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Surrey safeguarding slip-up

6 June 2023



Surrey authorities publicly named a five-month-old baby who died and his mother in a safeguarding review due to “human error”.

The LDRS can exclusively reveal Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership breached the anonymity of three family members by revealing their names, including the baby who died, in a document that was publicly available for nine months.

It outlined the tragic events leading up to the death of baby Acer (not his real name), a twin who was found lifeless in his baby bouncer in January 2021, after social services had been involved with his family for 14 years.

Simon Hart, independent chair of the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership, said the breach was “totally unacceptable” and that the partnership “sincerely apologises to those impacted by this error”.
He said the family had been informed, and were being supported.

The publicly-available review pointed to “a short-sighted decision”, “a lost opportunity” and “a lack of a coordinated approach by professionals” at various points in the family’s history. Near the end of the 32-page document, an appendix outlining the terms of reference broke the anonymity of the family and named the mother, the father and the baby.

LDRS found mother’s public Facebook profile from safeguarding report. The LDRS alerted Surrey County Council, one of three statutory safeguarding partners along with Surrey Police and NHS Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Board, to the breach, leading to an urgent review of all other published reports.

The document had a date of August 2022, meaning the family’s details could have been in the public domain for as long as nine months by the time the breach was identified.

Mr Hart added an investigation had identified that despite going through a “thorough review process”, human error meant identifiable information was missed in the document appendices.

The LDRS was able to find a public Facebook profile appearing to belong to the mother in the family, in which she named her children, shared pictures of the twins and shared posts comparing social workers to snakes.

On alerting the county council to the breach, the LDRS made clear that no article would be published while the report was still in the public domain, in order to protect the identity of the family.

The partnership confirmed no other breaches had been found in published reports, and that staff were working “at pace” to add more steps to the review process for such documents before publication. Mr Hart also confirmed the partnership had referred itself to the Information Commissioner’s Office.

‘No other identifiable information in published reports’

Mr Hart’s full statement to the LDRS said: “On 26 May, we were notified of a data breach within a Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review report. Regrettably, the report – which should have been entirely anonymous – named three individuals in its appendices. This is totally unacceptable and the partnership sincerely apologises to those impacted by this error.

“As soon as we became aware of the data breach, we informed the affected family and will continue to provide them with appropriate support. We have urgently reviewed the SSCP website and can confirm that we have not found any other identifiable information in published reports. We have also referred ourselves to the Information Commissioner’s Office as per due process.

“We take this matter extremely seriously and a thorough investigation has identified that, although the document went through a thorough review process, human error resulted in identifiable information being missed in the document appendices. We are working at pace to add additional steps to our review processes to prevent this happening again.”

*[Epsom and Ewell’s BBC Partner – Local Democracy Reporting Service]

The full background story is HERE Child victim of Co-Vid constraints?

Child victim of Co-Vid constraints?

6 June 2023

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A five-month-old who died in his baby bouncer could have been part of a “systemic failure” of social services that were there to get the “best outcomes” for the children in his family.

“Baby Acer”, a twin who was described as a “a loved and happy child”, died in January 2021. His death came after social services had been involved with his family for 14 years, with his siblings having been on three child protection plans and three child in need plans, all under the category of neglect.

A Safeguarding practice review carried out by the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership into the baby’s death said the covid pandemic impacted on his monitoring at home, and set out the history of “dangerous behaviours”, substance abuse and social services involvement with the family.

Moira Murray, the lead reviewer, pointed to “a short-sighted decision” in closing the family’s case and removing the children from child protection and child in need plans, as well as “a lost opportunity” to look at the safeguarding risks to the unborn twins by not convening a pre-birth assessment for the mother.

What does the review say?

The review said: “Similarly, after their birth, consideration should have been given to convening a pre-discharge meeting in order to consider the risks presented to premature, low-weight babies returning home to parents where chronic neglect of their children had been a consistent feature of their parenting.”

Ms Murray said the 14 years of involvement should be seen in the context of “the absence of a multi-agency systemic approach to assessing the impact on the children” of being exposed to “chronic neglect and the consequences of their parents’ dangerous behaviours”.

She also said it “could be construed” that despite the known risk factors to Acer and his twin, “there was a lack of a coordinated approach by professionals” to address the safeguarding risks presented to the twins’ health and wellbeing.

Councillor **Sinead Mooney**, cabinet member for children and families at Surrey County Council, described Acer’s death as tragic and said the review highlighted “some areas where safeguarding practice at that time should have been better”. She added that the partnership took the safeguarding of children “extremely seriously” and would continue to ensure “all the necessary changes were made and lessons were learned”.

According to Ms Murray’s review, Acer’s mother had woken up on the morning of January 15, 2021 and found him lifeless in his baby bouncer in the living room where she, Acer and his twin sibling were sleeping.

She called an ambulance, and Acer was taken to hospital having suffered a cardiac arrest. Despite attempts to resuscitate him, Acer died aged five months old.

Acer was known as ‘Little Man’ because he was the smaller twin, and the review described both parents as “deeply distressed at the loss of their child”. In his family at the time of Acer’s death was his mother, father, twin brother and five-year-old sibling, as well as siblings aged 14 and eight, who had a different father from the mother’s previous relationship.

The family had been known to police and social services since 2006, because of domestic abuse against the mother by her then partner, according to the report. Child protection and child in need plans followed, until the mother was arrested in January 2019 for alleged assault and criminal damage, followed by a week when the children were cared for by their respective fathers.

Ms Murray said neither father want to take formal responsibility of caring for the children, despite each having raised concerns about the mother’s mental health and substance abuse, and that the children returned to their mother when a number of the charges did not proceed.

‘Acer was a loved and happy child’. According to the review: “The tragic death of Acer severely affected his parents and siblings, as well as those professionals who knew him. That it happened at a time of an unprecedented pandemic meant that the period prior to his death was one in which there was less interaction with frontline practitioners than may have normally been the case.”

Acer and his twin were born at 32 weeks in August 2020, spent two weeks in a hospital neo-natal unit and then were sent home. Both had tested negative on a toxicology test, with neither showing symptoms of withdrawal, checked because of the mother’s history of substance misuse.

The review shows a health visitor allocated to the family made five home visits before Acer’s death, and had “stressed the dangers” of sleeping on the sofa in the sitting room with the twins, as well as sleeping in bed with them. It also said that the mother’s medication and drug use “was known to impact on her ability to stay awake and alert to the babies’ needs”.

When the health visitor had raised concerns about co-sleeping and propping a bottle to feed the babies, the mother had said she was “confident in knowing how to care for the twins”, given that she had three older children.

But the review also said that the mother had told Ms Murray she was dyslexic and had difficulty reading, and that the

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mother's "level of understanding of what was being explained to her may appear to be greater than it was in reality". She would sometimes look to the father for help on what was being said.

Ms Murray's review said of the meeting: "It was when the named nurse for child death reviews explained in simple language that babies can die if they are not laid on their backs in a cot that mother said she now understood how dangerous it was to sleep with the babies on the sofa and in bed, and how she wished she had never placed Acer in the baby bouncing chair."

The mother told the lead reviewer she was "shocked" to have had her children removed from her care after Acer's death, blaming it on "a faulty baby bouncing chair". The review said: "The tragic loss of their baby son was devastatingly apparent when the lead reviewer met the parents.

"That Acer was a loved and happy child was evident from the way mother and father spoke about him and from the many photographs on display." Closing case in March 2020 was 'unwise decision' ut Ms Murray said: "Given that from 2008 onwards until 2021, when Acer died, the children had been on a total of three child protection plans and three child in need plans, all under the category of neglect, it can be said that there was a systemic failure to achieve the best outcomes for the children of this family."

Closing the case in March 2020, when the mother's pregnancy with twins known, was an "unwise decision" according to the review, "given the history of chronic neglect of the children and the dangerous, risktaking behaviours of mother and father".

It went on to say: "If the case had remained open there would have been the opportunity to continue to monitor the children and risk assess mother's behaviour during her pregnancy and after the birth of the twins."

Cllr Mooney said: "The report outlines the need to ensure appropriate pre-birth risk assessments are carried out, although it is noted that steps have already been taken to improve practice in this area.
"The report also highlights the continued need to remind carers about the risks associated with co-sleeping, and stresses the importance of effective multi-agency communication and practice throughout, particularly when assessing the impact on chronically neglected children. The report also recognises the significant impact the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic had on this case, particularly on the delivery of training to practitioners, and steps have since been taken to make training programmes more accessible online.

"As a partnership, we take the safeguarding of children extremely seriously and will continue to ensure all the necessary changes are made and lessons are learned. The Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership has shared the recommendations of this report with all relevant agencies in Surrey."

Politics or personality puzzles Claygate voters

6 June 2023



It's a grey day in Claygate but the mood among the Lib Dems who have gathered at a micro pub next to the village station is anything but gloomy.

In a bright yellow jacket she said was a "hand me down" via one of her sons, the party's parliamentary candidate for Esher and Walton reacted to the news that **Dominic Raab** had resigned from the cabinet.

Monica Harding called for Mr Raab to resign as the area's MP, and said residents "deserved better".
Mr Raab said he had set out his position, and appreciated the "hundreds of messages of support" he had received. He added: "My overriding focus now is on delivering for the people of Esher and Walton, with our economic plan and support with energy bills."

In the 2019 general election, Ms Harding took 45 per cent of the vote in Esher and Walton, cutting the Conservative MP's majority from 23,298 in 2017, to 2,743. It is therefore a key seat the Lib Dems have their eye on for the next general election, which must be called before January 2025.

But with local elections taking place in Elmbridge on May 4, could Mr Raab's resignation in the wake of an investigation into bullying also impact on those voters?

The Lib Dem leader, **Ed Davey**, also the MP for neighbouring Kingston and Surbiton, told the LDRS that in parliamentary constituencies across Surrey, including Esher and Walton, Guildford, Woking and Mole Valley, the party was sensing a "real opportunity". He added: "This chaos and indecency in the Conservatives is what's putting off a lot of life-long Tories."

The village of Claygate has around 7,000 people, an average house price of more than £1.1million and three Liberal Democrat councillors. Elmbridge Borough Council, the area's local authority, is run by the Residents Associations' 18 councillors, in coalition with the 13 Lib Dem councillors.

The Conservatives are the second largest party, with 15 councillors, five of which hold seats that are up for election on

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May 4 when a third of the members are up for election.

Current Lib Dem councillor **Alex Coomes** is up for election, standing against **John Charles Burns** for the Conservatives and Sue Cope for the Labour Party.

One voter told the LDRS Mr Raab's resignation would not impact on how she would vote in the borough council elections.

An investigation into Mr Raab by **Adam Tolley** KC looked at eight formal complaints against the MP from his work in three separate government departments.

In his resignation letter, Mr Raab said all but two of the claims had been dismissed in the report and raised concerns the inquiry would "encourage spurious complaints" against ministers.

Peter Szanto, chairman of Esher & Walton Conservative Association, said: "Dominic has continually worked to support our constituency and all those that live here. He has always been professional, kind, thoughtful and tenacious in his work.I, and the Esher & Walton Conservative Association, fully support him."

Ann Hennings, who said she had met Mr Raab "several times at various functions", had found him to be "very kind" and said she didn't have "a bad thing to say about him". She said she was glad she was not at work anymore, and asked: "What is bullying? Getting somebody's job done, is that bullying? I think anybody who's in charge of anything might be accused of that sometimes." She said that the local Liberal Democrats, who run the council in a coalition with Residents' Association councillors, "seem to get things done" but added that her voting habits were not the same on national and local ballots.

"If you have parents that are a certain party, I think a lot of people tend to be the same, it goes down with families," she said. "My family were staunch Conservatives. I've always voted Conservative but never locally. I've only ever voted liberal."

Another resident said Mr Raab's resignation from his roles as Deputy Prime Minister and Justice Secretary was "good riddance", but said it would not change how she would vote locally.

While the Liberal Democrat leader on Elmbridge Borough Council, and Claygate councillor, Cllr **Bruce McDonald**, said on the doorstep the constituency's MP came up "from time to time" he didn't think Mr Raab was "at the front of their minds". Cllr McDonald said: "I and my colleagues are much more interested in talking about our positive vision for Elmbridge, what we're getting on with doing because, ultimately, that's what people want from us."

But the national picture isn't far from some people's minds on the doorstep. **Lynne Murray** opened her front door to find Ed Davey, Monica Harding and a raft of journalists on her doorstep. She told Mr Davey there was a "very high chance" the Lib Dems may be lucky and get her vote in the future elections.

With issues including the country's economic prosperity, a "holistic, long term" look at the NHS needed and wanting people to feel "hope again" she said she thought that aspiring to "have a great life" was "so far away from so many people at the moment." She added: "I'm looking back at 12 years of Conservative government and I can't think of a single aspect of life in the UK that's been better."

Polls apart – from the norm?

6 June 2023



The Epsom Playhouse is listed as one of Surrey's "quirky" polling stations in the report below from the BBC's LDRS (Epsom and Ewell Times' official news partner). A full list of the polling stations for the Borough of Epsom and Ewell Council's upcoming 4th May elections can be FOUND HERE.

When many Surrey voters head out to cast their ballot in local elections on May 4 they will go to the village halls, community centres and schools that are often used as polling stations.

But some will visit more unusual locations, including a pub, a theatre and a former home for "vagrants and casual workers" all being used as polling stations.

Local elections are being held in all 11 districts and boroughs across the county, though not all residents will go to the polls.

Some councils, including Elmbridge, Tandridge and Woking, elect their councillors "by thirds", meaning one third of council seats are up for election each time.

Others, including Guildford and **Epsom and Ewell**, hold "all out" elections every four years.

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At the Bull Inn, in Warlingham, people voting in Tandridge District Council elections will be able to grab a pint once they are done and drink it in the pub's garden. It is the third time the pub has been used as a polling station, and tea and coffee will be served in the morning with alcohol available from midday.

While voters in Esher, within Dominic Raab's parliamentary ward, will tread the boards of the Esher theatre to cast their vote. A production of City Of Dreams will run at the theatre until April 29, and there is a performance the day after the vote of Cool Britannia Cabaret.

It's not the only theatre to be used as a polling station on May 4, with the **Epsom Playhouse** also being used as a polling station for voters in Epsom and Ewell's Town ward.

Some voters in Guildford will have the opportunity to cast their ballot at the Spike in the borough's Castle ward. The purpose-built home for vagrants and casual workers, which opened in 1906, was built to separate vagrant workers from those within the main workhouse. In 2005, the Charlotteville Jubilee Trust fundraised to rescue the building, after a period of it being used by St Luke's Hospital before its relocation to the Royal Surrey site, and after it was listed as a Grade II building. The Community Centre and Heritage Centre now on the site opened in 2008.

Polling stations on May 4 will be open from 7am until 10pm, and voters should receive a polling card from their district council to let them know which polling station to attend.

It is also the first local elections where voters nationwide will need to show ID in order to be able to vote.
A full list of accepted forms of voter ID is available on the gov.uk website and the deadline to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate is 5pm on Tuesday, April 25.

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Two Epsom brownfield developments?

6 June 2023



With local controversies about the draft **Local Plan** eyeing up **Green Belt**, **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** soon decides on two Town proposals. LDRS reports:

Plans for a care home on the site of the former Epsom police station and ambulance station are set for refusal by councillors. The planned building, a 96-bed care in Church Street in Epsom, would be over three to five storeys, but council officers have raised concern about its "overly-domineering" impact on the surrounding area.

A meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's planning committee on Thursday (April 20) will make a decision on the application.

The 96 bedrooms in the proposed home would provide nursing, residential and dedicated dementia care, and would have en suite wet rooms.

There are 20 listed buildings in the The Church Street Conservation Area, which wraps around the south and west ends of the site. Officers said the scale, form, design and materials of the plans would cause "cause less than substantial harm" to the nearby listed buildings including Hermitage (Grade II Listed), Ashley Cottages (Grade II Listed) and The Cedars (Grade II* Listed).

A council report into the care home said the building would "represent an overly domineering and incongruous addition that would fail to integrate with the prevailing character and appearance of the area".

Concerns were also raised about the future of trees on the site including a cedar and a lime tree during excavation works for the development.

At the same meeting, councillors should make a decision on a plan for 20 homes in a five- and six-storey development on the corner of West Street and Station Approach in the town.

The plans, which would include just two affordable homes and five parking spaces, received 51 letters of objection raising

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concerns about the impact on the character of the town, and the loss of the existing building.
Officers have recommended the plans be approved, which would include the demolition of the current 1905 building which was originally a corn and coal merchants.

The redevelopment of the former Gillespie's Bakery building has been objected to by the county council's highways authority, because of the need to reduce the width of the existing pavement and cycle path.

Under a previous application, the highways authority had not objected to plans, but since then a stronger policy had been adopted to improve travel methods for pedestrians and cyclists, leading to the objection.

Despite the five car parking spaces not meeting the council's guidelines for parking, an officers' report said: "The site is in a highly sustainable location with access to a number of public transport modes and the displaced parking can be accommodated in adjacent public car parks and via on street parking."

The two affordable homes in the plans also fall below the council's affordable housing recommendations, but a 40 per cent provision would "substantially affect the overall viability of the scheme", according to council documents.

The meeting will take place on Thursday, April 20 at 7.30pm.

Related reports:

West Street developers climbing down enough?

From custody to caring – new plans for Epsom's old nick.

Full list of candidates for Epsom and Ewell Council

6 June 2023



Epsom and Ewell residents will go to the polls on May 4 to elect their councillors for the next four years.

All 35 seats on the council are up for election in Surrey's smallest borough, and elections are taking place at the other ten lower-tier authorities in the county as well.

The election at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council comes just six weeks after members voted for a pause to the plan for homes in the borough in order to re-consider the inclusion of green belt sites such as Horton Farm being used for homes.

The council is currently led by Residents' Association councillors and has been since it was founded in 1938. Residents will elect councillors to 14 wards this year, with a new ward added in Horton.

Below we list all the candidates standing across the borough:

Auriol
Hannah Mireille Jackson Abrahams – Conservative
John Richard Beckett – Stoneleigh and Auriol Residents' Association
Garrick Bigwood – Labour Party
Caleb Michael Philip Heather – Conservative
Julia Karen Lucas – Labour
Oliver Schuster – Liberal Democrat
Darren William Talbot – Stoneleigh and Auriol Residents' Association
Dorothee Katarina Wilbs – Liberal Democrat

Local Elections 4th May 2023 – Times coverage

HUSTINGS:

Wednesday 26th April:

3rd Scout Hall, Epsom Methodist Church, Ashley Road. Epsom, KT18 5AQ

6.15pm **Stamford Ward**

7.15pm **Court Ward**

8.15pm **College Ward**

Tuesday 2nd May at 7pm:

Southfield Park Primary School, Long Grove Rd, Epsom KT19 8TF, one hustings will be held for the new **Ward of Horton**.

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College
Kate Emily Brooks – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Nigel Kenneth Benno Sippel Collin – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Charlotte Mary Day – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Julian Peter Freeman – Liberal Democrat Focus Team
James John Lawrence – Liberal Democrat Focus Team
Helen Lewis – Labour Party
Julie Anne Morris – Liberal Democrat Focus Team
Christopher Charles Muller – Conservative
Tom Peer – Conservative
Michael John Ware – Conservative
Court
Chris Ames – Labour Party
Christine Rosemary Beams – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Kate Chinn – Labour Party
Rob Geleit – Labour Party
David Erwin Lyndsay – Conservative
Geoffrey Christopher Pope – Conservative
Karen Seidel – Liberal Democrat
Sandy Smyth – Conservative
Mary Catherine Sullivan – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
David Michael Triggs – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Cuddington
Caroline Barretto – Labour Party
Dan Brown – Liberal Democrat
Kevin Rhys Davies – Labour Party
Garrett Michael Doran – Conservative
Alex Paul Hawkes Cole – Conservative
Graham Owen Jones – Residents' Association of Cuddington
Phil Neale – Residents' Association of Cuddington
Arun Matyjas Saini – Liberal Democrat
Rajesh Saini – Liberal Democrat
Kim Spickett – Residents' Association of Cuddington
Lynn Walker – Conservative
Ewell Court
Tamas Balog – Liberal Democrat
Tom Chaloner – Conservative
Oliver Nathaniel Clement – Conservative
Dan Edwards – Labour Party
David Walter Gulland – Liberal Democrat
Debbie Monksfield – Labour Party
Peter William O'donovan – Ewell Court Residents' Association
Christopher Robin John Watson – Ewell Court Residents' Association
Ewell Village
Christine Gladys Cleveland – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
andrew Nicholas Cook – Conservative
Sandra Noel Hatfield – Labour Party
Kenneth John Kimber – Liberal Democrat
andrej Kubicek – Liberal Democrat
David Anthony Lee – Green Party
Graham Rapier – Conservative
Clive David Woodbridge – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Horton
Ros Godson – Labour Party
Eber Alan Kington – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Henal Vinod Ladwa – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Philip Mclauchlan – Liberal Democrat
Bernie Muir – Conservative
Kieran Persand – Conservative
Mark Christian Todd – Labour Party
Paul Stephen Vagg – Liberal Democrat
Nonsuch
Jamie Abrahams – Conservative
Janice Baker – Green Party
Stephen William Dixon – Liberal Democrat
Shanice Goldman – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Gaye Hadfield – Labour Party
Christine Anne Howells – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Robert Leach – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Steven Liu – Conservative
Gary Derek Peters – Liberal Democrat

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Sharon Marie Stead – Liberal Democrat
Ajay Kumar Uppal – Conservative
Ian Leslie Ward – Labour Party

Ruxley

Rob Adnitt – Labour Party
Joseph Ojo Alawo – Conservative
Catherine Anne Carver-Hill – Labour Party
Alex Coley – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
David Raymond John Collins – Conservative
David Michael Kidd – Green Party
Jan Mason – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Marian Paula Morrison – Liberal Democrat

Stamford

Andrew Darren Bailey – Green Party
Steve Bridger – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
David Colleton Buxton – Liberal Democrat Focus Team
Richard William Chinn – Labour Party
Alison Kelly – Liberal Democrat Focus Team
Karen Landles – Labour Party
Martin Olney – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Aaron Persand – Conservative
Stephen Pontin – Conservative

Stoneleigh

Rusmat Roland Arthur Ahmed – Liberal Democrat
Charlotte Ann Angus – Conservative
Hannah Charlotte Emily Dalton – Stoneleigh and Auriol Residents' Association
Brian William Fisher – Liberal Democrat
Anthony John Froud – Stoneleigh and Auriol Residents' Association
Sue Hoyle – Labour Party
Tracy Margaret Muller – Conservative
Ragu Raymond – Labour Party

Town

Arthur Abdulin – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Neil andrew Dallen – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Danny Leonard Fullilove – Conservative
John Stuart Gosling – Labour Party
Yvonne Caroline Grunwald – Green Party
Sarah Louise Kenyon – Labour Party
Rachel Sarah King – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Gillian Miles – Liberal Democrat
Jamie Joseph O'sullivan – Conservative
Philip Victor Pavey – Liberal Democrat
Meera Persand – Conservative
Sarah Louise Charlotte Whitworth – Liberal Democrat

West Ewell

Jason George anderson – Labour Party
Patrick Christopher Campion – Conservative
andrew John Casey – Liberal Democrat
Linda Martha Chmiel – Liberal Democrat
Tony Foster – Green Party
Lisa Zahra Haghir – Liberal Democrat
Nafiz Huq – Conservative
Lucie Kimberley Mcintyre – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
O'sullivan Kitty – Conservative
Humphrey Reynolds – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Alan Keith Williamson – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell

Woodcote and Langley Vale

Abbey Bloom – Labour Party
Liz Frost – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Bernice Froud – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
Daniel Charles Martyr – Liberal Democrat
Emily Lucia Cottam Martyr – Liberal Democrat
Steven John Mccormick – Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell
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Worrying about voter ID law

No photo – no vote!

4th May Surrey goes to the polls

6 June 2023



Election day in Surrey takes place on May 4 this year but because of the way the county is broken up, not every poll will be the same. Surrey operates under a two-tier system, so there is a county-wide council that sits atop of 11 boroughs and districts. On May 4 it's the boroughs and districts that go to the polls.

But even the boroughs and districts are holding different types of election. Surrey Heath, Spelthorne, **Epsom and Ewell**, and Guildford will have all out elections, where every councillor, in every ward will be decided on election day. The same process is also happening in Mole Valley and Waverley, although this is because of boundary changes.

In Mole Valley there will be 13 new wards, down from 21, represented by 39 seats rather than the previous 41. Waverley too has undergone major changes and instead of returning 57 members there will now only be 50 councillors. The remaining five boroughs and districts, Elmbridge, Tandridge, Runnymede, Reigate and Banstead, and Woking will be going out in thirds.

This year will also be the first time people will be required to show photo ID to vote in person.

In previous elections, residents of Woking have taken part in the Government's photo ID pilot tests. The law was changed last year so that voters have to show photo ID before being issued a ballot paper in polling stations for general, local, police and crime commissioner elections, or any future referendum.

Related reports:

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Register to vote deadline for elections

6 June 2023



The deadline to register to vote in May's local elections is approaching. Those who need to register, including those who

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have recently moved house, need to do so before midnight on April 17.

Local elections are being held on May 4 across the country, including for councils across Surrey.

All 11 district and borough councils in Surrey are holding elections, some for a third of their councillors and some for the whole council. There is also a by-election for Surrey County Council in the Walton South and Oatlands division, following the resignation of Cllr Tony Samuels.

Councils have started sending out poll cards to voters, anyone who has not received one or who has recently moved may not be registered to vote.

Registration should take around five minutes on the gov.uk website, and though people may be asked for their National Insurance number, it is possible to register without one.

Registering anonymously is also possible for those who do not want their name to appear on the electoral register.

May's elections will be the first where all voters will need to bring photo ID to vote, with only certain forms being accepted. Those without the necessary photo ID, which includes passports, driving licence and an Oyster 60+ Card, can apply for a free voter ID document.

While online registration is the quickest way, voters can also print off a paper form to be sent to their local Electoral Registration Office, which is the relevant district or borough council.

To check if they are registered to vote, voters also need to contact the electoral services team at their local council.

Voters must be aged 18 or over on election day and be a British, Irish, European Union citizen, or Commonwealth citizen with permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need permission, as well as being registered to vote.

Image – Runnymede Council.

Epsom and Ewell Times adds: For guidance on photo ID read our report HERE "No Photo, No Vote".

Related reports:

Turn up to turn downturn in turnout!

Worrying about voter ID law

Surrey's leader's life pledge for brain tumour research

6 June 2023



Surrey County Council's leader said his focus "for the rest of his life" will be fulfilling a promise made to his daughter before she died to fundraise for brain tumour research.

Emily Oliver was 21 when she died, 18 months after being diagnosed with a diffuse midline glioma, and after seeking medical advice "from across the world".

Her father, county council leader Councillor **Tim Oliver**, said the fund the family set up for her 21st birthday was now nearing £150,000 but vowed to continue to raise awareness and money.

He told the LDRS: "We promised Emily that we would do all that we could. We promised her that we would fundraise for what she wanted, specific research into her type of high grade glioblastoma. Hers was a very, very rare form.

"That is our focus and that will be our focus for the rest of our lives, to raise as much as we can and to find a research team that will look at predominantly her type [of brain tumour]."

Cllr Oliver said brain tumours didn't get the level of attention or funding as other types of cancer, because the number of cases was not as high, but said they were the biggest cause of cancer death for under 40s.

He said he and his wife, Debi, hoped to find a specific research project in the near future to give the money to. "It's really important to us that we continue to keep that alive and deliver on that promise to her," he added.

The council leader also has his sights set on creating a Surrey-wide bereavement service and has been having conversations about it with the chief executive at Surrey Heartlands and Surrey hospices.

He said "pulling together" the different organisations that offer support for both before and after death would help people know where to turn.

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Cllr Oliver added: “I think that would be a great thing for people to be able to know where to go.” He also praised the work of the **Brain Tumour Charity** and the support they give to families on what their journey may look like and understanding what their diagnosis actually meant.

He will take part in the **Princess Alice Hospice**’s “Talk the Walk” event in April which aims to get men, in particular, to talk about bereavement.

Debi said: “The pain of her loss is with us every minute of every day, but Emily was passionate about fundraising to find a cure for brain tumours, and I absolutely know she would be really pleased that what she had started is being continued.”

Cllr Oliver also called on the government to deliver on its promise of delivering £40million for research into brain tumours.

An inquiry by the **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Brain Tumours** was launched in 2021, and said that as of January 25 2023, just £15 million had been awarded since June 2018.

For advice and support from the Brain Tumour Charity, you can call its Support and Info Line on 0808 800 0004 or go to the website at: https://www.thebraintumourcharity.org/

Image Tim Oliver credit Surrey Live

County resists nimbies against children’s home

6 June 2023



Resident objections to a new children’s home and apartments for care leavers have been labelled “petty” as councillors approved the plans.

The former Adult Education Centre in Dene Street, Dorking can now be converted to provide accommodation for young people in the home and in “trainer flats” which bridge the gap before young people move into independent housing.



Plans for new children\’s home in Dene Street, Dorking. From Design and Access Statement. Credit: SCC

A meeting of Surrey County Council’s planning and regulatory committee on Wednesday (March 29) unanimously approved the plans, which will include the construction of a new two-storey building on part of the site. But the meeting also heard that of 48 letters received at the time of the meeting, 24 were objecting to the plans.

Three were in support, citing reasons such as the need for suitable accommodation in Surrey and being glad to see a vacant site used, while 21 letters were commenting on the application.

Councillor **Ernest Mallett** MBE (Residents’ Association and Independent, West Molesey) described residents’ objections as “petty” when he spoke on the application. He said: “I don’t quite know what the population are thinking. They seem to be objecting as if this was some sort of prison for about 100 people. I can’t really understand the objections.”

Cllr Mallett added that on a site visit he thought the plans were “an excellent use of the building”.

The development, which will be owned and run by Surrey County Council, raised concern among residents about rats being displaced and the need for pest control in neighbouring properties, and the authority being “poor at managing children’s home”.

These, along with concerns about the consultation carried out and the protection of the “well-being and mental health of existing residents” were put under the heading “other” by officers, stating in the report they were not material planning considerations for the application.

An officers’ report said: “The majority of objections were concerning the need to protect and enhance the site’s nesting swifts.”

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Officers confirmed ten “swift bricks”, which allow birds to nest in them, would be added to the design, while the birds’ current access to the roof of the building would be maintained during building work.

Along with the concerns about swifts, residents raised issues including the design being out of keeping with the residential area, worries about anti-social behaviour, noise and disturbance, and smells from “industrialist catering”.

Cllr **Catherine Powell** (Farnham Residents, Farnham North), who sits on the council’s corporate parenting board, said the new facilities were “absolutely necessary” and that she “100 per cent” supported the application.

She told the meeting: “Clearly the building is in a state of decay and it puts it back into a useful purpose.”

Officers confirmed the work would be done in two phases, with the children’s home and “no wrong door” facility being built first, followed by changes to the existing building to develop the trainer flats.

The Children’s Home would be for a maximum of four residents and 2 staff, while the “no wrong door” facility, also in the new building, would accommodate two emergency residents and one member of staff.

Top image: Dorking Children\’s home approved in Dene Street, Dorking. Current view from Google Street View

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Middling rate for Epsom and Ewell Council Tax

6 June 2023



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is slap in the middle of the 11 Surrey boroughs table of band D council tax charges for 2023/2024. The difference between the highest and lowest is £78.20 per annum. As reported by The Epsom and Ewell Times it should be no surprise to find debt ridden Woking having the highest. Emily Coady-Stemp LDRS reports on the full Surrey County wide picture and Epsom and Ewell Times produces the table.

	Borough	D band Tax
1	Runnymede Borough Council	£2,170.57
2	Guildford Borough Council	£2,178.06
3	Mole Valley District Council	£2,184.84
4	Waverley Borough Council	£2,187.29
5	Spelthorne Borough Council	£2,201.79
6	**Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**	**£2,205.25**
7	Tandridge District Council	£2,223.53
8	Surrey Heath Borough Council	£2,226.30
9	Elmbridge	£2,229.00
10	Reigate and Banstead	£2,235.36
11	Woking Borough Council	£2,248.77.

Related reports:

Budget Report: More council tax for Epsom and Ewell

Epsom and Ewell Council raises tax 2.99%

2023/2024: average of £50 more to pay Surrey County Council

Council tax bills for Surrey residents will go up from April 1 after authorities confirmed their budgets for the coming financial year. Surrey County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and each of the county’s 11 districts and

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boroughs, confirmed their increases separately last month, with council tax bills and collection being the responsibility of the districts and boroughs.

The Police and Crime Commissioner, Lisa Townsend, confirmed a rise of £15 per year for residents amid an increase in Surrey Police's fuel bills of more than £500,000.

While Surrey County Council, which is responsible for adult social care as well as services including road repairs and schools, increased its share by £50 per year on Band D homes.

See below for a breakdown of the council tax bands in your area.

Elmbridge Borough Council
The average Band D property in Elmbridge will pay £2,229.00, except in the Claygate parish, where the bill for a Band D home will be £2,243.15.

Band A: £1,486.00
Band B: £1,733.66
Band C: £1,981.33
Band D: £2,229.00
Band E: £2,724.34
Band F: £3.219.67
Band G: £3,715.00
Band H: £4,458.00

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Residents in Surrey's smallest borough will see council tax bills of £2205.25 from April, for the average Band D property.

Band A: £1,470.17
Band B: £1,715.19
Band C: £1,960.22
Band D: £2,205.25
Band E: £2,695.31
Band F: £3,185.36
Band G: £3,675.42
Band H: £4,410.50

Guildford Borough Council
The bill for Band D households in Guildford will be £2178.06, excluding parish and town councils. For Band D the parish share ranges from no extra charge in Wisley to £2291.71 for a Band D property in Normandy.

Band A: £1,452.04
Band B: £1,694.04
Band C: £1,936.05
Band D: £2,178.06
Band E: £2,662.07
Band F: £3,146.08
Band G: £3,630.1
Band H: £4,356.11

Mole Valley District Council
In Mole Valley, the average Band D property will pay £2,184.84, except where there are parish councils. In Charlwood, with the highest parish council precept, residents in a Band D property will pay £2,259.09.

Band A: £1456.56
Band B: £1699.32
Band C: £1,942.08
Band D: £2,184.84
Band E: £2,670.36
Band F: £3,155.88
Band G: £3,641.4
Band H: £4,369.68

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
A Band D home in Reigate and Banstead will pay £2,235.36 from April, while residents in the Horley Town Council Area will pay £2,283.12 and in Salfords and Sidlow will pay £2,265.08.

Band A: £1,490.24
Band B: £1,738.61
Band C: £1,986.98
Band D: £2,235.36
Band E: £2,732.11
Band F: £3,228.85
Band G: £3,725.60
Band H: £4,470.72

Runnymede Borough Council
Runnymede residents in Band D property will pay £2,170.57.

Band A: £1,447.05

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Band B: £1,688.22
Band C: £1,929.39
Band D: £2,170.57
Band E: £2,652.92
Band F: £3,135.27
Band G: £3,617.62
Band H: £4,341.14

Spelthorne Borough Council
Residents in a Band D property will pay £2,201.79 for their council tax in Spelthorne.

Band A: £1,467.86
Band B: £1,712.50
Band C: £1,957.14
Band D: £2,201.79
Band E: £2,691.08
Band F: £3,180.36
Band G: £3,669.65
Band H: £4,403.58

Surrey Heath Borough Council
Surrey Heath's amount for a Band D property is £2226.30, plus the amounts paid to parish councils throughout the borough. Bands listed below are for the most expensive parish, in Bisley.

Band A: £1,523.45
Band B: £1,777.35
Band C: £2,031.26
Band D: £2,285.17
Band E: £2,792.99
Band F: £3,300.8
Band G: £3,808.62
Band H: £4,570.6

Tandridge District Council
In Tandridge, a Band D property's council tax will be £2,223.53 2023/24. Parishes in the district range from no additional charge, to £2,311.97 in the most expensive, Crowhurst.

Band A: £1,482.36
Band B: £1,729.41
Band C: £1,976.47
Band D: £2,223.53
Band E: £2,717.65
Band F: £3,211.76
Band G: £3,705.89
Band H: £4,447.06

Waverley Borough Council
A Band D home, excluding parish council charges, is set at £2,187.29 in Waverley. The most expensive parish bills are in Godalming, and shown below.

Band A: £1,530.45
Band B: £1,785.52
Band C: £2,040.60
Band D: £2,295.67
Band E: £2,805.82
Band F: £3,315.97
Band G: £3,826.12
Band H: £4,591.34

Woking Borough Council
In Woking, residents in a Band D home will pay £2,248.77.

Band A: £1,499.18
Band B: £1,749.04
Band C: £1,998.90
Band D: £2,248.77
Band E: £2,748.50
Band F: £3,248.22
Band G: £3,747.95
Band H: £4,497.54

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Spelthorne’s thorny property problems spelt out

6 June 2023



Following the report on Woking’s woes we have Emily Coady-Stemp from LDRS report on another sister Surrey borough’s woes over property investments:

Spelthorne’s former leader says “hand on heart” he still believes the borough council’s commercial property investments were “utterly legal”. The councillor said the authority had taken legal advice on the decision to purchase the buildings but raised concerns about other councils with high borrowing costs.

Image: Spelthorne Borough Council audit committee on March 23, 2023. Credit: Emily Coady-Stemp

Councillor Ian Harvey (United Spelthorne Group, Sunbury East), who was leader of Spelthorne Borough Council at the time three commercial properties were bought outside of the borough in 2017/18, was responding to a public interest report carried out by its auditors. He told a meeting of the borough council’s audit committee on Thursday (March 23) his first question at the time the possibility of buying properties came up was: “Is it legal?”
He said the advice given at the time by the council’s KC was that it was legal, and that the decision had “repeatedly been determined to be legal subsequently”.

The report, publicly released in November, claimed the council had “acted unlawfully” in its decision to buy properties outside of the borough, and set out five recommendations for the authority.

At a December meeting of the council, councillors agreed the recommendations set out in the KPMG report, and Thursday’s meeting was an update on the action plan to come about from that.

The current council leader, Cllr John Boughtflower (Conservative, Ashford East) said in December the council “should not have any difficulties” accepting the recommendations, because of changes to processes at the council and issues that had been addressed since the purchases.

Cllr Harvery asked auditors at Thursday’s meeting, who were presenting their report into the 2017/18 accounts, if they had assessed the council’s risks “compared to some other spectacularly investing local authorities for example, Slough, Croydon, Thurrock”. He also asked about comparisons to Woking Borough Council, where the current administration has warned an effective bankruptcy may be declared, saying they had “borrowed more than we have without any surety of repayment”.

Later in the meeting Cllr Harvey said: “I can say hand on heart that we were assured, and I still believe, it is utterly legal. And if what we did was illegal then what a lot of other councils have done, and spectacularly failed, at was far, far more illegal.” He claimed the difference in legal opinions was because KPMG had “relied on a much more junior barrister within the same chambers who came up with a dissenting view”.

Cllr Lawrence Nichols (Liberal Democrat, Halliford and Sunbury West) said though the advice was taken from a “very well qualified QC”, it amounted to 19 words of legal advice for more than £200million of expenditure in 2017/18. He also questioned the diversity of the council’s property portfolio and the advice sought from how to manage commercial properties. He told the meeting: “I do think we out to be more realistic about diversification. We are in the office business, whether it’s an engineering company or a dental practice, that’s not the issue. It’s the office market we’re in, so that’s our diversification risk.”

In response to an expected £60m of rental income dropping to £46m for next year, which Cllr Nichols said was a “massive change of direction”, the council’s chief accountant Paul Taylor said £7m rent guarantee income had been released and would be going into the council’s revenue budget.

The meeting heard that a new group head of assets had recently started at the council and that a “fully worked up action plan” would come to the committee’s next meeting in July. Spelthorne’s chief executive, Daniel Mouawad, said the nearly half a decade turnaround in the audit report for 2017/18, the last stage of which was the public interest report, was “by any measure” a “remarkably poor turnaround”. But he added that nearly a year’s delay could be “directly attributed to the actions of one individual Spelthorne councillor” which was currently being investigated under the members code of conduct.

When asking a question on this individual, Cllr Harvey was cut off by the chair, his wife Cllr Helen Harvey (United Spelthorne Group, Sunbury East), though officers did confirm they would revert with a response on the cost of the delay caused by the councillor concerned.

KPMG representatives confirmed an “adverse conclusion” would be issued in relation to the “value for money arrangements” for the 2017/18 accounts, the same as in the 2016/17 accounts where recommendations and weaknesses

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raised were “still in place in the 2017/18 period”.

The meeting also heard that a review into the council’s borrowing carried out by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities should be coming to an end this week

In response to a public question on the review, the chair said the council was not “privy to the terms of reference or have any expectations to receive the final report within any given period”.

It was hoped this report would also come to the next committee meeting in July, though Terry Collier, the council’s deputy chief executive, said it had been hoped there may be a draft report available by Thursday’s meeting.

Education assessment delays making parents sick

6 June 2023



A mother claims Surrey County Council “makes her sick” as she says delays to assessing her son’s special educational needs are causing “a lot of stress”.

At a protest held outside the authority’s Reigate headquarters, the mother, along with others, called for change at the council in how Surrey’s children with additional needs are treated.

Image: Parents protesting outside Surrey County Council headquarters in Woodhatch Place, Reigate. Credit: Emily Coady-Stemp

Anna Sutherland, protesting for the fifth time outside the Woodhatch Place building, said parents being sent down the tribunal route, as they are if they want to appeal against a council’s assessment of their children, “put a lot on families”.

She claimed the education, health and care plan (EHCP) issued to her 11-year-old son by the county council was “unlawful” but that because she knew the law, and knew what he was entitled to, she would “get there in the end”. Ms Sutherland told the LDRS: “This makes me ill. Surrey council make me sick.”

With her 9-year-old daughter’s EHCP also up for an annual review soon, Ms Sutherland feared she may have two tribunals on her hands. On previous protests, cabinet members on Surrey County Council have come out to talk to the parents present, but did not on Tuesday (March 21).

When the group of parents decided to attend the council meeting taking place that morning, they were told they could only do so if they left their placards in the building’s reception downstairs.

Ms Sutherland said many families with children with additional needs had “a lot to deal with in the first place” and additional chasing of EHCPs, tribunals and school places was “a lot to put on families”. Saying many families also had to work, may also have neuro-diverse conditions themselves and the “huge impact” on a parent’s mental health of going through a child’s diagnoses she said the parents at the protest were representing a “much huger group”. She added: “On top of the stress they put on you, then having the additional strength or the additional drive to protest, a lot of families just can’t do that.”

Clare Powdrill said delays to the EHCP process for her son had led to her spending more than £30,000 in two tribunals, both conceded by the council the day before the hearing. She said: “I am protesting because Surrey County Council have seriously let my son down.” Another parent, **Charlotte Lewis**, also said EHCP processes had been delayed “at every step” and timelines not been met by Surrey County Council. She said: “Many parents are being forced into a lengthy and expensive appeals process which is usually won but can delay children’s access to an education by years in some cases. ”

A council spokesperson said: “We are not able to comment on the details of any individual children, but we can confirm that all current EHCPs were updated in line with statutory timescales to enable children’s transition to the next phase of their education. If a parent is unhappy with the content of their child’s updated plan, we would urge them to contact their case officer as soon as possible, so that any issues can be resolved.

“We always aim to resolve disagreements without families needing to go through a tribunal process, however, they do have the right to do so, and if it remains the view of the local authority that the latest education health and care plan accurately reflects a child’s needs and the provision required to meet their needs, then, in these rare cases the tribunal is the appropriate route to resolve the dispute.”

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Surrey Council's ULEZ talks ongoing with TfL

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Surrey councillors have confirmed written communications are ongoing with Transport for London over the impact of the ULEZ expansion. Surrey County Councillor **Robert Evans** (Labour, Stanwell and Stanwell Moor) asked cabinet members at a full council meeting on Tuesday (March 21) to confirm that the mitigations the council was calling for would be followed up with the chancellor.

He claimed previous attempts to extend the Transport for London (TfL) Oyster card zone 6 in several Surrey boroughs had "floundered" because central government would not underwrite potential losses to the train companies.

Image: Ultra Low Emission Zone, Stonebridge Park. Credit: Will Durrant/LDRS

Cllr Evans called on Surrey's cabinet to "work with TfL and the Mayor of London to make sure that Surrey residents get the health benefits of this, but don't get negative impacts if ULEZ comes into operation."
The zone, which sees drivers of older, more polluting cars charged £12.50 per day to enter it, is due to expand to cover all of greater London from August.

The ULEZ currently covers central London and its expansion will see it border several Surrey districts and boroughs including Spelthorne, Elmbridge and **Epsom**.

In response to TfL's plans to extend the zone, Elmbridge councillors previously called for the Oyster Card Zone 6 to be expanded further, highlighting the difference between public transport in London and in Surrey.
Cllr Evans said schemes in Bristol, Coventry, Birmingham and elsewhere had seen the government "pick up the bill for a scrappage scheme".

The council's cabinet member for transport, infrastructure and growth, Cllr **Matt Furniss**, (Conservative, Shalford) confirmed face-to-face meetings had been requested with TfL, but said he was "disappointed to say it only took the threat of legal action to get transport London to respond." He said the council did "ask the government regularly for additional funding" and would be talking to them about the impact of the planned extension.

Meeting documents showed a virtual meeting took place between with TfL, county council officers and Elmbridge Borough Council officers on February 21.

A written response was received from TfL as a follow up to the meeting on March 7, which was being looked at and a response drafted from the council. The documents said: "The council is committed to delivering a greener future, but it must be done in a practical and sustainable way. .....The impact of an expanded ULEZ on many Surrey residents and businesses will be significant, and we will not stand by and watch that happen with no mitigation offered."

During the meeting, Cllr Evans also reminded the scheme had been brought about by Boris Johnson, during his time as Mayor of London. Former Prime Minister Mr Johnson was London Mayor between 2008 and 2016, and announced the introduction of the world's first ULEZ in London in 2015. It was introduced from April 2019.

A written response was received from TfL as a follow up to the meeting on March 7, which was being looked at and a response drafted from the council.

Cllr **Buddhi Weerasinghe** (Conservative, Lower Sunbury and Halliford) said he was supporting a campaign by residents to get Ashford and Sunbury stations, among others in Spelthorne, added to Zone 6. He also highlighted the needs of the expanding Shepperton Studios that he said had been put in a letter to government regarding its work force needing to travel to and from the studios by train.

On the Hunt for pothole repairs

6 June 2023

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The Government will give an additional £3.7m for pothole repairs in Surrey. But one Surrey councillor is calling for ministers to "go further" and change the way road funding is allocated from Westminster.

Tuesday's budget, delivered by South West Surrey MP **Jeremy Hunt**, announced an additional £200million for 2023/24 across the country for pothole repair.

Surrey County Council's deputy cabinet member for levelling up, Councillor **Rebecca Paul** (Conservative, Tadworth, Walton & Kingswood) said she was "delighted" the Government had recognised more funding was needed in Surrey for road repairs. She told the LDRS: "The recent spate of potholes across our county affects every single one of us, so this additional money is much welcomed." She called on the Government to "go further and give serious consideration" to changing how highways maintenance funding is allocated to take into account traffic volume.

Cllr Paul delivered a petition to Downing Street in June 2022 calling for funding for road repairs to be allocated by usage rather than the current formula which looks at the length of roads. She said: "This would result in a fairer allocation of funds so that Surrey Highways is better able to address the backlog."

Roads minister Richard Holden said the cash could mean another 75,000 potholes repaired. He also praised Surrey's lane rental scheme, which he said the county had been "at the forefront" of rolling out. The scheme, rolled out in 2021, charges companies for works which cause delay at peak times on the county's busiest roads.
Mr Holden said the scheme minimised delays from roadworks taking place because they were more often carried out at the same time, and this also reduced damage to roads. He told the LDRS he wanted to see that rolled out more across the country.

On Cllr Paul's calls for "fairer funding" from central government, Mr Holden said it was "swings and roundabouts" because a lot of the strategic road network, paid for out of national taxation, was in Surrey. He added: "I'm always willing to listen to local concerns about these issues. I think it's vitally important that we do get the balance right when it comes to road funding."

A motion will be brought to a meeting of Surrey County Council on Tuesday, calling for the adoption of a "Vision Zero Safe System" and setting a target date for zero fatalities and severe injuries on Surrey's roads. **Will Forster** (Lib Dem, Woking South) will bring forward a motion saying: "Road collision statistics in Surrey have hardly changed over the last ten years. In 2021 24 people were killed and 647 were seriously injured. The effects of a road traffic collision can have a physical, emotional, social and economic impact on everyone involved. In financial terms the cost of road collisions in Surrey was approximately £250 million in 2021."

A Surrey County Council spokesperson said: "While any additional funding for potholes is welcomed, as highlighted by the Annual Local Authority Roads Maintenance survey in 2022, the condition of roads across the UK would require a one-time catch up cost (over and above what authorities already receive) of £12.64bn. The current commitment from government for English roads funding prior to the announcement in this week's budget was £2.7bn in total between 2022 and 2025, therefore the funding allocations from government still fall far short of the needs of the UK roads.

"However Surrey County Council recognises the need to invest in our roads and so is investing additional funds beyond government grants and will be spending £188m on improving and maintaining our roads and pavements over the next five years."

From custody to caring – new plans for Epsom's old nick.

6 June 2023



Epsom Police Station has been closed since 2012 along with its several cells for detainees. The Surrey Police are situated in offices in The Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom, where there are no custody facilities for arrested suspects. LDRS reports on the latest plans for the old building.

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A former Surrey police station and the neighbouring ambulance station could be turned into a 96-bed care home.
Plans for the Church Street site, in Epsom, include a basement car park, croquet lawns and specialist care for people with dementia.

But the The Epsom Civic Society has raised concerns about “the proliferation of specialist elderly accommodation within the borough” while there is an “outstanding need” for housing, especially affordable homes. A letter to the council regarding the application also highlighted the “importance of supporting the vitality and viability of Epsom town centre”.

Image. Left: Old station – Google street view. Right: Plans for former Epsom Police Station in Church Street. Credit: Hunters

The society also raised concerns about protecting trees on the site, necessary measures being put in place for demolition works which may involve asbestos removal, and a possible flooding risk associated with the basement car park.

The police station part of the site was granted planning permission in 2020 for a residential development with 29 apartments located in two blocks, but this excluded the ambulance station. While a since withdrawn application was also made in 2019 for a 60 apartment extra care scheme, which saw some local opposition but no objections from the statutory or council consultees, according to documents submitted by the applicant.

The 1960s police station building has been empty since 2012, and could now be replaced with the three to five-storey blocks of a CQC registered residential care home which would offer 24-hour care.

According to planning documents, the 96 bedrooms would provide nursing, residential and dedicated dementia care, and would have an ensuite wet room.

The applicant said: “The care home will be capable of caring for residents of all dependency levels, including those who require dementia care within a specialist unit.”

The Church Street Conservation Area, which contains contains 20 listed buildings including the grade II St Martin’s Church, The Cedars and Ebbisham House, wraps around the south and west ends of the site.

Plans show the home would include gardens with trees planted and “activity lawns” for residents to include bowling, croquet, gardening.

Why planning matters at Hobbledown

6 June 2023



A parent fought back tears as he told a Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s planning committee he thought someone was going “to be injured or killed” as councillors approved a series of applications for a family attraction. Hobbledown Farm in Epsom made five planning applications to its local council, some for works that had already been carried out.

Councillors called the attraction “a great asset” to the borough but also voiced frustrations that applications were coming to them for things that had already been done.

When the applications were last brought to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s planning committee in October, councillors deferred their decision and asked Hobbledown representatives to come back with a flood assessment for the site.

The meeting heard council officers were “content” with answers that had come back on the flooding risk after two rounds of consultation with the Environment Agency and with the lead local flood flood authority. But as well as concerns around an increased risk of flooding for neighbours, the vice chair of Clarendon Park Residents’ Association spoke at the meeting on behalf of residents in the estate next to the farm.

Alex Duval had been told he could not speak on all five applications at once, and was not able to stay for the whole meeting because he needed to get his nine-year-old child home for bed. But speaking as part of the consideration on a new overflow car park, and before an item on lorry deliveries on McKenzie Way, which he said residents were “most worried about”, Mr Duval set out the issues.

He claimed his car had been nearly hit by a reversing lorry there recently and that a two metre high fence that had just been approved by councillors retrospectively meant lorries coming out could not see as they exited. Clearly emotional, he said: “I’ll just say it as it is: completely unacceptable. My son has had to go out into the road, I’m going to try not to be

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really upset about it, to go round lorries coming out from that site into oncoming traffic and it's not acceptable. It is not acceptable for anyone living on Clarendon Park."

He paused, saying he could not even read his prepared notes any more. Again having to cut short his speech and close to tears, the father said: "Some resident, or a resident's child, is going to be injured or killed, when [deliveries] could have been controlled on the other side [of the site]."

Cllr **Jan Mason** (Residents' Association, Ruxley) said she had been talking to residents who had raised concerns about lorries using the McKenzie way entrance. She had also previously said an application for a gas tank holder on the site was "an accident waiting to happen" though councillors were reminded that this would be a matter for the Health and Safety Executive and not for planning.

The planning applications put in for the site, which is in the green belt and next to Horton Country Park, were:

- A retrospective application for timber and netting outdoor play structures, three bounce pillows and a lorikeet enclosure.
- Putting in a new "shepherd's hut" toilet block.
- A retrospective application for timber fencing around the farm, the relocation of entrance gates and the installation of a gas tank holder.
- A variation of a condition on previously granted planning permission to allow part of the site to be used for over-flow car parking at the busiest times.
- A variation of a condition to let deliveries to the farm shop and cafe enter the site via McKenzie Way.

All the applications were approved, with the chair using a casting vote on a second attempt to approve the gas tank holder.

Councillors were told by officers that the fact applications were retrospective was not material consideration, despite many expressing their frustrations on them.

A representative for Hobbledown said management changes at the attraction had been made and they were working to "resolve any planning breaches at the site". **Bob Neville** said meetings had been held between the applicant and senior planning officers at the council to try and respond to concerns.

He told the meeting: "We hold our hands up. There have been planning breaches that have occurred on the site. What we're doing now is working pro-actively to resolve those issues going forward."

After the overflow car park was approved, Cllr Mason was heard to say: "They've won again."

Speaking on that item she had previously said: "We're not Chessington World of Adventures. This is on a local nature reserve and I think we should remember that."

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