

Working update from your District Councillor, Duncan Irvine



Mickleham, Westhumble and Pixham, summer 2015

Dear Neighbours,

Since I was elected as our District Councillor in May I have been working on a number of things. I am writing to update you on some of those matters, as well as to provide you with my contact details and to emphasise that if there is anything which you are concerned about or which you believe should be addressed by Mole Valley District Council, I am at your disposal to discuss and to help as far as I am able.

Yours sincerely, Duncan

(E-mail is most reliable) duncan.c.irvine@gmail.com / 07738384287



Ride London Sunday 2nd August

I will be volunteering as a steward on Sunday and expect to be stationed at the bottom of Westhumble Street or nearby for most of the day. Any problems give me a call on 07738384287 and I will see what I can do.

Here is a summary of the routes in and out. Please bear in mind the organisers may have to amend plans due to force majeure of dreadful weather or accidents etc but this is the plan as it stands. **This year there will be a managed crossing point at the junction of Ashcombe Road and the A24** to help Westhumble and Dorking residents get in and out, but please bear in mind it will be slow especially during the main wave of cyclists between 1000h and 1300h, and is really only intended for the convenience of local residents.

A25 Newlands Corner to Dorking closed from 0500h, otherwise morning closures from 0730h.

Mickleham Access to A24 all day and via Givons Grove roundabout on to A246 towards Fetcham.

Pixham Access to A25 all day.

Westhumble until 1400h

Northbound out: Access to A24 to A246 from the bottom of Westhumble Street.

North Return: Bagden Hill > Chapel Lane.

Southbound out: Access to A25 via Ranmore Common Road > Ranmore Road > Ashcombe Road > managed crossing point > A24 South.

South Return: Pixham Lane > Denbies Roundabout > A24 South > managed crossing point > Ashcombe Road > Ranmore Road > Ranmore Common Road.

Westhumble 1400h onwards Westhumble Street, Chapel Lane and Ranmore Common Road closed until 1830h. They will try to open sooner but 1830h is the worst-case anticipated.

Ranmore Common closed 1400h-1800h.

Meadowbank Redevelopment

There has been some concern that the proposals for the development of Meadowbank football ground may not allow for Dorking Wanderers FC first team to play there. This is not the case. Dorking Football Club has been singled out in the recommendations of the MVDC executive because DFC has expressed a desire to have a long-term lease (eg 25 years) at the Meadowbank Ground. DWFC does not wish to have a lease of comparable duration and hence is not mentioned specifically.

This redevelopment is among other things an investment decision for the Council and it would be unwise to commit £4m to this project without the comfort of a likely long-term tenant for the football pitch itself. Surrey FA is expected to be the head lessee and they will then be able to sub-let to other clubs, which may well include Dorking Wanderers as well as Dorking Football Club, subject of course to finding a workable agreement for ground sharing. The Leader of the Council, Cllr James Friend has been working to achieve agreement between the two clubs on a ground share and the latest indications are that this is progressing well. In June Cllr Friend came to meet with some members of the WRA committee to go through this with us. There has been the suggestion from other Political Parties that the Conservative Group on the council "does not want" DWFC at Meadowbank. This is entirely and emphatically untrue.

E-mail Communications

I would like to set up an E-mail list for communicating with residents. Such communications would include occasional updates like this one to keep you informed of what I am doing, but also would be useful to spread information quickly when necessary, such as with road closures. If you would like to be on this list please drop me a line (duncan.c.irvine@gmail.com). This would only be used for apolitical communication and I would never use it to bother you with campaigning material, and nor would I pass your details on to anyone else, including the Conservative Party. If I can communicate with our villages more easily, I can spend less time delivering newsletters and more time getting on with the job.

Westhumble Bridge

There is concern among Network Rail and Westhumble Residents Association that if the bridge continues to be used by overweight vehicles this may result in a sudden failure of its brittle cast iron deck (especially in cold weather), which would result in its immediate closure and require major unplanned work to repair. In order to avoid this in the long term the bridge needs to be strengthened. But in the short term its 7.5T weight limit must be observed / enforced in order to protect it. Enforcement of the weight limit would be likely to require either a physical width restriction or the use of cameras or similar. We may find this awkward, but it may be better than an immediate and complete closure in the event of structural failure. The equipment on the bridge recently was assessing its current usage and the frequency of weight transgressions.

In general roads are a Country rather than District Council matter, however I am pleased to say that our Surrey County Councillor, Cllr Watson, the WRA and myself are working together on this issue. Strengthening of the bridge would require replacement of its existing deck at an estimated cost of £750k. This should not affect the appearance of the bridge because a new deck would sit on the existing parapets. We continue to explore possible solutions. If we do find it is necessary to use a petition to support this cause, I would suggest that such a petition be apolitical so as to present a united front on this issue.

A24 Verges - over-long grass affecting sight lines

I emphasised the danger of this to Council officers, as did my opposite number at Beare Green, Cllr Michelle Watson, where the same problem existed. The contractors prioritised these two areas for cutting and as a result carried out the work here slightly earlier than they had planned to (but still too late).

The background is that MVDC recently took over from Surrey County Council the maintenance of verges. This was the first cut from the new contractor. Although one can expect teething trouble with any new contract, this was obviously unacceptably late and as a result the contractor is now submitting to the Council for our approval a revised operational plan for the remainder of 2015. They were scheduled to do three cuts over the summer but because they left the first one so late, MVDC may choose to only have one more cut in September, in which case it will of course not pay for the third. That call will be made later in the year. At the moment the grass does not seem to be growing quickly but if it becomes a problem I will be on to it again.

Many residents expressed the view that it is actually only the grass around junctions which needs cutting frequently, and that for ecological benefits (wild flowers, insects etc) perhaps we should have a zoned approach where we do not cut everything every time they are trimmed. This is something the Council is looking into now. This will not be implemented in 2015 but may be in 2016.

30-minute free parking motion defeated

You may soon see if you haven't already, headlines about Conservatives refusing to support an opposition motion for a free first 30 minutes of parking in Mole Valley car parks. I spoke and also voted against this.

On the face of it 30 minutes of free parking may seem a good idea to encourage people into our shops etc. and may I emphasise the desire of myself personally and the Conservative group generally to strengthen the economic footing of our towns. But this motion was not a good idea, for the following reasons: Virtually no cost / benefit analysis had been undertaken whatsoever; The only headline amount Councillors knew beforehand was that the Council currently raises £580k / year from people parking for 60 minutes - it would not be unreasonable to envisage the loss of at least half of that revenue from this measure; The Conservative group sees a risk of damage to local shops in villages by encouraging people to nip into town for a couple of items instead; This would have negative environmental and congestion impacts; Our parking rates are highly competitive with neighbouring towns already; There was not even the beginnings of a credible plan for how to police and implement this scheme.

Other matters

- I currently sit on the Audit and Scrutiny Committees within the Council.
- I have met with the Mickleham Parish Council and Pixham Residents Association.
- I have received my monthly Councillor allowance of £347 (less tax). I have not made any expense claims for travelling to and from meetings etc.