



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 8; November 2007

Welcoming note

Welcome to the November 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 November issue.

A word from the chair

Brown's non-Election



A difficult month – at the beginning of November the media noted the non-General Election. Mr Brown got flustered as well he might; his NHS expert came up with yet another of his reports on the future of the organisation. I hope Sir Derek Wanless is better in forecasting needs in the Health Service rather than his efforts as non-executive director in charge of risk at Northern Rock.

The threat of inflation is very real with the surge in prices only tempered by the high level of Sterling against the US Dollar. The inflation in China must have an impact as so many manufactured goods are now imported from that country. One only has to look at a very prosperous country such as Qatar and see an 11% inflation rate to realise that interest rates are the major tools in our armoury to fight inflation. As Gordon Brown seems to have his puppet in Number 11, he will continue to use spin rather than realistic financial measures.

The price of gold continues to rise to levels well above US\$800, which must spook Mr Brown who sold gold below US\$300 an ounce.

We now understand that hidden in the recent statements is a National Insurance hike which will cost someone on £42,000 a year another £500 per annum. The new Inheritance Tax is helpful to widows or widowers who have not remarried, but of no help to single people - even the divorced.

The government are now suggesting that all children should stay at school until they are eighteen. If they wish to they already have this opportunity and to pass legislation is not the way to encourage the desire to learn. On the broader front, this country continues to neglect our armed forces in the field and after their return to base.

For Mr Cameron and his team the past month must have been very frustrating – from a probable losing position in September the Conservatives had turned things round and in October or November would have beaten Labour.

We in Mole Valley have to prepare for vital Council Elections in May – and with the Liberal Democrats aiming at us as a target Council we must be prepared to work harder to ensure we keep our majority on the



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 8; November 2007

Council. I continue to worry about a party which wishes to put up income tax for many of middle England and has even suggested that alcohol should be classified as if it were a Class A drug.

The new series of colour branch Conservative News has been well received by constituents and we hope to continue with these, not just at election time.

Mr Colin Crispin
Chairman, Mole Valley Conservative Association

News from the House of Commons

Southern taxpayers subsidise Labour's northern heartlands



I am pleased that two recent surveys have laid bare the truth about where Southern taxpayers' money is really going – up north.

Local Government Futures and Oxford Economics found a number of disparities between how much taxpayers pay and how much they get back in public services. In the south east, health spending was 8% lower than the national average and 14% lower than northern England.

The bigger picture is even more alarming – the southeast of England spends £15.1 billion more in tax than it receives in public spending whilst each voter in northeast England gets over £3000 more in services than they spend in taxes.

The media has not been shy to point out that it seems more than mere coincidence that 11 of the Government's cabinet represent constituencies in the north of England whilst only 2 have seats in the south.

Understandably many council leaders across the south have been dismayed by these figures which reveal that they are effectively bankrolling other parts of the country whilst their own public services such as NHS services and the police are neglected in the south east.

Surrey County Council is painfully aware of the lack of central Government funding for public services in the south east and the consequent burden that falls upon its taxpayers. In fact, Surrey residents fund £8 in every £10 of council spending.

A study has revealed that over a quarter of Mole Valley residents are consuming 'hazardous' levels of alcohol so it appears that the most heavily taxed are becoming the heaviest drinkers! Do we drink Brown ale?

Sir Paul Beresford
Member of Parliament for Mole Valley



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 8; November 2007

Report from Surrey County Council

A packed Council Agenda



In the rush up to Christmas the Council's Agenda gets even more packed. Apart from the extra round of social events and festive cheer, we anticipate the Government grant settlement to be announced so that we can agree our budget and set the Council tax for the coming year.

Every year we know we will get less from Government and will have to find savings through 'smarter' working to deliver our services, so throughout this year we have been asking deep questions about how our budgets are met within each of the services we provide and asking our select committees to challenge the figures. This 'star chamber' approach will hopefully identify further ways in which we can maintain our services on less resource.

On the Executive we will be battling with figures and priorities to try and stretch our finances as much as possible. Our biggest challenge is the amount we spend on social care, looking after vulnerable children and adults and especially caring for the elderly. After schools, who now receive their grants direct, social care has the biggest budget – around £500 million per annum compared to Highways which is around £60 million.

Locally, Surrey Waste has now submitted an application for an EFW (incinerator) at the brickworks site in Capel. Up until recently I have not been against incineration but have always objected to the site in Capel as being too far away from where waste comes from within Surrey. However there have been some reports from reputable sources that incineration may have a health impact and anaerobic digestion may well be a more natural and less aggressive tool to dispose of waste that has been recycled reduced and reused. I shall wait to hear more.

During October, County Hall was host to an examination in public of the Surrey Waste Plan special hearing for Surrey County Council and Capel Action Group. The hearing took place over three days, and each side were permitted to cross examine each other's witnesses and evidence. The Capel Action Group's barrister was pretty tough and his final summing up can be found on the Capel Action Group website. We now wait to hear whether the Inspector will take the Capel Action Groups advice and dismiss the plan or even better delete the site.

A week ago there was a public meeting in Capel to which Sir Paul Beresford and I attended with Cllr Jean Pearson (Chairman of Mole Valley and Capel Councillor). I was heartened to hear the spirit of the meeting intent on continuing the fight against the Capel site in spite of the planning application. It's not inevitable that an incinerator will be built on the site. It was overturned by Judicial Review in 2002 and there is still a long way to go.

Next month I shall be attending the County Planning Committee meeting to hear their determination of the planning application to extract sand from Betchworth Field. This is prior to the determination of the County's mineral plan and could be considered premature. I will be giving my point of view at the meeting – Chairman permitting!

On a more positive note, the County has now appointed new Community Highways Officers to each division and I was delighted to meet my CHO last week and to tour my division spotting road defects, blocked drains and broken railings etc. I am glad to say that he is very much on the ball and has already



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 8; November 2007

begun to tackle the long list of jobs reported by our residents and he has been in touch with some of them already. Surrey Highways has a lot of catching up to do but the signs are there at last.

Finally – should we be making more energy savings in the County by turning off streetlights, and lights in shops and offices during the night? Or would this encourage more crime?

Helyn Clack
Member for Dorking Rural
Executive Member for Policy and Performance
Surrey County Council

Report from Guildford Borough Council

Melanie Bright wins by-election



Guildford Conservatives now have an additional councillor, thanks to a terrific by-election win by Melanie Bright in Holy Trinity on 8 November. Melanie was a losing candidate in May in the same ward, but this time, she defeated the Liberal Democrat candidate by 166 votes.

This has increased our majority to six, which is fantastic news and a tribute to the hard work put in by Melanie and her team at the by-election.

Planning for the new Civic Hall continues. Next month, we are due to receive a business plan for the new facility as the next stage of the development. Once the plan is in place and agreed, we can then choose a developer for the building.

In the meantime, we have agreed to lease a small piece of land at the rear of the site for a prestigious four star hotel that will generate a capital receipt in excess of £2mn. This development will also include shops and restaurants and will fit perfectly with our plans for our new entertainment complex on the site.

There has been a degree of controversy over our plans to change how we provide our meals service for the lunch clubs at our sheltered housing schemes. Currently, these are prepared in house at each location, but the costs in recent years have risen to between £6 and £18 per head, depending upon the location.

Instead, we plan to provide meals through the meals on wheels service, that will ensure that the lunch clubs continue, but at an acceptable cost to taxpayers. This has generated some opposition at some of our sheltered schemes, but residents are still being consulted about the changes and no final decision has been taken.

Cllr Andrew French
Deputy Leader, Guildford Borough Council



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 8; November 2007

Report from Mole Valley District Council

What's happening at MVDC?



A new constitution for the Council

Mole Valley District Council is founded on a "committee" style constitution. However, very few councils run themselves in this way and the Conservative Council has decided to go for an "Executive" council constitution, in order to get things done faster. Over the last few months, the Council has been consulting with the people of Mole Valley on the new model constitution. The Council hopes to go Executive at some point in 2008.

Transfer of the council's housing stock

In October 2007, the Conservative-run Council transferred its housing stock to a "not for profit" public sector organisation. The total financial benefit to the Council will be in excess of £70 million over the next ten years, of which some £35 million will now go to the Council. The transfer was driven by hard economic facts as well as the need to maximize value for money for Council Tax payers.

The council's Housing Champion, Conservative Councillor David Walker, said:

"This transfer is excellent news for both council tenants and Council Tax payers. Council tenants will see major improvements made to their homes, while value for money has been achieved for the Council Tax payer."

...and on a lighter note - Arts Alive!

Arts Alive is the highly successful annual arts festival, which ran for its 11th year from 29th September to the 31st October in Dorking, Leatherhead and the surrounding villages. The festival is a celebration of the arts in Mole Valley, involving many groups and individuals from across the arts spectrum, from visual art to dance, audio-visual to drama, and music to crafts.

Councillor Tim Hall, Leader of Mole Valley District Council said:

"As the reputation of Arts Alive continues to grow, the festival gathers more support from local businesses, which is testament to the popularity of the festival. The sponsorship of the festival by local businesses meant that the work of these talented individuals was seen by nearly 24,000 members of the public."

Cllr Malcolm Johnson
Mole Valley District Council



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 8; November 2007

News in brief

Mole Valley in top 5 best places to live



The Channel 4 programme 'Location, Location, Location; Best and Worst places to live in the UK 2007' rated Mole Valley the 5th best place to live in the UK last month. The annual show compares 434 local authorities by considering crime, education, environment, lifestyle, health and employment in the area, and selects the 20 best and 20 worst from the results. Mole Valley was commended for its low crime rates, strong education results, and good health record. The Surrey Hills were described as 'one of the nation's truly easy-on-the-eye landscapes', and rightly so after the area was among the first official places to be designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The main criticism levied at the Mole Valley was the borough's lack of affordable housing, with the average house price sitting at £394,000 and not expected to drop over the next five years. However housing is already a priority in the area, and once the South East Regional Plan comes into force 188 new homes are expected to be built every year. The list was topped by Edinburgh, with Middlesbrough being chosen as the worst place to live. The real winner of the list though must be the county of Surrey, with seven local authorities from the area appearing in the top twenty.

Surrey's Hazardous Drinking Habits



New research has granted Surrey a new claim to fame; it is home to the highest level of hazardous drinking in the country. Runneymede topped the national tables with 26.4% of its adult population enjoying a few too many of an evening. Mole Valley drinkers aren't far behind as we stumble into fourth place. The

research classes 'hazardous' drinking as the consumption of fifteen units a week for women and twenty two for men, which is equivalent to one and a half bottles of wine for women and two for men. That may sound like an average Friday night for many. It alleges that social drinking can be as damaging to your health as bingeing. Residents risk liver and circulation problems as well as an increased instance of cancer. Despite this, statistics in Surrey for these illnesses are well below the national average. The government's greatest concerns are that this level of alcohol will cause behavioural problems and anti-social tendencies. So raise a glass to the people of Surrey for yet another poll we've topped...

Remploy factory closures



Remploy is the leading provider of employment services for disabled people in the UK. The campaign to keep open some 32 Remploy factories proposed for closure across the country has had only limited success. The proposals published last week show that Remploy are now suggesting that 55 factories continue in their current capacities but 17 will be closed. Sadly, the Leatherhead factory is not amongst those to be saved from closure. The Leatherhead site currently houses the asset management and warranty business within the firm e-cycle. The business requires large open areas and good logistics access and unfortunately the Leatherhead branch was therefore deemed unsuitable. Leatherhead employees will have a number of options open to them, including voluntary redundancy, early retirement where appropriate, and mainstream job placement. There are 38 people affected on the Leatherhead site, 27 of whom are anticipated to seek alternative employment via Employment Services.



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 8; November 2007

Feature Article

The Queen's Speech 2007

On the 6th November, Westminster was visited by the Queen for the State Opening of Parliament. Despite the glorious weather, and the exciting pomp and ceremony of the event, the Queen's speech itself felt like something of an anti-climax, with many MPs and voters alike asking themselves 'haven't we heard all this before?'

The Queen announced several Bills the Government intends to bring forward this year, covering a wide collection of issues that are intended to meet "the rising aspirations" of the British People.

The Education and Skills Bill would make it compulsory for all 16 to 18 year olds in England to be in education or training from 2015.

A Counter-terrorism bill will enable the post-charge questioning of suspects and allow the "drawing of adverse inferences from a refusal to say something later relied on in court." Further to this, convicted terrorists will be required to provide details of their whereabouts after release and will be banned from foreign travel.



The right to request flexible working, currently only available to parents of children under six years of age, will be extended to those with older children under proposed Government plans.

Other measures announced included a Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill which will introduce restrictions on people convicted of violent offences after they have served their sentences. To meet with the growing hospital hygiene crisis a Health and Social Care Bill would introduce a single regulator for the health and adult care services who will also have the power to fine hospitals for failing to meet hygiene standards. A new offence concerning the incitement of hatred against gay, lesbian and transgender people will also be extended in order to cover disabled people.

Many of the Bills were warmly welcomed by David Cameron who explained "we proposed them in the first place." Indeed many of the Bills do show more than a passing resemblance to those championed by the Conservative Party, including the flexible working extension, and changes to inheritance tax. Cameron then went on to describe Gordon Brown as "bereft of vision" and his first Queen's speech as nothing more than "yet another re-launch that's yet another re-hash of short-term gimmicks and the same old thinking".

Brown's earlier 'pre-Queen's speech' speech where he set out his programme a good four months before this official announcement might have seemed revolutionary at the time, but as a result this rather uninspiring, unoriginal speech leaves most of us with the uneasy feeling of déjà vu.