



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 18; September 2008

Welcoming note

Welcome to the September 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 September issue.

A word from the Chair

September 15 2008 was Battle of Britain Day – not just “Meltdown Monday”



I was asked a month or so ago why I tended to concentrate on financial matters – rather than say environmental or defence policies. The recent events have shown that at the end of the day if wealth creation stops then so does virtually everything else. If America were to become insular because of financial pressures then the effect on the poorer regions of the world, in Africa and South America, could be cataclysmic – the effects on the poorer parts of Detroit, Pittsburgh and New Orleans is already significant.

In Britain we are led by a man who must hate the month of September – in 2007 Gordon Brown had an opportunity and chose to miss it. Had he been re-elected in 2007 we would well be facing four more years of his supposed “prudent” stewardship, not only of our finances but in all aspects of our life. The comparison with Dick Fuld, of Lehman Brothers, is interesting. Fuld, also in September (but this time 2008) had the opportunity to save his institution and his staff, but arrogance made him reject any suitor or would-be investor, so he and Lehman's are finished. It is interesting that Henry Paulson pulled the plug on Lehman's; the London staff have no fall back other than their own ability, they must look up at Newcastle and wonder why the staff of Northern Rock were so important but the fall out of bank staff in London does not seem so important.

The vested interest of those who want UK interest rates lowered, despite the latest inflation figure of 4.7%, should remember that inflation can destroy everything. The base rate may be at 5% but the rate at which banks lend sterling to each other is 5.7% for three months, which must impact high street lending patterns. There has to be a limit to Government spending – be it on pensions for state employees (national and local) or some of the more altruistic expenditures on say orchestras, Opera Houses and so on. If we are to have a severe winter then real harm will be done to people – heating and food are vital – Olympic villages are not. As I wrote in April people will be familiar with CMOs, CDOs, Monoline bond insurance and Credit default swaps. The tangible evidence of the fragility of the present situation can be seen on the shirts of Newcastle United (Northern Rock), Manchester United (AIG) and West Ham (XL).

Mr Darling and his team have no answers – and Mr Brown has spent all the reserves in the good times on fruitless expenditure so that now we are in the really bad times we have no reserves to spend. Let Mr Brown be grateful that he can issue Government instruments to fund his folly – and we the taxpayer know we have the overhang to be funded for years to come.

I look forward to inspiration from the Conservative Conference to lead us again to a land of real promise.

Mr Colin Crispin
Chairman, Mole Valley Conservative Association



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News from the House of Commons

Pilot scheme to protect children from sex offenders



New measures will allow parents to ask the police whether a person with access to their child is a sex offender under a new pilot scheme being rolled out in Warwickshire, Cambridgeshire, Cleveland and Hampshire. The new concept which has taken its inspiration from Megan's Law in the United States which enables the police to inform the public about child sex offenders in their local communities.

The pilots have been met with mixed reviews from children's charities who welcome efforts to prevent child abuse but warn that there are intrinsic flaws to these plans which could ultimately lead to driving offenders deeper underground.

The new concept takes its inspiration from elements of 'Megan's Law' in the United States which enables the police to inform the public about child sex offenders in their local communities. Sara Payne has been lobbying for a British version of the American law since her daughter Sarah was murdered by a convicted sex offender in 2000.

Under the UK pilots, once a parent, carer or guardian has placed a request for information on a specific individual who has contact with their child, the police are obliged to look into the background of that person to discover any previous convictions which may indicate that they are a danger to children. Should these checks reveal that they have been convicted of child sex offences, the case will be considered by a panel of representatives from the police, probation and prison service and other agencies. Ultimately they will decide whether to disclose the information to the person enquiring, depending on the seriousness of the risk that person poses to a child.

An awkward caveat of the system requires that the parent does not disclose any information to other parents as this could lead to vigilantism. If they do tell other parents that their children are also in close contact with convicted of child sex offences they could face court action. This will be difficult to legislate and will cause huge moral dilemmas.

Only time will tell how effective this new scheme will be at tackling this very serious and widespread problem of sexual predators targeting children.

Sir Paul Beresford
Member of Parliament for Mole Valley



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Report from Surrey County Council

Brown, baseball and Birmingham...



After an awfully wet and dull August – the sun has come out to cheer us – however the news is far from cheerful with a financial crisis dropping like a tornado and picking off financial institutions in its path. Gordon Brown now says he wants to 'clean up' the City. He seems to forget that he is the man who during ten years as Chancellor created and presided over the current system of regulation. For ten years he boasted about his achievements. Now he is trying to disown them.

The Executive of the County Council wrote to Gordon Brown to point out the rise in energy costs would have on our residents both through our own increase running costs and on residents own bills. The reply was not very helpful, but thank goodness we have managed to contract energy for the Council which will be flexible and reflect the best rates available.

I was delighted to discover that the Surrey History Centre based in Woking had been able to help the Major League Baseball Association in the USA who were looking for information about the origins of the game. The Surrey History Centre had recently helped a lady in Shere with a discovery of a diary by William Bray she had found in a garden shed. The diary had a reference to playing 'baseball' on the green in the village on Easter Monday with friends (including women). The date was 1755 and is the earliest reference to the game yet found. Boris Johnson told the world that ping pong was coming home for the 2012 games, perhaps it's time to bring baseball home to Surrey as well.

Talking of the 2012 games, this week we raised the flag again to celebrate the handover of the Paralympic Games to Great Britain. I was delighted to join our High Sheriff Sally Varah and the clients of the Disability Initiative in Camberley to celebrate with them. The Paralympics will inspire our young adults with learning disabilities and I hope we will see more medal winners from Surrey at the 2012 games. Well done to those Great Britain Medallists from the Beijing Olympics!!

The Leader of the County Council Nick Skellett put himself in front of the public for 'Question Time' at Surrey University to discuss the rising cost of Adult and Children Social care – out of an annual budget of £1.2 billion - £700 million is spent directly on schools in Surrey, £300 plus million is spent on social care, with government grant only supporting 20% of this, the Surrey resident pays the remaining 80% of the annual cost. Many of the people in the audience were from the voluntary sector, carers or users of social care and the evening facilitated by TV's Nicholas Owen was extremely interesting. You can watch a webcast of the debate if you go to the County Council's website and follow the links.

At the end of the month we are all off to Birmingham for the annual Conservative Party Conference, Birmingham has changed a lot in over the years and delegates will be pleasantly surprised to find a thoroughly modern and efficient town centre – I really enjoy conference – a great time to improve your knowledge on what's being done and new ideas to solve local problems. I hope to come away refreshed and invigorated ready to get stuck in to building up to the County Elections.

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



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Report from Guildford Borough Council

South East Plan



Guildford Borough Council held a successful public meeting on September 8 to discuss the Government's proposed changes to the South East Plan. Both Sir Paul Beresford and Anne Milton were present.

In this latest version of the plan Guildford is required to build a minimum of 422 homes a year in the period up till 2026 (an increase of 27% over the existing housing stock) and is designated as a regional hub and a 'centre for significant change'. The Government consider that some of these houses, perhaps 2,000, will need to be built on Green Belt in north east Guildford by 2026 and a further 2,000 are likely there by 2031.

There is strong opposition to building on this scale which will destroy the character of Guildford, a geographically constrained historic town. The Green Belt release would be between Burpham and West Clandon (in Mole Valley constituency) and would destroy the strategic gap between the urban area of Guildford and the historic village.

Having heard the clear views of MPs, residents' associations, parish councils and interested individuals GBC will be making a strong and detailed response to the Government.

Shuttle Bus

GBC decided in July not to renew the contract to provide the town centre shuttle bus and the service finished at the end of August.

The reasons for this were that there are now a number of alternative bus services travelling parallel to the High Street. The contract was likely to cost in the region of £100,000 a year and the majority of users were over 60s who could travel free on the alternative services, which they could not do when the shuttle bus was introduced. In addition the Dial a Ride (costing the taxpayer £400,000 a year) service provides transport for anyone with mobility problems.

It is noteworthy that GBC is underfunded by the Government by about £400,000 a year for the provision of free bus transport for over 60s.

This is just one of the difficult decisions resulting from the squeeze on local government from inadequate Government funding for the tasks required.

Cllr Jenny Wicks
Guildford Borough Council



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Report from Mole Valley District Council

What's happening at Mole Valley District Council?



Mole Valley's Conservative Administration has launched the first Area Forum in Ashted and Leatherhead.

Conservative Councillor Sylvia Sharland, who chaired the meeting said:-

"This Area Forum was a huge success. We had two representatives of Surrey Primary Care Trust as well as Chris Grayling, the MP. Also present was our Council Leader, Cllr. Jean Pearson, Jack Straw, a planning officer from Mole Valley and Sgt. Simon Cox of Surrey Police. The public had the opportunity to ask questions of all these people. In addition, there were fifteen minutes for questions at the end of the Forum so that the public could ask the Mole Valley Councillors and the County Councillors any questions about any subjects."

The purpose of these forums is to engage with the people of Mole Valley. Councillor Sharland says that she has had nothing but positive reactions although apparently there was a slight problem with the sound system!

Says Sylvia:-

"This was our first Forum and I have no doubt we will improve as we go along. So why not come to the next Forum which will be held in Ashted on 26th January?"

Also coming up soon is the Bookham and Fetcham Area Forum. Conservative Councillor Clare Curran (Bookham South) said:-

"I am hoping to get off to a flying start in Bookham and Fetcham. We want to show the local residents association that we can reach the parts of our villages that other ears cannot reach. We want to discuss those issues, about which our residents feel strongly. These could be the A24, public conveniences, potholes, recycling, parking, Tesco and backland developments etc. All residents will have the chance to come along and challenge their councillors about those very things! We can also highlight the main topic for discussion at each Forum."

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



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News in brief

Sunday Funday Party

When Mike Tuke and his team run a summer Sunday anniversary party it takes some beating. Last Sunday, there were 600 guests, funfair daredevil events, football competitions, exotic cars, with food galore and drink to match. Replica Beatles and a very loud disco took turns in stirring the whole event, while real English summer sunshine warmed the day. Mike Tuke is head of Finsbury Orthopaedics in Leatherhead and this was their exceptionally generous celebration of 30 years of an increasingly successful business designing and producing front line cutting edge orthopaedic implants. Staff, ex-staff, and almost anyone associated with the firm along with their families crowded into the grounds at the Queen Elizabeth Foundation in Leatherhead. Paul Beresford joined in time to cut the anniversary cake and pull the lottery ticket for the holiday to Venice.



Clegg's "irresponsible" Energy Strategy

Last month, Liberal Democrat Leader Nick Clegg's energy strategy claims were branded as "wilfully irresponsible" by the Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Alan Duncan. Duncan's comments came after Clegg declared the need for the kind of vision, application and political will behind the Apollo moon mission in order to supply all the UK's energy needs by 2050. He said that this would be achieved not through reliance on fossil fuels or nuclear energy but through wave, wind, biomass and solar power. Duncan commented, "In the

absence of both coal and nuclear, how could the UK power large factories and cope with sudden fluctuations in demand without also needing gas? As that gas would have to be imported, his promise of self-sufficiency becomes indefensible." Duncan pointed out that much of Clegg's energy strategy was copied from Conservative policy but that "his overall conclusions defy reality". He continued, "Setting the energy debate in the context of 2050 instead of the decisions that need to be taken today brand the Lib Dems as a party which cannot be taken seriously on such a compelling area of public policy. Mr Clegg's reckless claims are wilfully irresponsible."

Gatwick Airport is to be sold



It has been confirmed that Gatwick Airport is to be sold by BAA. Several firms are interested in buying the airport, including Virgin, for an estimated £2bn. The concern for us as residents in the south east region is whether the new buyer will build a second runway. In order to compete with Heathrow it is likely that any firm bidding for Gatwick would want to create a second runway. Both Crawley council and the campaign group No Gatwick Runway (Nogar) want Gatwick to continue to thrive but insist it should remain a single-runway airport. BAA published a draft plan for a second runway at Gatwick in 2005, but a legal ruling prevents any construction work beginning before 2019.



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Feature Article

Surrey's Big Drink Debate



Surrey Primary Care Trust (PCT) is conducting a survey to discover Surrey residents' views and experiences of alcohol, in order to plan and develop an effective alcohol strategy across the county. The survey on this very important topic closes on 30 September so make sure you complete the questionnaire in time. Surrey PCT looks forward to hearing your views and has provided the following information for our readers:

Surrey's Big Drink Debate is a major public engagement campaign right across the county, led by a partnership that includes Surrey Primary Care Trust (PCT), Surrey County Council, Surrey Police and all eleven boroughs.

The campaign is looking to find out more about attitudes in Surrey towards alcohol, principally through an online survey.

So far there has been an excellent response to the online questionnaire, which encourages people to share their views and experiences of alcohol and alcohol-related behaviour, and asks where they go to access help.

The campaign will raise awareness with all age groups that excessive and irresponsible drinking can be dangerous to health. It also provides information that enables people to understand how many units a week they are drinking and to find out about recommendations for sensible alcohol use.

Findings from the online survey will inform a Surrey-wide alcohol strategy that will set out new measures to tackle dangerous drinking head on, so it's important people in Surrey have their say and help the agencies involved to get this right.

As part of the Big Drink Debate, Surrey PCT is running a free prize draw with the chance to win one of a number of exciting prizes which are being drawn every month until the survey closes.

The Big Drink Debate questionnaire is online at:

<http://www.surreybigdrinkdebate.nhs.uk/>