservatives plan below inflation tax rise**

Every year, the Council Administration has to set a budget. This time round, we are proposing to deliver significant improvements in services whilst keeping our council tax increase below the level of inflation. The proposed increase would mean that tax on a Band D property would increase by just over £4 per year.

Leader of the Council, Cllr Tim Hall said:-

*"Mole Valley has had the third lowest council tax in Surrey for a number of years and we want to keep it that way. This is not an easy time for local government and the challenges ahead are huge. In October, the Local Government Association reported that the settlement made by the Government for local authorities was the 'worst settlement for local government in a decade'.*

*The increase in the Government Grant to Mole Valley District Council was just 1%. That's a cut in real terms.*

*However the Conservative Administration is determined to keep Mole Valley up amongst the best in the country. We are constantly looking at ways in which we can do things more efficiently and make savings. This year we are planning smarter processes to ensure that our residents – particularly younger people, older people, those living in rural areas and others in particular need – will get far better services from us. The planned programme will improve transport, help create a better environment, provide better leisure facilities and encourage healthier lifestyles.*

*The new initiatives range from the proposed multi-million pound refurbishment of Leatherhead Leisure Centre to smaller but high impact projects such as improving Dorking town centre and providing more community buses"*

Cllr Hall added:-

*"As part of our commitment to protecting the environment we will be continuing with the Food Waste trial for another year; providing cheap green cones for home composting to those who join our energy efficiency programme and there will be many other 'green' initiatives being launched over the next year."*

**Cllr Malcolm Johnson**  
**Communications Officer, Conservative Group**  
**Mole Valley District Council**



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## News in brief

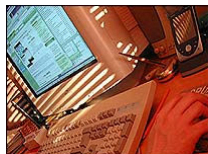
### Betchworth sand extraction update



Sir Paul Beresford, Mole Valley MP voiced concerns over plans to extend sand extraction at Betchworth. An application to Surrey County Council for further sand extraction was approved by the Planning Committee last month. Sir Paul had urged the members of the Committee to refuse this application in a letter written to each of them but sadly they still went ahead with their unpopular decision. The village has proven popular with film and television programmes because of its beauty and has a classic English village look and appeal. The new sand extraction plans greatly threaten its appearance. Further to this, Sir Paul suggests this application is premature, since the Surrey Waste Plan has not yet been adopted. The officer's recommendation to approve this application was based partly on the basis of need for sand. This is in spite of an anticipated statement from the Secretary of State that is expected to predict a reduction in need for sand. Councillor Helyn Clack, the local County Councillor for the area, and the majority of Betchworth residents wish that this application had been rejected and Sir Paul fully understands their dismay. The plans must now go before the Secretary of State for final approval. Sir Paul said: "The decision was very disappointing. I will use whatever means I can to persuade the Secretary of State it is a mistake."

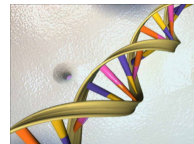
### MP tables amendments

Sir Paul continues to work hard to close loopholes in child sex offences law. Working closely with the Met Police Paedophile Unit and an academic barrister, he has put forward



two amendments for the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill which aim to increase the penalties for those thought to have encrypted indecent images of children on their computers but who refuse to disclose the encryption codes to police. On 9<sup>th</sup> January Sir Paul spoke in the Chamber about his unrelenting efforts to improve current law saying, "Part 13 of the Bill includes a clause on child sex offenders. On Second Reading, I raised two issues with the Minister in that regard. Two new clauses were proposed, but fell. I intend, with the help of my colleagues on the Front Bench, to pursue them in another place. I should be grateful if the Minister could examine them carefully and positively. He will find support on his side of the House, including in the Home Department."

### DNA database inquiry launched



DNA databases have been, once again, brought to the attention of the British media. This time it is the turn of the forefather of DNA profiling, Sir Alec Jeffreys, to speak out over the risks and problems the database poses. As the government launches a £75,000 inquiry into the way the DNA database is used, Sir Alec said that 'the retention of innocent people's DNA raises significant ethical and social issues'. Sir Paul has been battling over this subject for some time now, as he too is concerned about the extent to which this database could be open to abuse. Over the next six weeks the Human Genetics Commission advisory body will hold sessions with dozens of members of the public. A report will be given to the government next year on the forensic use of DNA. The inquiry chairman, Sir John Sulston has said: "There is an important balance to be struck between individual rights and public safety and we need to know how people feel about these issues".



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## Feature Article

### Surrey Police Funding

On Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> December Sir Paul Beresford, MP for Mole Valley, attended a briefing to update Surrey Members of Parliament on the various issues affecting Surrey Police and the initial and long-term measures being considered by the Force and Police Authority to address them. There was particular concern over the threat to the county due to a real term cut in the Government police funding.

We are lucky to live in a county which boasts a Police Force that is regarded as one of the best in England; Surrey was graded the joint top-performing county in England and Wales in the recent Police Performance Assessment Framework and the staff provide local people with an excellent level of service. However, this service is placing considerable pressure on staff and furthermore the force is finding itself spiralling into an increasing financial deficit. Financial constraints will undoubtedly put pressure on the police to change and reorganise in order to make savings, despite the proven effectiveness of their current procedures.



Surrey Police are funded like any other rural force, despite the increasing threat of criminals travelling from neighbouring urban areas such as London. Crimes committed by non-Surrey residents have risen sharply in the last two years, from 36% to 47% with a significant percentage of murders, robberies and burglaries in Surrey attributed to non-Surrey, frequently London, criminals. Sadly, the funding formula for Surrey Police takes no account of this and the fact that the Surrey polices some of the busiest roads in the country, namely the M25, M3 and A3, whilst also helping to ensure the safety and security of Heathrow and Gatwick airports. With mounting debts and a growing need to tackle high volumes of serious crime and Counter-Terrorism, the force is worried that the situation may become unmanageable in the years to come unless prompt action is taken. Surrey Police are already finding it difficult to meet even their statutory duties because of the low, disproportionate funding they currently receive.

Despite extensive lobbying, this Government is refusing to improve Surrey Police's funding and therefore a funding gap of £5.3m over the next three years is forecast. In real terms, Surrey Police receives an effectively decreasing central Government grant due to a simplistic funding formula which penalises their success in keeping crime levels down. Unfortunately the burden falls upon the council tax payers to help fund our police service, with Surrey residents contributing double the national average, 47%. This is despite Surrey making the largest contribution to the Exchequer in the south east region - £5.5 billion in 2005/6!

The Government's chronic under-funding of Surrey Police is clearly unacceptable and Surrey MPs will put pressure on the appropriate Ministers to reverse this situation. Paul Beresford and other Surrey MPs also back the necessity for our Police Force to make cost savings. Additionally Paul Beresford welcomes the determination of the Surrey Force to tackle the rising threat from serious criminals including those from outside the County. This new move will mean Surrey "ticks less Government target boxes" but will hit those heavier crimes that are, in his belief, more serious and damaging to our safety.