

Ashtead Independents

Newsletter

Issue No. 29

The Ashtead Independents are an independent group of local Mole Valley District and Surrey County Councillors working for the good of Ashtead without National political party ties.



March 2019

We are working for YOU!

Ashtead has six independent Councillors, all residents in Ashtead like you, and all committed and determined to do all we can to maintain and, where possible, enhance all that makes Ashtead such a special place now and for future generations. This has become even more feasible since last year's election as three of us are now members of Mole Valley District Council's eight-strong Cabinet, to which many decisions in the District are delegated. David Harper has the portfolio for the production of the new Local Plan and Patricia Wiltshire that for Environment, while Well-Being is my responsibility. We are also able to influence broader policies, and were successful in securing changes in the new Council Strategy for 2019-24 to include emphasis on protecting the built and natural environment and cultural as well as other leisure activities.

These are, however, challenging times with the Conservative Government dictating how many houses should be built in the District, regardless of their figures not being supported by any evidence of actual need. We are all currently intimately involved in shaping the new Local Plan, which will govern developments in the District for the next 15 years, and are so fortunate in having David Harper to lead on this. We have to meet these demands to avoid decision-making on housing being taken entirely out of the Council's hands. This is an enormously difficult task and the plan is to have a draft available for consultation in the early summer.

I am pleased that we have been able to get the security of the QEII Recreation Ground improved, and can inform you that the long-awaited major refurbishment of the Ashtead Peace Memorial Car Park is due to start in earnest in the early summer.

We keep in close contact with, and exchange information and views with, the Ashtead Residents' Association, and are immensely grateful to our network of supporters who deliver material, and make information available through websites.

If you would like to be more involved with us, do let me know! We have one seat to contest in Village Ward in the election on 2 May 2019, for which we have a strong and experienced candidate, but we are always looking for residents who might wish to stand in future years.

David Hawksworth
Leader, Ashtead Independents
Common Ward

What future NDP in the new Local Plan?

There were a number of policies created in the writing of the Ashtead Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), some of which have been trumped by 'material considerations', and others by permitted development rights such as the right to split one bedroom into two or three once a dwelling is built. These 'learning experiences' are not lost, but valuable lessons in forming a new Local Plan. Specifying Dwellings Per Hectare, or Square Metre for instance, may replace policies designed to create more two/three bedroomed dwellings.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) gives Green Belt land the highest level of protection, and only allows its use for dwellings in 'exceptional circumstances' where all other options have been explored and exhausted.

The NPPF requires all categories of brown field to be seriously considered before using green field land. There are not many sources of brown field in Ashtead.

One option that must be explored in Ashtead is the 'Densification' of built up areas around stations and shops. Previous Local Plan policies have required developments in back gardens in Ashtead to show some sympathy for the immediate surrounding built environment. Historically these developments have typically been at around 20 Dwellings Per Hectare. Densification would aim to deliver housing at a higher rate and we are obliged to consider this before we can argue 'exceptional circumstances' have been met.

Any remaining NDP policies that are not superseded by the Local Plan will be retained and will continue to carry weight.

The brown field proposals, green field, densification, and all other policies will be the subject of a public consultation scheduled for June/July 2019.

David Harper
Village Ward

Parking – 2018/9 Review

The consultation on potential changes to the parking restrictions in Ashtead finished in late January.

The major change is in Woodfield Lane proposing yellow lines both sides northwards to the small roundabout adjoining Meadow Road. I am expecting it to be agreed by numerous residents at the time of writing and will be pressing hard for the lines to be drawn as early as possible (late March/early April 2019).

Surrey Highways will be monitoring the effect these have on our village, as will I, and we will take these into consideration going forward. Enforcement via Mole Valley DC will be a factor here and they are expanding their workforce to take account of any issues.

Chris Townsend
Surrey County Councillor



Scrutinising MVDC's Budget

Now well into my first year as a Councillor, I would like to explain the function of one of the important panels on which I serve, the Standing Budget Panel. The role of the Panel is to review the Council's budget formulation process and the robustness of the Administration's budget proposals, including fees and charges, plus grants to voluntary organisations, and to advise Scrutiny Committee of its findings.

The Standing Budget Panel meets during evenings in the autumn/winter each year to challenge the Administration on the extent to which its proposals:

- were clear, focused, achievable, realistic and based on sound financial practices;
- had clear linkages with corporate and other plans that form the Policy Framework and consistent with the Council's aim to improve services in priority areas;
- achieve the Council's goals, standards and priorities; and
- also consistent with the Council's agreed charging principles.

Each of the Cabinet Members attends one of the meetings of the Panel and is asked to justify and explain the budget for their respective portfolios: People and Rural Mole Valley, Planning Services and Housing, Planning Policy, Strategy and Assets, Environment, Prosperity, Well-being, and Finance, Performance and Risk.

A final report was forward to the Scrutiny Committee with the conclusion of the Standing Budget Panel's work last month, with recommendations as how to improve the content and process in the future.

The Standing Budget Panel for 2018/19 comprised five Councillors: two Conservative, two Liberal Democrats, and an Independent (myself). This is, however, only a part of what I do.

I am also active in Full Council Meetings, the Scrutiny Committee, Planning Policy Working Group, a reserve for the Development Control Committee (Planning) and the Social Media Guidelines for Members Working Group. Fortunately, most meetings are in the evenings so I can continue to work in the day.

Garry Stansfield
Park Ward

Funding & Grants – come and get it !

I sit every year on several Grant application committees hoping that more Ashted resident groups and associations will apply. The money is there to be used, and some excellent causes have been given a 'kick start' by the various grants. People are not always aware of the application process or funds on offer, so I provide a summary here:

- Capital Fund
- Small-grants Community Fund
- Thomas Flack Trust Fund
- Annual Revenue Grants

Grants will be considered from organisations which deliver valuable services to Mole Valley residents and support Council priorities as outlined in our Corporate Strategy.

To find out which grant may be suitable for your organisation or project, complete the Expression of Interest online form. The next funding round will open in April 2019. The Small-Grants Community Fund has a quarterly deadline for which the next deadline is 31 March 2019. Note that The Thomas Flack Trust Fund is specifically for use by groups in the North of the District (Ashted, Bookham, Fetcham, and Leatherhead),

Priority will be given to organisations which:

- show they will deliver improvements in at least one of the Council Strategy priority areas
- show they have community support
- work collaboratively with other agencies, organisations and individuals
- raise funding through as many sources as possible
- demonstrate that a grant will help to attract or unlock funding from other sources

Still have questions?

Please review the grants policies carefully to ensure that your project or service is eligible. If you have any questions, would like to discuss your application in advance or request for your application to be pre-checked, please call 01306 879338 or e-mail grants@molevalley.gov.uk.

We have previously granted money for community capital projects, choir establishment, disabled charities, and support for mental health groups in Ashted. Please take up the opportunity, and if unsure contact your local Councillors for advice.

Mary Cooper
Village Ward

Securing Open Spaces in Ashted

Immediately after the unauthorised encroachments on the QEII Recreation Ground last year, steps were taken to take measures to restrict vehicular access to all MVDC-owned open spaces in the District. As an immediate response, large concrete blocks were placed at strategic points as a temporary measure while material for permanent restrictions was on order and installed. In addition to the new barriers on the Recreation Ground, one has been placed on the Wood Field where defective posts have been replaced and a new ditch and bund created along much of the west side. As a part of the major refurbishment of the Ashted Peace Memorial Car Park (see front page), it is also planned to include a height restriction.

David Hawksworth
Common Ward





Surrey County Council (SCC) Service Consultations

Public consultations on proposals for five different service areas ran simultaneously from 30 October 2018 to 4 January 2019. Over 28,000 responses were received, relating to Children's Centres (3,814 responses), Community Recycling Centres (12,132), Concessionary Bus Travel (3,082), Libraries and Culture (7,901), and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (1,133). These consultations aim to assist in solving the financial straits that SCC finds itself in.

Family Resilience: Children's Centres: At the heart of the consultation was the development of the Family Resilience programme, aiming to support families at a much earlier point, so preventing problems escalating into a crisis that might require a child being taken into care. Surrey's Early Help offer therefore has to improve, and they are extending the age of those children they help from 0-5 to 0-11 year olds. This means they can reach more vulnerable children and their parents as the most vulnerable families do not always use Children's Centres. This proposal meant that the number of Children's Centres in Surrey would be reduced from 58 to 21 with satellite sites located in areas where children are most likely to experience poor outcomes. At least one main centre in each district or borough will remain, supported by the use of satellites, outreach workers and community venues. The Leatherhead Children Centre is proposed to be closed with the Dorking one retained for our District. I signed a petition against this proposal and asked that Leatherhead be kept as a Satellite Centre, but this was not accepted by the SCC Cabinet.

Concessionary Bus Travel: SCC proposed to bring the concessionary travel scheme for disabled people into line with the statutory offer as funded by government and in common with most other councils. They proposed free bus travel for disabled people and their carers / companions from 9.30–23.00 on weekdays and all day on weekends and bank holidays. On these concessionary bus fares, companion passes are now to be retained (that is a change), but the scheme will move to the proposed times in accordance with national policy.

Community Recycling Centres: The amount of waste dealt with by the centres has decreased by almost 40% since 2015/16, and was part of the rationale for this consultation. They proposed that the four least used Recycling Centres be closed, these being also smaller, older and less well designed and laid out than the 11 that will remain. Following petitions, two were withdrawn from closure entirely, while four (including Dorking) are retained but only for recycling materials and until 30 September 2019 to see if savings can be made in other ways. If they do close, then as compensation the remaining four sites (including Leatherhead) will be open 7 days a week.

Libraries and Cultural Services Strategy: The public consultation feedback demonstrated significant support for five guiding principles to guide work with partners to prepare more detailed proposals for a service that best meets the people's needs: (1) Libraries enable people to learn and access information; (2) They strengthen communities - particularly the most vulnerable; (3) Volunteers are crucial to the running of our libraries; (4) New technology provides 24/7 access to information; and (5) Libraries are most effective in partnership with other organisations in shared spaces or hubs. The responses to the consultation provided many thoughtful and innovative suggestions that will help inform a future service model for libraries. These are all being considered and further consultation will take place later in 2019; it is not yet known what impact this may have on the Ashtead Library.

SEND Strategy (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities): Five principles put forward in the consultation were broadly supported, and will assist work with partners and parents to shape future strategy ensuring SEND services provide the right support and better outcomes for residents: (1) That needs are identified earlier; (2) That support is provided at the earliest opportunity; (3) That children can lead fulfilling lives in their own communities; (4) That children's voices are heard; and (5) That children can go to school locally. Feedback will be used to inform further engagement and co-design activities. This planning will begin in February 2019 with families, health partners, education, and other partners in order to develop a joint strategy and long-term action plan.

I am personally deeply concerned by some of the changes going forward. Firstly will they deliver (3 to 5 years is my estimate), and secondly, financially, they need investment both in IT and personnel to make them successful, which may well be challenging in the future. I and David Hawksworth as MVDC Cabinet Member for Well-being, will work to ensure the best outcomes we can for our residents.

Chris Townsend
Surrey County Council

Ashtead Pond



We all remember the very hot summer last year, and many of you will have noticed that the pond on Barnett Wood Lane lost a lot of its water. The Council wanted to take advantage of this to clear out some of the rubbish that had accumulated over the years, but were nervous about piercing any membrane that might be holding in the water. These fears were unfounded and we discovered that the pond has a base of puddled clay, so seepage of water from the bed of the pond was certainly not the cause of the lowered water.

The Council had been aware for some time that there were far too many fish in the pond. These were mostly coarse fish, with a fairly large complement of carp which were probably the result of people discarding their goldfish. As many fish as possible were removed in the late summer and were taken by a commercial fishery to a huge holding tank for later introduction into their ponds. They were certainly treated humanely. During the fish trapping, three terrapins were also taken and found a safe haven.

Please do not discard pet fish or amphibians into ponds and streams. It is bad for existing wildlife and for the pets themselves.

If you are keen to feed the ducks and other wildfowl, it would also be a good idea to give them corn or frozen peas. These provide healthy food for wild fowl, and give them energy and protein. Bread should certainly not be given because it harms the birds, and encourages bacterial growth in the water.

I am assured that the vegetation surrounding the water will receive attention this year so that we can all enjoy sight of the pond from the road again.

Patricia Wiltshire
Common Ward



A Special Request to Ashtead Residents

At this years AGM of the ARA, Chris Townsend informed the meeting that due to the parlous state of the Surrey County Council's finances, residents must appreciate that self-help will become a way of future life! If you are ready to play a part, I invite like-minded Ashtead residents contact me direct (alan.reilly1@btinternet.com or telephone 01372 802489).

Encouraged by the Independent-initiated Ashtead Tree Wardens, operating under the aegis of the ARA, I propose to establish a monthly working party, depending on the number and availability of volunteers, with the intention of keeping our footpaths clear of leaves, general rubbish, and invasive vegetation. If you feel unable to physically participate but would like to make a financial donation to help provide waste bags and tools etc., please also advise.

With the full support of all the Ashtead Independent Councillors, I plan to have the working party at 10.00–13.00 on Saturday 23 March. Please register your intention by phone or email if you wish to participate. I will provide waste bags and many tools, but please wear suitable clothes including footwear and working gloves. Also bring any favourite tools (not powered) you may wish to use. I propose that our initial work will be along the footpath from Skinners Lane through Paddocks Way to Greville Park Road (for the The Street). Volunteers will then take bags of waste to a disposal site. All participants will be asked to propose areas for future attention. All participants will be volunteers and operate at their own risk.

Alan Reilly
Village Ward

Waste Collection

In August 2018, MVDC changed the waste collection contractor from Biffa to Amey. We entered into a joint contract with Surrey Heath and Elmbridge Councils in order to benefit from economies of scale, and it was calculated that the District would benefit by savings of £1.3 million a year. We are on target for these savings and, overall, are pleased with the way the new contractor has performed. The venture is monitored and run by Joint Waste Solutions on behalf of the three councils, and they deal with day-to-day problems and assessing performance indicators. In the beginning there were certainly some hiccups, with some residents experiencing missed bins. However, considering the number of dwellings that are served each week, the number of complaints was, and still is, small. Of course, when your bin is not emptied, the problem looms large for you, but if this does happen, please report it so that the Council can claim a refund from the Waste Contractor.

Everything you need to know about waste collection is on the Mole Valley website.

Amey has 06.00–16.00 to collect your bin(s) on collection day, before it can be reported as missed. If your bin does get missed and you are unable to report it online, you can call the council on 01306 885001 after 16.00 on the day of collection, or within 48 hours of your bin being missed. If you still have problems, get in touch with me and I will do my best to sort this out quickly for you.

Patricia Wiltshire
Common Ward

From the Ashtead Residents' Association

It is always a pleasure for me to be asked to write a few words in support of our seven Independent Councillors, and to remind readers of the unique relationship we have with our elected representatives.

If you have read this Newsletter, you will be in no doubt of the dedication and commitment that lies behind their reports. I am constantly amazed by the amount of work they undertake on our behalf. We are very pleased to see that three of them are now members of the MVDC Cabinet with all the additional responsibilities that brings. We send our congratulations to them all.

The Ashtead Residents' Association (ARA) is the largest independent residents' association in the country, and currently about half the households in Ashtead are members. We support the election of Independent Councillors, and together we work to preserve and protect all the special things about Ashtead that makes this such a lovely place to live.

If you would like to know more about the ARA, have a look at our website, www.ashteadresidents.org.uk – we would be delighted to welcome you as a member if you have not yet joined. If you are a member, look out for the Spring Ashtead Village News which will be winging its way to you soon.

Blanche Douglass
President, Ashtead Residents' Association

Speed Limits in Ashtead

Some residents have been expressing concern over speed limits in residential areas.

This is an SCC issue, and 20 mph limits have been secured for around St Giles and the City of London Freemans' School in Park Lane and Dene Road; signs have been installed and final implementation will occur shortly.

As promised in my 2017 Manifesto, I have been campaigning for 20 mph limits around all schools in Ashtead. SCC are very aware of this issue, but we do not have the money to proceed with the introduction of further restrictions this year.

Chris Townsend
Surrey County Councillor

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