



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 3; May 2007

Welcoming note

Welcome to the May 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 May issue.

A word from the chair

Local Election News



The Local Elections resulted in the status quo being maintained in Mole Valley. Our neighbours in Guildford saw a slight improvement, thanks to Tillingbourne. Reigate Conservatives romped home, Elmbridge remained as no overall control and Epsom remained under control of the Ratepayers Association.

To dislodge existing Councillors is no easy task; we learnt that we will need more proactive support from the membership in order to properly canvass and then "knock up" the electorate. My personal thanks are due to all the candidates and to the members who canvassed, delivered, ran committee rooms, acted as tellers or "knocked up" on Election Day.

The other evening I watched a programme on Gordon Brown – perhaps in a year or so, we will look back on Tony Blair with fond memories as Mr. Brown digs his avaricious claws further into people's wallets. The rape of the pension funds is now being understood by more and more people as the value of their pensions do not meet the returns promised as recently as 1995.

My main concern is the renewed threat of inflation – let us hope the Bank of England act quickly; 6% now is better than 7¼% in March 2008. The members of the Monetary Policy Committee have a duty to us all – let us hope they face up to it.

Mr Colin Crispin
Chairman, Mole Valley Conservative Association



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 3; May 2007

News from the House of Commons

Local schools



Firstly, congratulations to all of the Councillors who were newly elected re-elected in the local elections on 3 May. We held our seats and made one gain as we now hold both seats in Tillingbourne for Guildford Council. Although it was disappointing for those who narrowly missed out on representing their wards, their efforts ensured that the Liberal Democrats' votes were hugely diminished throughout Mole Valley.

An issue I have become increasingly concerned about and which is understandably worrying many parents in the constituency is the government's dictatorial policy on Local Education Authorities regarding transfers from infant schools. On Saturday 19 May, I attended a meeting with local heads and governors of these small, and often rural, schools at Mole Valley District Council's premises, Pippbrook, to discuss the difficulties they face. One such problem threatens the future of village schools in our rural community. In order to secure a place at the primary school of their choice, parents often feel the wisest decision is to move their children from infant school early, in year 3, which therefore depletes numbers in year 4 vastly and threatens to leave these infant schools with no choice but to close. Also, the Department for Education and Skills has advised Local Authorities that whilst it is acceptable to have 30 children in one class taught by one teacher, 31 children must divide into two classes and therefore demands two members of staff.

As this goes to press I have just delivered an adjournment debate in the House of Commons on variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease and the possibility of its transmission via dental instruments used during root canal procedures, in response to hasty new guidance issued by the Department of Health based on preliminary research.

Sir Paul Beresford
MP for Mole Valley

Report from Surrey County Council

Priorities for the year ahead



The County Council has held its Annual General Meeting and so another political year starts with challenges ahead. The Conservative administration laid out its priorities.

- Improving highways and maintaining our roads
- Ensuring that looked after children grow up better equipped for life, particularly through education
- Increasing the number of vulnerable adults able to live independently
- Increasing waste minimization and recycling

In addition to these priorities are our other important services, and the ongoing efforts we make to improve them, but it is a measure of the general high quality of the County Council's services that we can focus on a number of priorities in this way.



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 3; May 2007

We are still waiting to hear from government about their financial proposals in the much heralded comprehensive spending review – what it will mean for Surrey County Council and our residents is that our financial situation is unlikely to improve. The Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 has been postponed to the autumn, so the best we can judge is that the financial position will require zero growth in the Council's budget for 2008-9, with the possible exception of adult social care, if we can afford it, and even there we need to demonstrate value for money. It will also require very tight control of procurement and of any inflationary increases. In addition, of course, services will be required to identify further "Gershon" efficiencies this year of 3%.

The new Surrey Highways service came into being on 8th May. We are currently recruiting for 34 new Community Highways Officers in the new Service. Seventeen of these have been appointed and we received a further 52 applications for the remaining 17 posts, currently being interviewed. Our expectation is that these posts will provide our eyes and ears in the heart of the community, and support our drive to get tougher with utility companies.

I am pleased to announce that I have been appointed Executive Member for the portfolio of 'Policy and Performance'. This new department came into being last year and works at the heart of the council. It has the responsibility of drafting council policies, liaising with government departments and planning for the future of the county's public services. It also supports the electoral processes and elected members and provides a service for the committees such as Local Committees and the Executive. It is responsible for partnerships working together to promote better value for money to residents by pooling resources and costs with other public agencies in Surrey to ensure more effective and closer working. It also houses the Communications department, which ensures residents are kept informed about council decisions and services.

Mrs Helyn Clack
County Councillor for Dorking Rural

Report from Guildford Borough Council

Conservatives retain control



On 3 May, we were delighted to retain control of Guildford Borough Council, increasing our majority from two to four in the process.

The gains we made included an extra seat in Tillingbourne ward, won from the retiring Independent. It is the first time since 1991 that we have had two Conservative councillors in that ward. We also defeated a Liberal Democrat in Christchurch ward who had held her seat for 16 years, to be replaced with a new Conservative councillor who is 19!

The election also saw Labour lose its remaining two seats on the council, in Stoke ward, to the Liberal Democrats. This included Cllr Angela Gunning, the retiring Mayor. The council is now made up of 26 Conservatives and 22 Liberal Democrats.

We witnessed an extremely negative campaign from our Liberal Democrat opponents, which, judging by the results, was not supported by the Guildford electorate. In contrast, we fought a positive campaign, focusing on our record of low council tax and a recycling rate that has doubled over the last four years.



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 3; May 2007

Our attention now focuses on the immediate priorities in the Borough, including making swift progress with a new Civic Hall. We have recently applied for planning permission for the proposed new building, hoardings have gone up around the site, and we aim to get construction under way as soon as possible.

Other targets for this council term include increasing our recycling rate still further and making a real difference with regard to street cleaning and other basic services.

Cllr Andrew French
Deputy Leader, Guildford Borough Council

Report from Mole Valley District Council A rising Conservative vote



It has only been a few weeks since the 3rd May District Council elections, but it seems much longer. The elections for Mole Valley DC actually showed little change on the surface as no seats actually changed hands, but underneath the surface saw several very significant shifts as the Conservative Party vote rose by over 20% on four years ago. This means that our majorities in previous marginal wards rose dramatically.

In Bookham North, David Walker's majority is now over 800 from 180 and in Ashted Village Chris Hunt's majority went from 50 to 420, showing that the Councillors' hard work paid off finally. Also, in the key marginals Lib Dem majorities fell from several hundreds to 72 in Betchworth, Brockham & Buckland and 97 in Beare Green.

Turning back to the Council, we have welcomed our new Conservative Council Chairman, Jean Pearson of Capel. She will be a breath of fresh air and challenge the system to make it relevant for the 21st Century.

Finally, we will be launching our new Corporate Plan, which will allow us to pursue further with smart targets as our priorities. These are:

- increasing the amount of affordable housing
- cutting the amount of waste and rubbishing and increasing the amount of recycling
- better involvement of and facilities for the district's young people
- improving our efficiency and value for money
- providing stronger and safer communities with better facilities and lower crime and fear of crime.

Cllr Tim Hall
Leader, Mole Valley District Council



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 3; May 2007

News in brief

SWT Pricing Structure

Sir Paul is concerned about changes to the Cheap Day Return pricing structure set by South West Trains, which will affect commuter routes to London Waterloo from some stations within Mole Valley. The cost of Cheap Day Return tickets to London from some stations within Mole Valley for travel between 09.30-11.00am will rise by 20% from 20th May 2007 and even new Super Off Peak Day Returns, for travel after 11.00am, will increase by 3%. SWT claims that this new pricing structure and increase in fares will reduce overcrowding on commuter trains. However, it is likely that those who previously chose to travel to work just after peak hours, i.e. 9.30-11.00am, will now consider that there is little difference between the peak and off peak fares and travel before 9.30am instead. Stations such as Bookham, Effingham Junction, Clendon and Horsley have already been inflicted with a Cheap Day Return price increase of over 5% in January 2007 and it seems to go against overall passenger interest to introduce further increases within five months. More than one price increase a year suggests that greedy train companies are abusing their monopoly status and looking after their profits rather than commuters.



Post Office Closures



The future of small rural post offices throughout the country continues to be of great concern. Sir Paul recently received a letter from Post Office Ltd with further news about postal services in the Mole Valley constituency. The Post Office will continue to run 373 flagship Crown Post Offices in UK towns and cities and have confirmed that Dorking is included within this list. In essence, it means that Post Office Ltd will own and directly

manage the branch, rather than private Sub-Postmasters or retail franchise partners, which should reassure local residents. The Government have now completed their 12-week consultation process and we await news about the future of almost 14,000 Sub Post Office branches nationwide. The task will then fall to the Post Office Ltd to implement the Government's plans and name the post offices in Mole Valley to be closed down. Sadly, Sir Paul has already been told to expect 5 branch closures in the Mole Valley constituency.

Tackling Human Trafficking

Sir Paul has welcomed the Metropolitan Police's launch of its first specialist unit to tackle the criminals behind human trafficking. Charities and voluntary organisations will work with the new team to help victims, many from Eastern Europe, Africa and the Far East, who have been trafficked into the UK and forced to work in the sex trade. Traffickers make colossal sums of money from their victims, so the police officers' first priority will be to crack down on the financial activities of the networks that lure young men and women into the country with empty promises. Children are smuggled into this country for domestic slavery, benefit fraud, Muti ritual killing and for adoption. Even very young children are pushed into the sex industry and there is growing evidence that paedophiles may use trafficking as an opportunity. As a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Trafficking of Women and Children and a campaigner for improvements in paedophile and sexual offences laws, Sir Paul is becoming increasingly concerned about the ease in which trafficked children can be smuggled through immigration. Sadly the true extent of this modern day slavery is difficult to calculate and further research is needed to grasp how best to tackle this deplorable activity.





Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 3; May 2007

Feature Article

Village Halls and the Licensing Act 2003

As Member of Parliament for Mole Valley, it is vital for Sir Paul to gather facts, figures and opinions from his constituents in order to play an effective role in representing their needs and concerns in Parliament. Questionnaires continue to be a useful tool, whether directed at every resident in Mole Valley or just a targeted group. Past questionnaires include a Dental Survey sent to local dentists to discover their thoughts on the new NHS dental contract and an annual Business Survey for local companies to react to the Government's Budget.



As mentioned in the April newsletter, Sir Paul has recently been canvassing opinion on the Licensing Act 2003 by sending out questionnaires to village halls asking about the positive and negative effects the new law has had on the social and financial aspects of running premises for hire. The Act has introduced a more expensive, and complex new structure for holding events involving licensable activities, such as the sale of alcohol, at village halls as well as sports clubs.

The Licensing Act 2003 does not exclusively relate to village halls but also to such venues as pubs, bars, and nightclubs too. Fundamental objectives of the Act were the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and the protection of children from harm. Whilst one can easily see how such problems need to be addressed within the aforementioned venues, rural village halls are unlikely to be afflicted with such antisocial behaviour. Revealingly, of those who answered Sir Paul's two-page questionnaire, all bar one did not think that this government considered the concerns of village halls when passing the Licensing Act 2003.

Village halls must apply for a Temporary Event Notice for an event with less than 500 people where "licensable activities", such as the sale of alcohol, are planned to take place. The law states that a maximum of 12 TENs are allowed to take place per year at a village hall, each charged at £21 compared to the previous fee of just £10 for 6 events. 75% of those who responded to the questionnaire believe that the cost of TENs does not offer value for money and, as many halls are run as charities, the same percentage called for charities to be exempt from paying for TENs.

Sir Paul recently raised the matter in the House of Commons and told the Minister that village halls "have been severely hit by the legislation" and asked if he will "consider taking some of this heavy-handed legislation off those little village halls, perhaps starting with a de minimis level below which the legislation need not apply?"

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Shaun Woodward conceded that Sir Paul's point was "well made and we are considering proposals for the future."