



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 4; June-July 2007

Welcoming note

Welcome to the June-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 June-July issue.

A word from the chair

Gordon Brown takes over



One of the more unusual sights of this year was the image of Gordon Brown visiting our troops in Iraq. Mr Brown has not been known for his visits to military bases in Britain, so his visit to Iraq indicates, we hope, a new willingness to ensure our armed forces have the correct equipment to perform their tasks.

A very alarming column appeared recently which said the ability of the British to evacuate casualties in Afghanistan was now so poor that men were dying or losing limbs because of the delay with treatment. The Americans can get their wounded to a casualty clearing station in 25 minutes – we would take some hours. The lack of helicopters with the right equipment is a major factor in this dreadful state of affairs. We also know that the delivery of bomb proof vehicles is way behind schedule and patrols in both Afghanistan and Iraq still have to take place in land rovers.

I have a major suspicion that the Labour Party is anti the military and prefer to spend money on vote earning projects in Scotland, Wales and the North of England; however, I would not be surprised to read that Mr. Brown's first act will be to confirm the building of two aircraft carriers in his northern capital, what a gift to Glasgow! The transfer of local wealth from the South to the North has got to stop. Surrey hospitals, roads and general infrastructure are under-funded because of the development of the rate equalisation grant.

We are now told that we, the taxpayer, do in fact have a liability in respect of the £20 billion plus that Network Rail have borrowed under government guarantees – there is written evidence that it is a government debt but still Gordon Brown denies it.

This is the man who will be promoted from an office he has mismanaged to the pinnacle of power; with ever increasing expenditure, but nothing to show for it – be it rail services, equipment for the armed forces or the infrastructure in Surrey.

As Brown leaves the Treasury, we can afford a wry grin as the M.P.C. are now looking to raise interest rates to 6% - which is sensible - but an appropriate judgement on Mr. Brown's tenure as Chancellor.

Mr Colin Crispin
Chairman, Mole Valley Conservative Association



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News from the House of Commons

Council tax increases



Recent economic research on council tax rises over the past 10 years, whilst Tony Blair has been in power, has thrown up some startling figures. Astonishingly, the average council tax bill in Great Britain has increased by 91% over the last decade, with the average council tax per dwelling in 2007-08 at £1,078 compared to £564 in 1997-98.

Mole Valley is within the top 10 billing authorities with highest area council tax charges this financial year and with the largest monetary increases in average council tax per dwelling since April 1997. Of course the majority of their bill is from Surrey County Council. It is not a situation Mole Valley or Surrey County Council wish to inflict on their council tax payers but this present government's siphoning of council grant north, with corresponding cuts in grant to London and South East England has pushed the cost of services on our local Council tax payers. Indeed the last big cut under John Prescott's department cost Surrey £35 million year on year.

As you may recall from previous editions of the newsletter, I have become increasingly concerned about the impact of the Licensing Act 2003 on village halls. I recently raised the matter in Parliament after successfully securing a Westminster Hall Debate and told Shaun Woodward, the current Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, "the effect of the wretched 2003 Act on village halls has been a nightmare for the local people who manage them. They volunteer to do so for the sake of the village. They do not expect a bureaucratic nightmare of plans, forms and teachings on legislation."

I have put forward a number of suggestions that the Government appear to be considering including a de minimis level so that small village halls are outside the Act, simplified bureaucracy and many more licenses available. The Minister has agreed to see a small delegation from Mole Valley but with a reshuffle about to happen I wait to see who the new minister is.

Mr Woodward congratulated me on securing the debate and responded, "I hope that I can deal with some of the things that he raised, and I wish to put on the record the fact that there are genuine issues that we need to continue to examine and, when appropriate, revise." The trouble is we have heard it all before from this Government.

Sir Paul Beresford
MP for Mole Valley



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Report from Surrey County Council

Executive policy and spending decisions



As I announced last month, there is a new team in the Executive of the County Council. The Executive takes all major policy and spending decisions, and meets every other Tuesday at 2.30pm in County Hall in Kingston. Residents are welcome to attend and, with prior notice, to take part in debate.

Surrey finally gets an Air Ambulance service!

The vital and often life-saving work of Air Ambulance services sprang to national attention last year when Top Gear TV presenter Richard Hammond was seriously injured in a high speed crash for the programme - with his life almost certainly being saved by the fact he was airlifted to hospital immediately by an air ambulance service. For too long Surrey has been without its own service - unacceptable for a county with many rural and hard-to-reach areas. With little funding available, coupled with the significant cost of running such a service, the situation was looking bleak. However on Friday 8 June we saw the launch of a new service dedicated to Surrey, following some excellent partnership work between our public agencies - including a donation of £50,000 from the Surrey County Council toward the total required funds of £250,000.



Helyn with Sally Marks, Nick Skellett and the Pilot of the new Air Ambulance

Bringing more economical success to Surrey

The Leader of the Council Nick Skellett joined other guests to meet the Duke of Edinburgh at the opening of new offices for Exxon Mobil on May 30 - a development which will ensure sustained economic prosperity for the area for many years to come. Although the offices were already in place, the major refurbishment means Exxon Mobil have now made the Leatherhead offices their UK Headquarters, sustaining employment for more than 1,000 local people. Protecting Surrey's heritage is only one part of our role on Surrey County Council - it is also vital that we recognise the importance of economic growth as it is partly this prosperity that gives Surrey its identity as the economic heartbeat of the South East, and that brings with it such benefits as attracting further big-name firms into the area. Exxon Mobil Corporation is the world's largest publicly-traded energy company.

This month the Executive will take major decisions on issues including:

- How we can increase the number of vulnerable residents cared for in their own home instead of care homes

Care homes are both expensive for residents to fund, and create distress for the person having to move from their family home. We can have a major impact on the quality of life for vulnerable residents and their families if we can tackle this core issue.

- How we go forward with school admissions

We have very much been aware there have been issues relating to school admissions processes this year and my colleague Andrew Crisp - Executive Member for Schools - will be recommending this month that changes are made to the policy to avoid similar concerns arising in the future. We will also recommend regular reviews of this policy to reassure parents.

Helyn Clack
County Councillor for Dorking Rural
Executive Member for Policy and Performance



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Report from Guildford Borough Council

Council settles down into new term



It has been a relatively quiet month as the council settles down into its new term and our new Chief Executive, David Hill, who joined us in April, becomes more familiar with Guildford's activities and the requirements of the Conservative administration.

We are continuing to make progress on the Civic Hall. The application for planning permission for the new hall is due for consideration on 26 June. We are also in the process of drawing up a detailed business plan for the running of the facility, which is likely to open in 2010.

Climate change is becoming an increasingly important issue for the council. We were, therefore, very pleased to secure yet another award for our mini hydro facility, located in the Town Mill next to the Yvonne Arnaud, which generates electricity from the River Wey. The council is also looking at other ways of generating renewable energy at other locations in the town.

Nearer to home, considerable concern has been expressed about Star Energy's plans to establish a gas storage facility in East Clondon, with a pipeline that will run from Albury to the storage facility at East Clondon and onwards to a location in West Horsley. It is likely that the application for the facility, which will take a year to construct, will be submitted under the Gas Act, thus bypassing local government planning requirements. Local Parish, Borough and County Councillors are monitoring this application closely and are discussing the application with Star Energy and will make every effort to minimise its impact.

Cllr Andrew French
Deputy Leader, Guildford Borough Council

Report from Mole Valley District Council

Conservative Council Posts



Since I wrote the last report we had the Annual Meeting of the Council which saw Conservative Cllr Jean Pearson of Capel, Newdigate & Leigh Ward elected as Chairman of the Council. Jean is already making a firm impression on the District as she starts her year in office.

In the Conservative Administration of the Council I was re-elected as Leader for another year, and am joined by Cllr Chris Hunt, newly re-elected with a super majority in Ashted Village Ward as Deputy Leader and Chairman of Development Control Committee. Cllr Clare Curran is Chairman of the Policy Committee, Cllr Chris Reynolds is Chairman of External Scrutiny, Cllr David Sharland is Chairman of Licensing and Cllr Kathryn Westwood is the new



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Chairman of Performance and Audit Committee. Cllr Vivienne Michael is the new Group Chairman and Cllr Rosemary Dickson is Group Whip supported by Cllr David Walker.

In the important posts pushing the Conservative Agenda as Policy Champions, we now have in no particular order - Cllr Bryan Davis (Waste/Recycling), Cllr David Walker (Housing), Cllr Carolyn Corden (Young People), Cllr Ben Tatham (Safer & Stronger Communities), Cllr Clare Curran (Efficiency), Cllr Kate Horden (Customer Care & Equalities), Cllr Janette Purkiss (Property) and Cllr Daphne Ladell (Benefits).

As you can see we have a really good team of people from across the District pushing the Agenda you elected us on forward.

- This Agenda includes pushing forward on the Housing Transfer to a new Mole Valley Housing Association at the end of October, which will stop Gordon Brown robbing our tenants of £4Million a year in rent money.
- We are reducing homelessness by preventive action and investing in creating significant amounts of affordable housing for local people.
- We are investing in recycling with more garden recycling bins, a new food waste collection trial and possibly glass recycling collection in the New Year.
- New playgrounds and facilities for young people in Fetcham, North Holmwood and Westcott as part of a rolling programme of better provision will keep youngsters occupied.
- We are investigating a new Leisure Trust to bring in more resources to improve Mole Valley Leisure facilities, besides refurbishing Leatherhead Leisure Centre.
- We are doing more in partnership with Police to keep Mole Valley as the safest place in the Country.
- We will look at our property assets to see if we can get better use from them and review the efficiency of all Council services with our partner councils in Reigate and Tandridge.

So as you can see we have a busy year ahead. Plus we are looking to having a more effective "Executive" Council structure.

Cllr Tim Hall
Leader, Mole Valley District Council



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News in brief

Denbies Trust Bid for Epsom Hospital



Former High Sheriff of Surrey, Adrian White, Settlor of the Denbies Trust has written to the Chief Executive of Epsom & St Helier NHS Trust to confirm his offer to buy the hospital and dedicate it to the local community. This charitable trust will be led by doctors and members of the community, providing NHS services as well as serving the charitable and private health sectors. Sir Paul Beresford strongly supports the Denbies Trust and this scheme. This cost-saving proposal should be favourable to members of the Trust Board. Amongst the savings are approximately £30 million which would have been spent on refurbishment or rebuilding. Furthermore, the site will be used by the NHS rent-free. Mr White reassured the Trust that the bid will hold “no hidden agendas, no privatisation of the site, no commercial benefit to the Denbies Trust (a registered charity) and certainly no financial benefit whatsoever to myself as Settlor”. The government have displayed a bleak outlook for NHS care at Epsom and throughout Surrey. Sir Paul has great fears that Epsom Hospital will die by a thousand cuts as services are slowly being whittled away.

Star Energy Update

Sir Paul is delighted that Star Energy has withdrawn its gas processing application at Albury Park. However, there are ongoing concerns over their preferred prospective site at Furze Copse near HMP Send and the line of the connecting pipeline. Sir Paul, Anne Milton MP, local pressure groups, parish councils and local and county Councillors, were concerned about the positioning of the processing at Albury Park. Surrey County Council received nearly 2000 letters of objection to Star Energy's recent planning application for Albury Park. Nonetheless, Star Energy intends to resubmit an application for appraisal drilling at the site. Sir Paul said, “We wish to be sure that this Area of

Outstanding Natural Beauty will not face any destruction along the way. I would encourage all residents and those interested to look carefully at these new proposals. Any concerns should be expressed to the Council Planners as soon as reasonable so that the local people's thoughts can influence discussions between the Council Planners and Star Energy.”

vCJD Guidance for Dentists



Sir Paul secured an adjournment debate on 23 May in the House of Commons, where he voiced his concerns to Health Minister Rosie Winterton in light of new guidance about infectivity of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD). Preliminary research on mice indicated a possible risk of Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE) infection from pulpal tissue via endodontic files and reamers. The Department of Health's Chief Dental Officer for England, Barry Cockcroft, sent letters to all dentists advising them to treat such instruments as single use, despite no reported or suspected cases of vCJD transmission from dental treatment. Amongst Sir Paul's criticisms of the advice was the matter of expense. After the fiasco of the new NHS dental contract, dentists are now expected to pay for extra instruments, without passing the cost onto patients. He questioned why only two types of apparatus were viewed as a danger, when other instruments may become contaminated during treatment. Further, in a paper reported in a recent British Dental Journal, transference was considered possible from extractions but endodontics did not get a mention. Sadly, with this new guidance leading to higher costs associated with root canal treatment and the perception amongst the general public that this treatment could expose them to vCJD, patients are likely to opt out of root canal procedures leading to an increase in extractions and implant placement. Rosie Winterton did say research was ongoing and a fuller risk assessment was underway.



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Feature Article

Garden Grabbing in Mole Valley

Mole Valley constituents have voiced their concerns to their MP, Sir Paul Beresford, over the classification of gardens as Brownfield sites, which are defined as previously developed land. This can mean that the local council is powerless to refuse planning applications to build on gardens. As a consequence many residents rightly feel that new build houses are being crammed in and are completely changing the more open environment of the residential streets of Mole Valley.



Sir Paul supports Caroline Spelman, a fellow Conservative MP, whose Private Member's Bill, Land Use (Gardens Protection etc) Bill, has its Second Reading this Friday. The Bill would change the planning legislation to remove gardens from Brownfield definition. Under present planning rules, introduced by John Prescott, because gardens are classed as Brownfield sites - just like a derelict factory or railway siding - they are subject to a presumption in favour of development. Not surprisingly the Spelman Bill has gained enormous support from many MPs and it is hoped that this time the Government will listen and respond positively to public opinion.

Startling new statistics illustrate the extent to which "garden grabbing" has been occurring in England. In the South East region, 30% of all new dwellings in 2005 were being built on previously residential land, which includes gardens. In fact, the South East is the worst affected region in the country. In Mole Valley, the picture is worse still with 60% of new dwellings in 2005 built on land that was previously houses and gardens.



Period houses are often demolished in favour of apartment blocks which cover the entire footprint of the plot, house and garden included. Sir Paul understands the need for social and affordable housing. However new developments are frequently focussed around the Government's demand for high density building and do not complement the nature of the surrounding houses.

Sir Paul is concerned that if gardens continue to be developed in this way, the character of the Mole Valley landscape will be irrevocably damaged. Building on gardens creates environmental problems such as affecting natural drainage leading to higher risk of flooding. Inevitably, the greater concentration of population stretches resources which could lead to restrictions in the future. Furthermore, the present Government has failed to recognise the increased demand on hospitals, schools and police at a time when they are all having their funding greatly reduced resulting in savage service cuts.