

Ashtead Independents

Newsletter

Issue No 26



July 2017

Letter from the Leader

Dear Ashtead Resident.

We recognise that it is important to keep you informed of local issues and what we are doing about them, so we are pleased to be able to distribute this Summer update.



We were delighted with the outcome of the Surrey County elections in May with a resounding win for Chris Townsend our Ashtead Independent Councillor. He retained his seat and increased his majority with a 54% share of the votes cast. Ashtead Independent (AI) District Councillors continue to work hard on your behalf tackling parking, refuse handling, housing, and planning issues on a regular basis.

We work alongside Chris Townsend to tackle schooling, health & highways issues as they arise. Surrey County Council is facing significant financial pressure and the implications are discussed by Chris Townsend in the newsletter.

We are also delighted to confirm Councillor Simon Ling (AI Village Ward) has now been elected to the role of Chairman of Mole Valley Council with all party support.

Currently Mole Valley District Council remains operating with an all-Conservative Executive due to their overall majority. You can be assured we will be holding the revised Executive to account for their actions. During the period of joint Independent/Conservative control, many initiatives were put in place, including the Transform Leatherhead Project, and the refurbishment of the Pippbrook council offices, and we will continue to keep a close eye on these to ensure they are delivered effectively. The Ashtead Neighbourhood Development Plan was approved and recently ratified by Council. This will now form part of the planning process alongside the new Local Plan which is in the early stages of development. This very important document is expected to commence public consultation during the summer period.

These are exciting times for the development of Ashtead and we will continue to work closely with all residents within the community to deliver what is best for Ashtead. We continue to offer our monthly 'surgery' to further engage with our residents – please drop in and discuss issues directly with your Ward Councillor. The dates and location are published elsewhere in this newsletter. Please do not hesitate to contact us we are here to serve all the community.

Yours sincerely
Mary Cooper

Thanks from our County Councillor

I would like to thank the residents of Ashtead for continuing to support me as their Surrey County Councillor. I will continue to work for all Ashtead residents to the best of my ability and am happy to respond to any queries or issues that may occur over the next 4 years. I have a great team supporting me and my thanks also go to all of them without whom this pleasing result would not have been possible.



Chris Townsend

Ashtead Common

Ashtead Common is a much loved and well used open space. Like all natural environments it needs looking after and the City of London (which owns it) does a good job.

There is a body known as the "Ashtead Common Consultative Committee" which includes representatives from both Councils, and which reviews issues concerning the Common including programmes of work. Chris Townsend and David Hawksworth represent Surrey and Mole Valley respectively.

If residents have any concerns over matters to do with the Common they would like to see taken up they are welcome to contact them.

Simon Ling



(Photo by Shaun Waddell, Senior Ranger).

Future Mole Valley... Act Now!

A consultation by MVDC under the title "Future Mole Valley" commenced in July to gather views on the draft new **Local Plan**. Don't miss the opportunity to have your say on what development you would like to see (or not see) in your District.

Details at www.futuremolevalley.org

District Council Finances

Councils can only spend what they earn. This might not sound radical, but it is. Five years ago, it would have been the case that councils could only spend what they were given. Now, central government has stopped 'giving' money to councils to run services and, instead, expect them to engage in economic activity to generate their own funding. How has MVDC been reacting to this?

The Conservative administration aims to 'earn' £1M a year by borrowing £50M, at low interest rates for 50 years, from the Department of Communities, and then investing it in commercial property outside MVDC. I didn't agree with that. I expressed concern that what locals know in (say) Edinburgh, a due diligence exercise would miss. I argued in Scrutiny Committee, that we (MVDC) have more knowledge of our immediate locality, and the South East generally, than other parts of the country, so we might be better placed to consider local investment. Plus, we control planning, so why couldn't we invest 'under our noses' with more certainty, and to the benefit of our residents?

This £1M/year income stream is to cover the drop in the new homes bonus and the elimination of the Revenue Support Grant. The council needs an income of £10M a year to retain its spending on services. Without this new revenue, the Council's income will drop to £9M and there will be cuts, and these will probably have the greatest impact on the poorest and most vulnerable residents.

A few years ago, Woking Borough Council established a company to enable them to build their own council houses. Dwellings are now under construction, and the council is expected to cover its staff costs as well as returning a small surplus towards its own income next year. Woking has been investing 'under its nose'.

I am deputy leader of the Scrutiny Committee at council. I can influence who and/or what is scrutinised. I will continue to monitor where this £50M is spent, and intend to investigate whether it would be possible for Woking representatives to attend one of our Scrutiny Committee meetings to explain their financial planning. This will ensure that the Conservatives will be fully aware of alternative investment strategies.

David Harper



Parking restrictions (yellow lines etc.)

At a recent Local Committee of Mole Valley DC and Surrey CC councillors, it was agreed which parking restrictions (yellow lines, residents parking etc.) would be proposed for the future. Consultations will go ahead over the coming months, however implementation will take 18 months to 2 years as the severe budget cuts referred to elsewhere in this newsletter will preclude annual changes. Costs are to be spread over a two year period.

Chris Townsend



Balance Pond in The Murreys

The balance pond has been neglected ever since the development was built to the increasing concern of residents, and nobody knew who owned it.

Councillor Simon Ling has been able to establish that it is the property of the developers who are Taylor Woodrow. It is hoped that contact can now be made and some action will be taken.

Simon Ling



Photo courtesy of Charles Cowley

Car Parking by the Peace Memorial Hall

In March many residents told your Ashted Independent Councillors that they were worried to hear that 65 permits had been sold to a Leatherhead based company to park in the car parks at Ashted Peace Memorial Hall (APMH) and Grove Road.



We took action and are pleased to tell you that following their approaches to Mole Valley District Council and Premium Credit, the company has significantly reduced its use of the car parks in Ashted and returned a large proportion of the permits that were originally purchased as has Ashted Hospital.

We would like to put on record our appreciation of the responsible position taken by Premium Credit management in mitigating a difficult situation.

Peter Stanyard



Ashtead Tree Wardens Formed

In the course of survey work in preparation for the Ashtead Green Belt Boundary Review (Ashtead Neighbourhood Forum) in 2013, it came to the attention of Cllrs David Hawksworth and Patricia Wiltshire that there were some inconsistencies in what trees and wooded areas were subject to Tree Protection Orders (TPOs). It emerged from discussions that the Bookham and Fetcham Residents' Associations had Tree Wardens recognised under the National Tree Council's Tree Wardens Scheme. Following a meeting at MVDC Pippbrook with the pertinent MVDC staff and Residents' Associations in November 2015, David and representatives of the Bookham and Fetcham Tree Wardens met to discuss the way forward with the MVDC Tree Officer in January 2016. David was then a member of the Ashtead Residents' Association (ARA) Standing Committee which agreed to explore the possibility of establishing a new Ashtead Tree Wardens group. He sought interested persons through the Ashtead and Leatherhead Local, and at the ARA's AGM and Village Day that year.

The results were gratifying, and on 20 July 2016 he convened a meeting with those who had expressed interest and the MVDC Tree Officer, the Parks and Countryside Officer, and representative of the Bookham and Fetcham Tree Wardens to discuss what was involved. Having now been elected as Councillors for Ashtead Common, it was not appropriate for David or Patricia to be members of the Ashtead Tree Wardens (ATWs). Those interested were so keen they met separately to establish the group on 29 July 2016, deciding to operate under the umbrella of the ARA, and the ATWs Secretary has joined the ARA Standing Committee.

Their numbers have now swelled to 12, and the ATWs are already active and can be seen around Ashtead in yellow vests looking at trees, seeing which are subject to TPOs, and carrying out minor tree work on roadside trees under agreement with Surrey County Council

Highways. They are also acting as a source of advice to the ARA on planning applications that involve trees. The ATWs also want to encourage planting new trees, and planted their first, a whitebeam (*Sorbus aria* 'Lutescens'), on 22 March 2017.

Trees are such a part of the character of Ashtead, and your Ashtead Independent Councillors are pleased to have had a role in getting the ATWs established, and if you would like to get involved yourself, then please contact either the Chair (Roy Guy, email Roy.Guy@guy26.myzen.co.uk) or the Secretary (Chrissy Kerton, email chris2kerton@yahoo.co.uk).

David Hawksworth and Patricia Wiltshire



A24 crossing at Bramley Way

Surrey highways are still trying to create a design for a pedestrian crossing on the A24 near Bramley Way which meets all the stringent criteria laid down for these crossings. The bend in the road, the hill and narrow pavements all contrive to make the task less easy than one might think at first sight, not to mention budget resources.

But your Ashtead Independent Councillors are not letting the matter rest. We bring it up at every opportunity. We will get there!

Peter Stanyard



Political balance

Recently one of the Conservative members on the District Council resigned the party whip and now sits as an Independent. Of the 41 Councillors, just 21 are Conservative, 13 Liberal Democrat and now 7 (up from 6) Independent. Despite having such a wafer thin overall majority, the Conservatives provide the Leader and all the members of the Executive, and by exercising the party whip are able to determine the outcome of any vote. Furthermore of course an outcome need only be decided by 4 members of the Executive and this can become Council policy.

We believe that the way decisions can effectively be made by Councillors representing a tiny proportion of the Mole Valley electorate is wrong, and we would like to put this right by making sure that one Conservative is replaced by an Independent as soon as possible, to produce a hung council. In this way opinions from all areas and shades of opinion are more likely to be taken into account when decisions are made.

We are looking for candidates for the Ashtead wards for next year, but we would also like to encourage suitable independent candidates elsewhere in the District. Do please get in touch if you can help us with either of these objectives. We shall also continue working on the remaining Conservative Councillors!

David Harper and
Simon Ling



SCC Budget issues - 2017/8

Following the aborted attempt by the Conservative administration on SCC to propose a 15% Council Tax rise and its sudden reduction to 4.99%, and the County Council elections last month, we now find the Budget cuts being proposed are stringent.

SCC has to find around £120m in savings this year with many cuts being made to service Social Care provision. The major cuts that will affect all residents whether in Ashted or elsewhere in Surrey are in the Highways arena. In Mole Valley alone the Capital programme for Integrated Transport schemes has been reduced from £138,250 down to £36,000. Happily the 20mph scheme around St. Giles' School has developer funding already allocated to move this project forward. The budget for Revenue Maintenance of £196,601, approved in March this year, is being reduced to £40,910. This means that there is no money for tree and vegetation works; and parking reviews, instead of being annual, will now occur either on a 2 or 3 year cycle. Only 5 speed limit assessments will be undertaken in the whole District; and there is no money for any Localism Initiatives or Community enhancements, and any minor maintenance work (our Community gang) will have to be shared across 3 District councils rather than for Mole Valley alone.

These cuts mean there will be no money for the ARA to use for residents' concerns on protection of verges, footpath clearance etc. as this is part of the Localism Initiatives mentioned above. The Local Allocation given by SCC to your local County Councillor to use in assisting Ashted organisations and charities that need small sums to help them on various projects has been cut by 50% to £6,000 - I am grateful that this sum is available but it means I cannot do as much as I would like to assist our residents this year.

Project Horizon, the main Highways project covering roads, and now pavements, is also slowing down through funding issues. It is fortunate that a number of roads in Ashted have been renewed or repaired over the past few years but we still have those in need of treatment (The Street being but one that springs to mind - I am pressing for this to be done this year rather than 2018/9 as now proposed). We have no pavements anywhere in Mole Valley on the list for work this year although I put forward a number for appraisal.

As you can see from this article Highways improvements are hard hit, but other services are being looked at too. Youth, Libraries and even cuts to Social Care itself are on the table to ensure that SCC can balance their books. Most if not all of this information has only been given since the SCC election and one has to worry about what might be suggested for the Council Tax rise next year 2018/19.

I will continue to monitor the progress of all these issues and work in the best interests of all Ashted residents.

Chris Townsend



Planning applications

We have had some difficult planning applications in Ashted over the last 6 months. The recently adopted Ashted NDP is now an integral part of the MVDC planning process and in its first month its policy on provision of off street parking for new developments came under severe challenge in one case.

Your Independent Councillors from all three wards spoke in the debate to put across opinions from the whole of Ashted. In so doing we gained the support of both Liberal Democrats and Conservatives and indeed all the councillors on the planning committee to ensure that this unsuitable application was refused.

So please ensure you continue to keep your Ashted Independent Councillors informed if you have any concerns about planning applications in your area.

Mary Cooper and Simon Ling



Drop-in Sessions

For the first time we booked a stall at the recent Ashted Rotary Village Day. We were pleased to meet and talk to a number of Ashted Residents who raised a variety of topics with us.

We continue to hold drop in sessions on the first Saturday of every month at 12 noon in the Scout Hut in Woodfield. Usually at least one councillor from each ward is in attendance to listen to any issues that ward residents wish to raise. Do come along and meet us!

We are always on the look-out for anybody who might consider standing for election as an Independent Councillor in the future, and we are more than happy to receive offers of help with delivering newsletters and election leaflets, or telling and canvassing. Please get in touch with any of us – our contact details appear alongside.

Your Ashted Independent Councillors



Our Contact details:

	Common Ward	
David Hawksworth	dlr.hawksworth@molevalley.gov.uk	07551 773640
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