

Ashtead Independents

NEWSLETTER



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LIBERAL DEMOCRATS KEEP COUNCIL OFFICES CLOSED!



Council office doors closed

Have you ever tried contacting Mole Valley Council Officers either in person or by telephone?

Now it's more difficult following the Liberal Democrats' decision to close the offices from 2.30pm every day, allowing the majority of staff to work from home three days a week!

Your telephone calls are now dealt with by the Customer Services Team who will pass on messages to other Officers, with residents having to wait for a response days later.

This is an appalling situation and is no way to run a Council. It is inefficient, costly and causes needless delay and frustration for residents.

At the recent Full Council, I requested that Council offices remain open till 5pm every day and that Council staff return to working in the office five days a week. These requests were refused by the Liberal Democrats saying that residents can contact the Council digitally!

This is not inclusive and totally ignores all those people who are not comfortable with, or unable to use, technology. It also fails those who have complex or sensitive queries that require face to face contact.

Ashtead Independents believe that everyone should be treated equally have the easiest access to the full range of Council services and information. We will continue to pursue this matter.



Councillor Gerry Sevenoaks

PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITIES - PARKING & ENFORCEMENT

Surrey Highways are way behind establishing yellow lines to protect our school children in Ashtead - due last May/June.

I have been chasing this for months, but I am sorry to say the same excuse is being given. Parking Enforcement has been taken away from the Districts and is being done by a Company under contract to Surrey County Council.

I have asked for the details of when enforcement officers have visited Ashtead, particularly to protect our schools, but have yet to receive a reply.

On a more positive note the 20mph limit around schools is currently being implemented around The Greville with consultation going on for the area around Downsends/St Andrews/St Peters and West Ashtead.

The road humps in both Woodfield Lane and Barnett Wood Lane are being assessed for improvement in relation to issues such as noise, and this, once costed and approved, could well be implemented during 2024.

If you have any concerns about enforcement on any issue and/or road in Ashtead please contact: surreyparkingenforcement@nslservices.co.uk



County Councillor Chris Townsend

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More Improvements to Ashtead Pond

I am pleased to report that Ashtead Pond has undergone a remarkable transformation thanks to the dredging and the pruning of the trees and plants around it. It has been a long process, but we are finally seeing the results of restoring the pond to its former glory.

For too long, the pond was neglected and obscured by overgrown vegetation and silt. The intention was to protect the water from road pollution, but the lack of maintenance and funding led to a dismal situation. The water level dropped, the wildlife suffered, and the public could not enjoy the beauty of the pond.

Fortunately, the Council took action and removed a total of 330 tons of silt in two phases. They also trimmed and removed some of the trees that were blocking the light and consuming too much water. The pond is now deeper, clearer, and more inviting. The birds and other animals can thrive in their natural habitat, and people can appreciate the view and relax by the water.



Councillor Patricia Wiltshire

Update on Ashtead Youth Centre Activities



Rally Karting project

Ashtead Youth Club is a vital service for the young people of our community, and we are proud to share some of the achievements and activities that have taken place this year.

Our youth club offers a variety of programmes for different age groups, from sports and games to arts and crafts, from life skills and leadership to volunteering and social action.

One of our most popular sessions is the Rally Karting Project, which teaches members about teamwork, mechanics, and driving.

We are also excited to announce that we will be celebrating our first batch of Bronze Duke of Edinburgh

Award recipients in December, as well as showcasing the talents and experiences of our young people who participated in the Rotary Youth Leaders programme.

Councillor Mary Cooper

Help Us Keep Ashtead's Alleyways Safe

Can you spare 2 hours a month to help cut back vegetation along alleys to help make using the network of alleyway footpaths easier and safer?

If so, please join me and the Ashtead Independents Alley Action Team - our growing group of volunteers who meet at 10am on the first Saturday of the month.



Councillor Chris Hunt

Decision on Artificial Football Pitch Goes into Extra Time

The Liberal Democrat Cabinet at Mole Valley District Council agreed that the planned fenced-off artificial football pitch in Ashtead QEII recreation ground should go forward to the next stages. However, the Cabinet's decision was reached despite earlier opposition from Ashtead Independent members of the Scrutiny Committee, including chairman David Hawksworth. As it felt its concerns were not adequately addressed, the Scrutiny Committee called in the decision for re-examination on the 14th November. It will report back to the Cabinet on the 28th November.

The Scrutiny Committee's concerns primarily focused on the threat to the openness of the area, the use of plastics, and loss of public open space, as opposed to possible benefits it could bring to young people's access to all weather football facilities. There were further concerns over the consultation process and that the new facility was to be managed by a company established for that purpose and independent from Ashtead Football Club.

Despite concerns, the Lib Dem Cabinet decided to still proceed with the decision.

Several matters still remain to be progressed before any works could be permitted to start including approval to divert the route of the existing public right of way footpath, consent from Fields in Trust, and advertising the loss of public open space.



Councillor David Hawksworth

JAZZ AT THE SWAN CENTRE

I spent a marvellous evening at the Stockroom Society jazz event in the Leatherhead Swan Centre. The initiative was conjured up by Rachel Groom an Ashtead Park resident. The Stockroom took over the pop-up gallery in the Swan Centre.

The team have 20 artists exhibiting and has aimed to provide workshops from DJ'ing rapping & street art for teenagers, workshops for adults with some free sessions. A great initiative from an Ashtead Resident



Councillor Mary Cooper

Lib Dems Continue to Waste Money on an Empty Building - Pippbrook House

Ever since the Liberal Democrats gained control of Mole Valley Council they have been pouring money into this empty building, which Surrey Libraries vacated ten years ago.

The Lib Dems have admitted that maintaining an empty Pippbrook House is now projected to cost Council Tax payers around £100,000 a year to keep the building in a minimal safe condition.

A much-hyped plan to use it has come to nothing...yet the ruling party say they plan to spend millions on the building anyway while one senior Lib Dem Councillor has admitted that the building is worth only a fraction of that!!

With Pippbrook House and plans for spending huge sums on Dorking Halls, it is clear that the true focus for the ruling Lib Dem group is to keep pouring money into their political power base in central Dorking – the rest of us have to pay for it.



Councillor Chris Hunt



A New £13.7m Cycle Corridor for Ashted?

Liberal Democrats at Mole Valley District Council are spending £160,000 for more designs for the district's new £13.7m bike and pedestrian routes.

The two routes under consideration are the northern route connecting Leatherhead with Epsom and a route between Leatherhead and Great Bookham. These are a part of the Surrey County Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Project.

The route through Ashted along Barnett Wood Lane and Craddocks Avenue would involve a mixture of shared pavements, one-way and two-way tracks, carriageway widening,

verge narrowing, junction modification, and new crossings (two with Toucan lights). There are also suggestions to widen the routes across the Woodfield to the Railway Station and through the Ashted Recreation Ground to allow mixed usage.

Given the failure of the southern Leatherhead to Epsom route along the A24 to attract significant numbers of cyclists, the newish Ashted Route has been opposed by Ashted Independent Councillors. It is surprising then that this next stage is proceeding without any public consultation or hard evidence of possible usage (other than some modelling).

The 'Local Cycling and Walking Plan' is available on the Mole Valley District Council website; keep an eye out for the eventual public consultation!

Councillor David Hawksworth

Ashted Park Volunteer Group

It is a shame that our first volunteer day of the season had to be cancelled but we will be having another one soon and I will keep people informed on our website and on social media.

There is still a huge amount of clearance work needed in the park because it is just that – a park. The estate did not have a great deal of natural woodland and, although there are some lovely specimen very old oaks, many of the older trees were planted by the owners of Ashted Park House, now the City of London Freeman's School. These include some alien specimens such as the Yellow Buckeye (*Aesculus flava*) from America and the Caucasian Elm (*Zelkova carpinifolia*).

Volunteers are trying to remove the encroaching bramble, scrub, and thousands of saplings that are taking over the open spaces. The Park has been neglected for a long time and even the notice boards are decrepit and out of date. The dead hedge did manage to divert people to the preferred path, but it is now unsightly and will be removed.

Some carefully targeted work on trees with ash dieback has been carried out and only ones that are far gone have been removed. The rest of the ash trees will continue to be monitored. Also, some money has been found to replace the signage and the information will be updated.

Along with the Leatherhead Angling Club which has a licence to fish the pond, the Council is aiming to improve the areas around the pond and, hopefully, the recently installed plastic piping and netting will be concealed, or removed appropriately. It is all 'work in progress' and anyone who would like to volunteer is welcome to give their details to Councillors so that they can be assured of being kept up to date.



Councillor Patricia Wiltshire

Mists, Mellow Fruitfulness, and Bonfires

It's that time of the year again and the air will be full of acrid smoke from bonfires and fireworks. I make no secret of the fact that I hate both – bonfires because of their toxic fumes and particulates, and fireworks because they are noisy, and terrify pets and wildlife.

Thankfully, we have fewer bonfires in Ashtead than 43 years ago when I arrived, and when some people burned even their domestic rubbish. Luckily, most now realise that wood smoke is highly toxic. Smoke from tobacco is just one plant species that is carcinogenic. Think of all the species in garden rubbish, and be aware that many carcinogenic and toxic compounds are released in its smoke - just look up 'toxins in woodsmoke' online.

The people who suffer most are those with chest ailments, and any kind of smoke will exacerbate their discomfort and ill health. But woodsmoke is harmful to healthy people, even if they like the smell of it, or they find it difficult to believe.

Compost your garden waste as much as possible, take it to the Council Waste Centre in Randall's Road, or use the garden waste bins for collection. These are provided by the Council for a fee. If you need more information, the Council's website will give full details.

If a neighbour's bonfire is a nuisance, report it directly to the Environmental Health Team at MVDC: they have the authority to act as appropriate.

Councillor Patricia Wiltshire

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED BECOMING A DISTRICT COUNCILLOR?

Are you looking for a way to serve your community and make a difference? Do you share the values and vision of the Ashtead Independents? If so, you might be interested in becoming a Councillor.

The Ashtead Independents are a group of six Councillors who represent the best interests of all the residents of Ashtead on the Mole Valley District Council. They cannot be a member of any national political party while representing Ashtead and the Group cannot be affiliated with any national political party.

Becoming a Councillor is a rewarding and challenging role. You will have the opportunity to serve your community by shaping the future of your area, influence policies and services, and help solve local problems. You will also have to balance the demands of your constituents, the Council, and the law.

If you are thinking about becoming a Councillor, you should first visit our website and contact one of our current Councillors. They will be happy to answer your questions and give you advice on how to get involved. You should also talk to your family and friends, as being a Councillor will require some of your spare time. You also need to be over 18, live or work in Ashtead, and have a passion for making a positive difference.

If you decide to run for election, you will receive training and support from the Council and from us. You will also join various committees and groups that deal with different aspects of the Council's work. Most meetings are held in the evenings, but some may be during the day.

If you are interested, please get in touch with us, and also visit our website www.ashteadindependents.org.

For more general information, you can also check out this UK Government link:

www.gov.uk/government/get-involved/take-part/become-a-councillor

Councillor Garry Stansfield

Your Councillors:

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Drop-In Advice Surgeries

Don't forget that your Ashtead Independent Councillors run monthly drop-in Advice Surgeries between 2-4 pm on the first Saturday of each month at Ashtead Library.