

Letters to the Editor

Traffic survey is disingenuous

Surrey County Council staff have been out recording traffic volumes in central Farnham during the morning commute.

Anyone who travels into Farnham on a working day knows that for the last few weeks traffic volumes have been vastly lower than usual, because of the combination of children having finished GCSEs and A Levels, and private schools having broken up for end of term.

A significant number of residents are on holiday already, and so local car travel is much easier than usual.

I generally find it takes me a good 30 to 40 minutes to get into town during term time. At the moment it takes nine minutes as the traffic is flowing freely.

No doubt, the county council will use these disproportionately low traffic figures to congratulate themselves on the road scheme, when the reality for residents and workers on a daily basis during the vast majority of the year is very different.

When I approached one of the traffic counting wardens, I asked if the county council appreciates that there are a lot of private schools locally, and that traffic volume is lower, so if they want a fair reflection, they should do monitoring during normal term times for all schools.

However, I was told that the county council knows private

schools are off, but they only take notice of state school term times! (It seems convenient that not only do they ignore private schools, but also lower volumes of students at state schools post-exams).

I really think this practice is disingenuous. Surely, to properly judge a scheme, it should be studied in typical conditions, not during the one time of year Farnham is quiet.

It seems to be a strategy undertaken deliberately contrary to the best interests of Farnham residents and workers, but to benefit whatever agenda Surrey County Council has.

As a local business owner, recently one member of staff left us, citing the fact she couldn't reliably get to work on time due to the traffic volumes and delays, and with children, she couldn't adjust her commuting time, so this issue has serious consequences for businesses as well as residents.

**Barbara Milne,
Farnham**

Sign decision shows three is best

The Farnham Herald recently informed us that Surrey County Council had lost an appeal against Waverley's refusal of planning permission for a large illuminated advertising sign at Hickley's Corner.

We are used to developers appealing to try to overturn local

democratic decisions, but to hear that the county council has spent council tax payer money to try to get its own way by using the planning appeal system is another matter.

We have a decision on local government organisation awaited. A primary reason for Waverley's preference for three (rather than two) unitary authorities is that the larger, more remote councils would be less accountable.

Surrey's blatant attempt to reverse this planning decision by Waverley stands out as a clear example of a larger, more remote council ignoring local opinion - and why the three-unitary option should be chosen.

**Stewart Edge,
Farnham Liberal Democrats,
Beavers Road, Farnham**

A better idea for Ukraine

I am an ordinary man, soon to be 83 years old. I have lived long enough to see far too many wars, and I know one thing: it is always ordinary people who suffer most.

Putin must be stopped. But is there a way to end this war without condemning more people to death and destruction?

Perhaps we can find a compromise, where neither Russia nor Ukraine "wins." Instead, the territory taken by force could become a separate, independent nation, aligned with neither side.

I write this not as a politician,

nor a person of influence, but as someone who longs for peace.

Jesus calls us to peace. I pray that those in power may listen before more innocent lives are lost.

**John F O'Donnell,
Address supplied**

Waverley has lost our respect

We have no confidence in the leadership of Executive Committee of Waverley Borough Council regarding the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Some councillors have made a series of misleading and inaccurate claims in public forums and on social media, including claiming the discretionary review includes householder and agent error - and yet refusing to clarify what the actual remedy would be in such cases.

In January, the full council voted to adopt discretionary reviews in line with West Berkshire's model. The executive has refused to implement that decision, claiming it would have been "unlawful" for full council to direct the executive in this way.

The executive claims its restrictive approach is the only legal route - despite ignoring an equally valid legal opinion stating that Waverley has all the powers it needs to follow West Berkshire's model.

This is not about changing the law - it is about Waverley choos-

ing not to apply CIL against homeowners in this way where there is error in submitting the correct paperwork on time.

The executive's chosen policy for discretionary reviews is unnecessarily narrow, limiting refunds only to proven council error, and is therefore not in line with West Berkshire.

Currently there is no motivation for anyone to apply unless they believe there to be council error.

We call on full council to take back control of the executive's delegated powers concerning CIL, which we believe are seriously damaging the reputation of Waverley Borough Council and eroding public trust in leaderships.

As our elected representatives, we urge you to act now to restore the review process agreed in January, to be in line with West Berkshire; ensure true independence in appointments of those reviewing discretionary homeowner CIL reviews; and apply CIL regulations with fairness, proportionality, and in line with government guidance.

Only by doing so can you begin to regain the respect of residents. We may represent only a small percentage of the electorate, but our voices are being heard and we are winning the hearts and minds of the wider community.

We, the Waverley victims of CIL, fighting against the CIL injustice, have no allegiance to any political party.

Names and addresses supplied