



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 19; October 2008

Welcoming note

Welcome to the October 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 October issue.

A word from the Chair

To the brink - and beyond



The Paris newspaper 'Le Monde' has described Gordon Brown as the saviour of the Western World – they do not have him as their political leader!

On the way to and from Dover I noticed that, in a masterly act of spin, all British cars now have Brown's initials on the back to support his act of folly in trying to fight an economic battle with no reserves (having previously spent them all). The British banks are now going for 9% tier one capital instead of the 6% which was previously regarded as appropriate. The new found ability of the Government to interfere in the compensation packages of banks is alarming – can bankers now be guaranteed the same pension rights as our MPs and civil servants, will the package Mr Mandelson received

from the E.U. be perceived as the norm.

These comments are being written on the evening of Wednesday 15th October. The stock markets have again been hit – but this time by the realisation that an economic downturn in the real world is now with us and unless the UK Government borrows more – or increases tax – then there is no real help they can offer. The problem in the Sterling deposit market, despite all the hype, is the reality of three months interbank rate being at 6¼% as against a 4½% base rate, and all the government guarantees have not solved this problem. It is just as well that the Bank of England had held firm on the interest rates otherwise the drop to 4½% could not have been engineered as part of the Brown / Darling package. Let us hope that 5.2% is the top of the inflation spiral and a helix will now prevail.

In the early 1980s – 1 month Euro dollar interest rates were 21 5/8% - the world survived – what would happen now if such rates were to occur? We have also seen the collapse of the Icelandic banks – everyone now realises why they were paying such attractive rates to attract funds. The personal savers are to guaranteed refund of all their monies; no longer is there a £50,000 ceiling. Unfortunately many companies, charities, public bodies, local and County councils have made deposits in the failed banks. Do they not remember Hammersmith and Fulham with their interest rate swaps problems and the Western Isles with BCCI?

For highly paid executives to have placed money with banks such as Glitnir is, surely, a dereliction of duty. It is sad to find Surrey County Council locked into two Icelandic banks for a total of £20million, £10million of which is in Glitnir. Presumably the local taxpayers will pick up the tab for the possible loss of what could be 4% of the budget.



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 19; October 2008

There may be a temporary increase in the popularity of the Labour Party but when people in this country realise that the overwhelming increase in Government spending left nothing in reserve for the events of the past weeks and months then we can expect to see our support re-emerge and the opportunity for our party to govern is hopefully only eighteen months away. I am sure David Cameron and his team, having correctly helped the Government during the banking crunch of the last weeks, will be prepared to help restore this country to real prosperity.

Mr Colin Crispin
Chairman, Mole Valley Conservative Association

News from the House of Commons

South East Plan Westminster Hall Debate



On Wednesday 22nd October, Anne Milton MP for Guildford was successful in securing a Westminster Hall debate on the South East Plan. I joined the debate to ensure that the voice of Mole Valley residents was heard by the Minister. I am deeply concerned and horrified that the Government Inspector dramatically increased SEERA's housing target from 332 to 422 homes a year to be provided in the Guildford borough. The worry is that these figures are not a target but a floor and there is also a refusal to accept windfall sites when planning housing supply.

I pointed out to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Mr Sadiq Khan, "My constituency... has green belt, areas of outstanding natural beauty, special protection areas, special areas of conservation, and farms that produce food for our area and for London, which are particularly important now, with all the concern over food and food prices. My hon. Friend said that the problem is that the figures are not a target but a floor. The refusal to accept the windfalls makes that floor damaging. In my area, recent growth has come from developers purchasing large single properties or achieving an amalgam of purchases—a few houses—then demolishing them and building additional homes. The developments do not come in sizes that are large enough to count on plans, so they cannot be predicted—they are a windfall—but they are where the growth is happening."

In my concluding comments during the debate I told the Minister, "we are putting the case succinctly and asking him to look at the figures, including the SEERA figures, and move to those, at least; to allow windfalls to be taken into consideration; and to recognise that despite the pouring of houses, and the people in them, into its area, Surrey county council has been deprived of funds to provide the infrastructure and turn the situation round at the same time as, if not before, the houses go in. It is quicker to build a house than to build a hospital or a school, and so on. If we are to have the growth—we need some—we need that infrastructure. Finally, I ask the Minister to recognise that the success of the south-east could be mimicked elsewhere if planning were used. That would ease the demand and would not, as he is doing with his figures, put petrol on the fire that is already there."

Sir Paul Beresford
Member of Parliament for Mole Valley



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 19; October 2008

Report from Surrey County Council

Should we have a directly elected Mayor?



I was disappointed earlier this month when we were given the decision by Surrey's Planning Committee that permission would be granted to build an incinerator at Capel. However all is not yet lost as the same Judge that overturned the committee's decision last time has asked to review this new decision alongside the waste plan of the county council which is being challenged by Capel Parish Council. I think they have a good chance.

The great debate at county hall and which more importantly should be across the whole county is whether we should have a directly elected mayor or strong leader. 'What?' I hear you say 'more bureaucratic jobs!' Well yes I am afraid so - the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act requires the Council to make changes to its current governance and decision making arrangements. The new arrangements will come into operation immediately after the County Council elections in May 2009.

So what does this mean? A directly elected Mayor will hold office for a period of four years. Once elected the Mayor would be responsible for all Executive functions and would decide which of these functions were going to be delegated to other Cabinet members, Local Committees or Council officers. The Mayor would appoint a Cabinet of a minimum of two and a maximum of nine councillors and the Mayor and Cabinet would take decisions on Executive functions.

Alternatively, the executive leader and Cabinet model is similar to the County Council's current Leader and Executive arrangements. There would continue to be a leader of the Council and a Cabinet of at least two but no more than nine other councillors. However, much more power would be placed in the hands of the Leader of the Council than at present. The Leader would be responsible for all Executive functions, and would decide which of these functions were going to be delegated to other Cabinet members, Local Committees or Council officers. The Cabinet would be appointed by the Leader and not by the whole Council as at present. Another change to the current arrangements is that the Leader is elected by the whole Council for a period of four years at the first meeting of the Council after the County Council elections.

We have to make our minds up at the special council meeting on 9th December but I want to hear from members of the party locally how they think I should vote. There are lots of questions that come to mind like who will be the party's candidate? How will we manage such a campaign? Is this a Boris for Surrey? What if we get a celebrity candidate or a man in a monkey suit – remember Stuart Drummond in Hartlepool - who wins? What will all the other councillors do? Do the districts and boroughs also get a directly elected mayor?

As ever please email me with your views helyn.clack@btopenworld.com

County Councillor Helyn Clack
Member for Dorking Rural
Executive Member for Safer and Stronger Communities



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 19; October 2008

Report from Guildford Borough Council Town centre Parking and Shuttle Bus



Despite a hard fought campaign, we were unable to win the by-election in Stoke ward in September. This ward was won by the Liberal Democrats from Labour for the first time in May 2007 and they retained the seat by a majority of 454. Nevertheless, we finished a strong second, relegating Labour to third place.

Our focus is now moving to the 2009/10 budget round for the council. It is clear that we are going to have to make some tough decisions in the year ahead, but we are determined to maintain our excellent record on council tax.

Due to an error in the 2004 Town Centre On-Street Parking Order, discovered recently, motorists parking on the street in Guildford Town Centre are enjoying free parking for a temporary period. Before charging can be reinstated, a new order has to be drawn up, which we hope will be in force in early November. This is extremely frustrating for us, as the revenue from on-street parking helps to support the Park and Ride service. However, on a more positive note, a new Park and Ride service on the A246 at Mellow has just opened in time for the Christmas shopping period. We hope that residents on the eastern side of Mole Valley Constituency will take advantage of it!

Finally, the row over the withdrawal of the Town Centre Shuttle Bus continues to rumble on. The Executive decided to stop the service, which would have cost over £100,000 per annum had it continued under a new contract, at the end of August. The Surrey Advertiser has been running a campaign ever since to reinstate it, despite the fact that we have launched the Guildford Town Rider, based on our Dial a Ride service, as a replacement. The new service will provide an alternative for the elderly and disabled, who have missed the old service the most, and we are confident that it will provide good value for money.

Cllr Andrew French
Deputy Leader, Guildford Borough Council

Report from Mole Valley District Council

What's happening at Mole Valley District Council?



Before we begin my monthly report from the council, let me invite you to have a look at the Conservative Group of Councillors' website. You'll find it at:-

www.molevalleyconservativegroup.org.uk

The website has been live for about six months, but recently it's undergone a new design. The idea is to bring you news and comments about what your Conservative Council is doing. We welcome all comments – positive and negative!

In the meantime back at the council, our Leader Jean Pearson is calling for a change to the way in which central government funds Mole Valley.



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 19; October 2008

Says Jean:-

"At present we have a ridiculously convoluted system. We gather in business rates, pay it over to the government and then they give some of it back through a complex process. This cannot be right. Much of what Business Rate payers pay in Surrey goes up North and we have no means of checking how our share is calculated."

Jean suggests a new independent body, which would be free from political interference and would give councils the funding they require for the services they need to provide. This would ensure that each council can offer the same level of service to their residents as each other – standardising each authority's ability to meet the needs of its residents.

Mole Valley collects Council Tax from households and pays some to the County, some to the police and the rest to itself: the Government is not involved except that it limits the percentage increase rise to 5% irrespective of the starting rate. Mole Valley's council tax rate is lower than most)

However up north where the needs are assessed as high and the resource low (many of the houses are Band A as opposed to Bands G and H here), northern councils get a large amount of NNDR and RSG.

The result is that some 60% of the NNDR collected in Surrey leaves the County. The allocation has been changed and it now seems to be arbitrary. When it started off there were formulae which could be checked.

Surrey County Council's leader, Nick Skellett has already made the same suggestion. He aired his ideas for more equitable funding and fairer social care charging at a Question Time debate organised by Surrey County Council and moderated by TV journalist Nicholas Owen that focused on the growing demand for adult social care. Mr Skellett told a capacity audience of 180 at the University of Surrey:-

"The Government gives Surrey residents £205 funding per person for vital local government services, which is way below the national average of £595, and the funding for Manchester of £855. The impact of this and poor grant means there is a funding gap in social care of up to £15 million per year. Surrey residents and businesses contribute £12.9 billion in taxes to the Exchequer but receive back only £7.4 billion in benefits and grants to public services."

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



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 19; October 2008

News in brief

MPs to move out?

It recently emerged that MPs could be moved out of the Palace of Westminster for up to three years so that major repairs can be made to the House of Commons. As well as electric cables and water pipes needing to be replaced, there are also concerns about asbestos. Every year between July to October, when Parliament is in recess, essential work is carried out on the estate in order to cause as little disruption as possible. However the scale of the refit is said to be so great that it would take 25 years of working throughout the summer recess to complete work, which could be completed in just three years if MPs were moved out of Parliament and relocated elsewhere. A £250,000 feasibility study has been commissioned to explore the options for relocating the MPs. The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre which is just across Parliament Square from the Palace of Westminster would be a strong contender to set up a temporary Commons chamber. However, MPs do not need to start moving yet, as the work is unlikely to begin until 2012.



Sir Paul pleased with progress



Over the last few years Sir Paul Beresford has been actively involved in trying to improve laws relating to the monitoring and prosecution of sex offenders so he was pleased to hear a decision recently relating to an issue that Sir Paul has raised previously. Sir Paul had suggested that offenders convicted of an offence of failing to provide access to encrypted computer files by failing to comply with a notice made under section 49 of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, should be made subject to the sex offenders register. Vernon Coaker, the Minister of State for Policing, Security and

Crime, has considered this and decided that this offence should be added to Schedule 5 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. This would have the effect that anyone convicted of this offence could be made subject, by a court, to a Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO) if they presented a risk of serious sexual harm. This could make such an offender subject to certain restrictions. Also, anyone subject to a SOPO is automatically subject to the sex offenders register. This change will be made by secondary legislation as soon as it is practicable.

Stand to attention for the EU's national anthem *by Daniel Hannan MEP*

The European Parliament has voted to reinsert the EU's national symbols: its flag, anthem, motto and public holiday. You will remember that the deletion of these emblems was the sole alteration made to the European Constitution when it was resurrected as the Lisbon Treaty. Now MEPs have voted to overturn the referendum results and, flicking two fingers at their voters, to give these trappings of statehood more exposure than ever. The national anthem, Beethoven's Ninth, will now be played whenever the European Parliament meets in solemn session, with MEPs expected to stand to attention. I had been panning to mark the event with a dignified protest: I didn't want to sit there sulking, or to stalk out. So I had intended, with various pro-referendum MEPs from different countries, to sing *La Marseillaise*, in homage to that wonderful scene from Casablanca where the café waiters and clients drown out the German marching song with their hymn to freedom. Then again, what with the financial crisis and the general mood of gloom, I didn't want to be trivial. But I did register my dissent, in the 60 seconds provided under the rules, without hesitation, repetition or deviation. The Treaty of Lisbon must be put to the people: *Pactio Olisipiensis Censenda Est*.



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 19; October 2008

Feature Article

Pharmacy White Paper Proposals

As you may well be aware, the proposals in the Pharmacy White Paper could have a great impact on the future of dispensing doctors. The White Paper proposes changing the distance requirements for the establishment of dispensing practices: currently, it is the distance from a patient's house to the surgery; in future, it would be the distance from the surgery to the nearest community pharmacy.

This could result in the loss of many dispensing practices in the Mole Valley constituency where dispensing surgeries provide a vital service in rural communities. The consultation document sets out 4 options as set out below:



Option 1 is no change.

Option 2 is that whilst continuing with current arrangements where GP dispensing applies in controlled localities, the existing specific distance criteria would be removed.

Option 3 would mean that, instead of the distance between the patient's home and the pharmacy, the determining factor should be a distance between the dispensing surgery and the nearest community pharmacy.

Option 4 is a variation of Option 3. It would mean that a GP would not dispense where there is a pharmacy within 500m or 100m of the GP practice and a second pharmacy within 1500m. Those who are permitted to dispense may do so to all their registered patients regardless of the distance between their home and the surgery or pharmacy.

If you would like your views to be taken onboard please visit the following webpage and download the consultation response form:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH_087324

Consultation responses should be sent in by 20th November 2008.