

Epsom and Ewell braces for M25 closure traffic

22 April 2024



Greater chaos has been avoided by the **Epsom and Ewell Times** correcting the **Highway Authority's** belief you could turn off the *northbound* A3 to go *south* at the Hook Junction. "Thank you for your email of 19 April 2024 in relation to the M25 junction 10/A3 Wisley interchange improvement project and specifically regarding the error in the M25 weekend closure diversion route published on our webpage. I'd like to apologise for this error and to also thank you for bringing it to our attention. This has now been corrected...." wrote Chris Davis, the Project Support Officer.

The Highways Authority has announced the closure of a section of the M25 motorway between junctions 9 (A243 Leatherhead) and 10 (A3 Wisley) from 9pm Friday, May 10, to 6am Monday, May 13, 2024. This closure is necessary for the installation of a new bridge.

Travellers are advised to avoid unnecessary journeys during this period, with the authority expressing gratitude to drivers who complied with similar closures in the past. A 19-mile diversion route has been planned, utilizing the A3 and the A240. Drivers are urged to follow this diversion and not rely on their SatNav systems.

For clockwise diversion, except for over-height vehicles, drivers are advised to leave the M25 at junction 8 onto the A217 (Reigate), then follow signs for London, Sutton, and Kingston on the A217 and A240. At the Esso roundabout, they should turn right onto the A24 (A240) towards Kingston, then left onto the A3 towards Portsmouth and Guildford. After 9½ miles, they can rejoin the M25 at junction 10.

Fortunately, the works at the Tolworth roundabout have all but completed for traffic. The northbound A240 has four lanes to filter at the junction approach.

For anticlockwise diversion, except for over-height vehicles, drivers should leave the M25 at junction 10 and join the A3 towards London. After 9½ miles, they should turn right onto the A240 towards Epsom and Reigate, then follow signs for Reigate and the M25 on the A240 and A217. After 3½ miles, they can rejoin the M25 at junction 8.

Drivers using the signed diversion route will not incur any Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) charges that may usually apply in London. However, over-height vehicles must follow a different diversion route to avoid a low bridge.

The Highways Authority also announced plans for three more weekend closures of the M25 this year, with no closures scheduled for June. The remaining closures will occur between July and the end of 2024, with dates to be announced following the May closure.

Plan your local Epsom and Ewell lunch dates with relatives accordingly...

Related reports:

M25 diversion cost me £12.50 ULEZ charge

Going South this weekend?

Epsom's Earth health doctor checks GMC

22 April 2024



Epsom residents led by Dr. **Kristine Damberg** converged Thursday 18th April on the General Medical Council (GMC) headquarters in Central London, decrying what they perceive as the regulator's lackluster response to the urgent health risks posed by climate change. The demonstration, organized by the **Planetary Health Coalition**, aimed to spotlight the pressing need for action on climate-related health issues affecting the community.



Dr Damberg protesting outside General Medical Council.

Dr. **Kristine Damberg**, Senior Simulation Practitioner and ESTH Sustainability Champion based at **Epsom Hospital**, voiced concerns about the immediate health impacts of climate change in the area. She lamented the rise in climate-related ailments among patients, including heat-related illnesses during the 2022 heatwave. Dr. Damberg emphasized the gravity of the situation, citing staggering statistics: “In the UK, 29-43,000 people die unnecessarily every year because of air pollution.”

Adding: “Even in a relatively affluent area like Epsom we are seeing these impacts on patients presenting to GP surgeries and hospitals. In the 2022 heatwave there were 3000 excess deaths in the UK and on the wards at Epsom Hospital the temperature was consistently above 30 degrees. It was extremely challenging for staff to work and keep already vulnerable patients safe at these extreme temperatures.”

She stressed the imperative for proactive measures, echoing The Lancet’s designation of climate change as the most significant global health threat of the 21st century. “We need to act now to protect our community.”

However, the GMC’s recent efforts to incorporate sustainability into medical ethics guidelines have fallen short, according to Dr. **Ramina Yassaie**, a medic and ethicist. She criticized the optional nature of these additions, stating, “Practising climate-conscious medicine should be a clear duty of a doctor.” She called for more robust guidance from the regulator to address the climate crisis head-on.

Epsom resident **Warren Bunce** echoed these sentiments, expressing disappointment in the GMC’s perceived inaction. “The General Medical Council’s silence on climate change is a betrayal of public health,” he asserted. He called for stronger support for healthcare professionals in Epsom and beyond to confront the health consequences of a warming planet.

Protestors also raised concerns about the GMC’s financial ties to fossil fuel industries. Dr. Christelle Blunden, a GP from Southampton, highlighted the disconnect between the GMC’s ethical standards and its investments. “Doctors want their money out of ecologically destructive industries,” Dr. Blunden stated. She emphasized the need for regulatory bodies to lead by example in addressing the climate crisis.

The protest occurred amidst growing legal restrictions on climate activism, with the recent conviction of Dr. Sarah Benn, a GP from Birmingham, serving as a stark reminder of the risks faced by healthcare workers advocating for environmental causes. Dr. Benn’s case underscored broader concerns about the erosion of protest rights in the UK, prompting calls for greater protection for activists.

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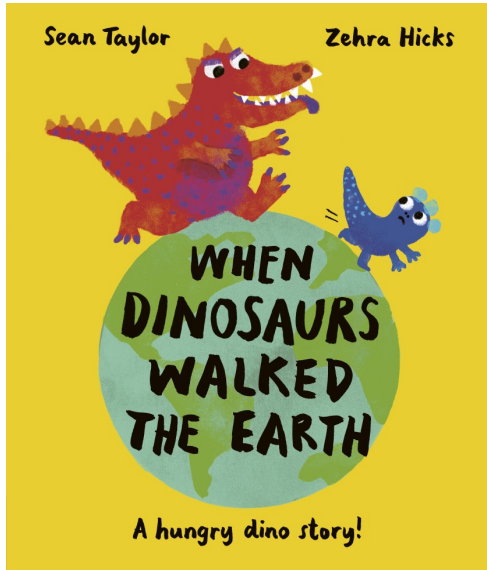
Climate Justice. A generation thing?

Walking with dinosaurs ... not quite

22 April 2024



Epsom-based **Zehra Hicks** is an award-winning children’s book author and illustrator whose books have been translated in over 20 languages. Through her work, she shows the magic of storytelling to children through her comical illustrations, which has led to an already impressive list of accolades, including being highly commended for the Macmillan Prize for Illustration and winner of the Heart of Hawick Award, to name a few.



When Dinosaurs Walked The Earth, authored by Sean Taylor and illustrated by Zehra, is one of five shortlisted books for this year’s £10,000 **Oscar’s Book Prize**. Founded in honour of book-loving Oscar Ashton who passed away aged three and a half from an undetected heart condition, the prize seeks to find the best children’s picturebook, and is supported by **Amazon** and the **Evening Standard** with Princess Beatrice as a patron. The winner will be announced at a ceremony in central London on the 7th May.

Zehra is a tutor at Chelsea College of Arts, where she completed a short course in Book Illustration in 2009.

Since then, she has been highly commended for the Macmillan Prize for Illustration, winner of the Heart of Hawick Award, named Lovereading4Kids Debut of the Year in 2011 and shortlisted for the Read It Again! Cambridgeshire Children’s Picture Book Award.

About Epsom Zehra told the Epsom and Ewell Times: “I moved to Epsom from London 14 years ago when I was pregnant with our second child. For quite a while I missed living London, but now I definitely have the best of both worlds. I feel incredibly lucky to be living in a town with so many open green spaces like Epsom Common and Epsom Downs, yet only being a 35 mins train ride away from the capital.

“I love going for daily walks with my sausage dog, Vincent. Sometimes I even run with him. I’m much more likely to come up with book ideas on a walk or run than stuck behind my desk! And I love bumping into people for little chats. Being an author and an illustrator can be quite lonely, and I find Epsom residents and dog walkers so friendly.

“I work in cafes too, so although some people may think there are too many cafes in Epsom, I happily make use of them ALL! You may often see me in Gail’s or D’s Coffee House with a sketch book working on new ideas. I love the buzz in cafes – it helps my creativity, and I love that there seems to be more and more residents working in cafes, creating a lively working community.”

“Having an art shop and bookshop is a huge benefit to me too, as is the market. It would be lovely to have some more independents though. A few are cropping up, but very, very slowly!”

Image: Zehra Hicks and her sausage dog on Epsom Common

Climate motion sparks energetic debate in Council

22 April 2024



In a lively session at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Tuesday 16th April, councillors engaged in a debate over a motion proposing a significant environmental mandate for future housing developments.

Councillor **James Lawrence**, (LibDem College) the initiator of the motion, emphasized the urgency of addressing climate change through stringent environmental standards in housing. He argued that aiming for the highest energy efficiency rating, Grade A of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for all new house builds, would not only align with climate goals but also save residents money in the long run.

“I believe that this ambitious policy would allow us to more effectively design the housing of the future, both saving residents money and meeting our climate goals and saving energy in the long run,” Councillor Lawrence asserted.

However, concerns were raised regarding the practicality and affordability of such a mandate. Councillor **Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley) queried the feasibility of implementing the requirement and its potential impact on housing affordability.

“How much would these homes cost and to what extent would that mean that less affordable and social housing is built because of the cost of these elite homes?” Councillor Coley questioned.

Councillor **Phil Neale**, (RA Cuddington) drawing from a construction background, echoed similar sentiments, highlighting the challenges developers would face in meeting such stringent standards without significantly increasing housing costs.

“In reality...to provide housing of above A, which is what is being asked in this motion, is impossible,” Councillor Neale argued, stressing the need for practical solutions to address the housing shortage.

Amidst the debate, Councillor **Kim Spickett** (RA Cuddington) urged a nuanced approach, emphasizing the importance of considering the impact on families and advocating for a stable efficiency metric in EPC ratings.

“The focus of an EPC headline metric needs to be on reducing demand through a stable efficiency metric,” Councillor Spickett remarked, urging caution in setting overly ambitious standards.

Despite the spirited discussion, Councillor **Julie Morris** (LibDem College) urged the council to aim high, citing the potential benefits of setting ambitious environmental standards.

“It’s much easier to negotiate downwards than it is to negotiate upwards,” Councillor Morris asserted, advocating for bold action to combat climate change.

However, Councillor **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley and Chair of the responding Licensing Planning and Policy Committee) cautioned against rushing into decisions without considering the economic viability and broader implications of the mandate. He stressed the importance of evidence-based decision-making and cautioned against jeopardizing housing affordability.

Councillor Lawrence concluded by urging the council to consider the motion’s underlying sentiment, even if it failed to pass, highlighting the growing momentum for stringent environmental regulations.

The motion was defeated on a show of hands.

Image: Oakton Developments - new houses in Epsom

Seeing through transparency in Council Chamber

22 April 2024



In a fullsome debate during the Full Council meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Tuesday 16th April, members clashed over a motion aimed at enhancing transparency in decision-making processes. The motion, proposed by the Liberal Democrat group, called for a policy of ‘transparency by default,’ urging that all meetings and documentation be made public unless specific exemptions under the Local Government Act applied.

Councillor **Julie Morris** (LibDem College), expressing disappointment with the decision not to refer the matter to the Standards and Constitution Committee, argued that the current approach lacked proper review and resulted in too many discussions being held behind closed doors. She emphasized the need for a more nuanced approach to determine when confidentiality was truly warranted.

Councillor **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Horton) echoed concerns about transparency, citing instances where information had been withheld or meetings had been abruptly shifted to private sessions. She called for comprehensive training for both officers and councillors to ensure better understanding and adherence to transparency principles.

Councillor **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) acknowledged the challenges in navigating confidentiality requirements but defended the importance of open discussions. He highlighted the unique opportunity afforded by debating the motion in a public forum, urging members to engage in constructive dialogue.

Newly-elected Councillor **James Lawrence** (LibDem College) expressed confusion over the rationale behind certain decisions to withhold information. He stressed the importance of providing clear explanations to the public and fellow councillors, especially in cases where secrecy seemed unwarranted.

Councillor **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) raised concerns about the misuse of private sessions for political reasons, emphasizing the need for robust scrutiny and public engagement. He criticized the current administration for potentially undermining transparency and urged for greater accountability moving forward.

In response to criticisms, Councillor **Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley) defended the decision to debate the motion in full Council, emphasizing the importance of public engagement. He questioned the opposition’s reluctance to address transparency concerns in a public setting.

Councillor **Alan Williamson** (RA West Ewell), opposed the motion, asserting that existing transparency measures were sufficient. He cautioned against broadening transparency requirements, arguing that certain discussions necessitated confidentiality to foster open dialogue.

Councillor **Peter O’Donovan** (RA Ewell Court) highlighted the distinction between confidentiality and secrecy, emphasizing the need for a safe space to discuss sensitive issues. He cautioned against overreach in transparency efforts, citing the potential risks to privacy and effective decision-making.

Councillor **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington), echoing sentiments expressed by Councillors Donovan and Spickett, emphasized the importance of confidentiality in certain discussions, particularly those involving commercial interests or personal safety. He cautioned against inadvertently stifling open dialogue by overly broadening transparency requirements.

Councillor **Hannah Dalton** (RA Stoneleigh) underscored ongoing efforts to address concerns regarding confidential sessions, promising clearer explanations for why certain items were categorized as confidential. She emphasized the need for balance between transparency and privacy, acknowledging the challenges inherent in navigating sensitive issues.

Councillor **Kieran Persand**, (Conservative Horton) expressing support for the motion, highlighted frustrations over perceived barriers to transparency within the council. He stressed the need for greater accountability and public trust, arguing that enhanced transparency measures were necessary to rebuild confidence among residents.

Councillor **Alison Kelly**, (LibDem Stamford) who seconded the motion, underscored the importance of improving communication and understanding among councillors and the public. She proposed measures to enhance clarity around confidentiality, aiming to provide residents with a better understanding of decision-making processes.

However, Councillor **Liz Frost**, (RA Woodcote and Langley) Chair of the Standards and Constitution Committee, urged caution, warning against potential unintended consequences of broadening transparency measures. She emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between openness and the need for confidential discussions to facilitate effective decision-making.

Following the debate, the motion was put to a vote, with a majority ultimately deciding against its passage.

Image – Cllr Liz Frost responds to the motion. Council Chamber. EEBC YouTube

Council getting belted by Green Group?

22 April 2024



The **Epsom Green Belt Group** has submitted a “complaint” to **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**, expressing grave concerns over what they perceive as significant failures in the governance, oversight, and leadership of the **Local Plan**. The group’s submission outlines several key issues they believe have hindered the proper scrutiny and preparation of the plan, which will shape planning permissions for buildings in the future.

In their communication to the Council, the Epsom Green Belt Group emphasizes the importance of preserving green spaces and utilizing brownfield sites to deliver affordable homes within the borough. They express frustration at what they see as resistance from planning officers to cooperate with members of the **Licensing and Planning Policy Committee** (LPPC), hindering the committee’s ability to provide direction and challenge to the Local Plan.

According to the group, the LPPC, tasked with influencing and controlling the development and use of land in the Borough, has not fulfilled its obligations effectively. They argue that the LPPC should have been actively engaged in the preparation, adoption, and review of the statutory Development Plan, including Local Development Documents. However, their analysis reveals a concerning lack of involvement and debate on critical aspects of the plan.

Of particular concern, the Group argues, is the apparent absence of discussion or challenge regarding the Spatial Strategy, Plan policies, and critical decisions related to the Local Plan. Despite the completion of a public consultation, which garnered 1,736 responses, the Group asserts that none of the LPPC meetings addressed the results or expected impact on the Regulation 19 Local Plan. This lack of engagement is compounded by the cancellation of several LPPC meetings and a significant increase in the Local Plan budget without corresponding scrutiny or accountability.

The Epsom Green Belt Group urges the council to address these issues urgently and provide clarity on the timetable for scrutiny, challenge, and direction of the Local Plan by the LPPC. They demand assurance that the committee will have the freedom, opportunity, time, and resources necessary to fulfill its mandate without undue constraints or interference from officers. Additionally, they call for a contingency plan in case of further delays to the Local Plan timetable.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council were swift to respond with answers to **six** demands made by the Green Group:

1. **The detailed timetable for the scrutiny, challenge and direction of each significant element of the Local Plan by the LPPC**

The Proposed Submission Local Plan with a recommendation will come to Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC) in November 2024. Councillors can discuss, debate and if needed change the recommendation at this meeting. If supported, the recommendation would then go to full council in December 2024 for all Councillors to discuss and debate. If supported, this would then be put to public consultation in January 2025.

2. **The date on which the analysis of the consultation results, and proposed amendments arising from it, will be presented to the LPPC for adjustment and/or approval**

A Consultation Statement will be published as part of the agenda pack for the LPPC in November 2024 where the Proposed Submission Local Plan will be considered. The exact date of this meeting is to be confirmed.

The Consultation Statement will summarise the responses received on the Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) and how they have been considered in producing the Proposed-Submission (Regulation 19) version of the Local Plan.

3. **That the LPPC will be given the freedom, opportunity, time and resources sufficient for it to fulfil its mandate, as set out in its Terms of Reference, without undue constraints or interference from officers**

Correct. In line with the Council’s constitution, officers advise Councillors in their professional capacity, and Councillors are responsible for decision making in respect of the Local Plan and its content.

The Council’s constitution can be accessed from the following link:
<https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=205&MId=1619&Ver=4&Info=1>

4. **That review, challenge and direction of the Local Plan will be included in the agenda of every meeting of the LPPC to be held until publication of the Regulation 19 consultation**

The Council’s Constitution provides the terms of reference for the LPPC, these are set out in Appendix 3 (p16-18). Agenda items coming to Council Committees are typically brought to arrive at a decision.

The LPPC responsibilities include making decisions at key stages in the production of Local Plan documents as set out below:

- Considering and approving Draft (Regulation 18) Local Plans
- LPPC considered and approved the Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) for consultation on 30 January 2023.
- Considering and recommending for approval to Full Council, submission versions of Development Plan documents
- LPPC will consider the pre-submission Local Plan in November 2024.

The next decision related to the Local Plan regards the Proposed Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19) at the November LPPC meeting.

5. **That there is sufficient time and budget to accommodate any and all changes the LPPC may recommend**

As has been reported to LPPC, the Local Plan timetable has a limited degree of flexibility to ensure that the Local Plan is submitted to the government for examination by the 30 June 2025 deadline, which is the deadline set by government for submission under the current Local Plan system. The scale of changes made will influence whether there is a delay to the programme- for example, minor typographical errors or clarification of wording will not impact the programme. However, changes that require amendments to the evidence base could lead to delays that result in the transitional arrangements deadline being missed.

6. **That a contingency plan is in place should the currently proposed Local Plan timetable slip for any reason, including matters arising from the review and challenge set out above.’**

There are elements of contingency in the plan, but if the Local Plan timetable slips and as a result it will not be possible to submit the Local Plan to the government by the 30 June 2025, we will prepare a Local Plan under the reforms set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act. The government are due to publish further legislation in relation to plan making reforms that will need to be considered.

Epsom Karate Kids go global

22 April 2024



The Mo-ichido England Karate Association, nestled in the heart of Horton Country Park, made waves on the international stage as they ventured to Albena on the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria. Their mission: to compete in the prestigious 14th WSF World Shotokan Championships, facing off against formidable opponents from across the globe, including national squads hailing from as far as the Ivory Coast.

Led by Colin Sensei and Squad Captain Olivia Lusted, the club sent a team of 8 young competitors, proudly representing England on the global karate platform. Their performance exceeded expectations, returning home with an impressive haul of 1 gold, 3 silver, and 2 bronze medals. This achievement catapulted England to the 12th position out of 27 on the medal table, showcasing their resilience against adversaries with greater resources and support.

From the Mo-ichido association’s humble beginnings in an old, rundown cow shed in Horton Country Park, the club has evolved into a beacon of inspiration within the local community. Offering a diverse range of activities including physiotherapy, yoga, pilates, meditation, Ki-aikido, the club has transformed the shed into a sanctuary where individuals of all ages can partake in the shared passion of karate.

With a track record of producing European and World champions, the Mo-Ichido club continues to make strides in the martial arts realm, representing excellence on both national and international fronts. However, their ambitious pursuits come with financial challenges, prompting the club to seek sponsorship opportunities to sustain their journey towards global domination.

For more information on the remarkable achievements and ongoing endeavors of the Mo-Ichido England Karate club, visit their website at moichido.co.uk.

Enforcing planning enforcement in Epsom and Ewell

22 April 2024



In a comprehensive analysis of the **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council**’s planning enforcement procedures, a recent audit report titled “EPSOM & EWELL BOROUGH COUNCIL INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2023-24,” conducted by the Southern Internal Audit Partnership in February 2024, has brought to light a litany of deficiencies and failures. These findings, detailed in a thorough examination of the council’s practices, underscore significant shortcomings in record-keeping, response times to complaints, and the enforcement of regulatory measures.

Central to the audit’s findings is the examination of the administration of planning enforcement, a critical function entrusted with ensuring the adherence of development activities to established regulatory frameworks. Despite assertions by the council regarding the existence of a comprehensive Local Enforcement Plan, purportedly designed to outline clear guidelines and timelines for enforcement actions, the reality paints a starkly contrasting picture upon closer scrutiny.

“Testing of a sample of cases revealed a disconcerting trend of non-compliance with stipulated timelines,” the report notes. Contrary to the Local Enforcement Plan’s mandate of acknowledging receipt of planning enforcement complaints within five working days, numerous instances were found where this requirement was not met, resulting in prolonged delays and a lack of clarity for complainants.

Moreover, deficiencies in the triage process, a critical step in determining the priority level of enforcement cases, were exposed. Despite the plan’s directive to assign priority levels ranging from one to three, the absence of mechanisms within the council’s system to accurately record these priorities severely hampered monitoring efforts. As a result, the council’s ability to effectively manage and expedite enforcement actions was compromised, leading to further delays and inefficiencies.

“Key documentation associated with enforcement actions was found to be missing altogether,” the audit report reveals, casting serious doubts on the thoroughness of investigations and the efficacy of enforcement measures. In several instances where enforcement notices were issued, no evidence of follow-up actions to ensure compliance was found, directly contravening statutory requirements under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The repercussions of these systemic failures extend beyond procedural lapses to tangible impacts on the community and the council’s reputation. So heard a meeting of the Council’s **Audit and Scrutiny Committee** Thursday 28th March. Councillor **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley), drawing from her extensive experience in planning, expressed profound dismay at the council’s failure to uphold its responsibilities in enforcing planning regulations. “I am totally surprised that we haven’t dealt with this in a more timely fashion,” she remarked. “This reflects poorly on our council, and I am deeply concerned about the potential consequences of unchecked development activities.”

Echoing these sentiments, Councillor **James Lawrence** (LibDem College) highlighted the significance of planning enforcement to residents, citing recurring issues and delays in addressing enforcement matters. “For many residents, planning enforcement is a top priority,” he emphasized. “The council’s failure to act swiftly in response to complaints undermines public confidence and raises serious questions about its commitment to upholding regulatory standards.”

In response to queries raised by councillors, council officers sought to clarify the circumstances surrounding the appointment of a permanent Enforcement Officer. While acknowledging the existence of temporary officers in the past, they emphasized the recent transition to a permanent role as a step towards addressing staffing concerns within the planning department.

How many £s does it take to change a Council light bulb?

22 April 2024



The cost of changing Council light bulbs was the subject of some concern at Tuesday 26th March’s meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee of **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**. The committee was considering the annual maintenance programme for Council run properties.

Cllr. **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch) enquired: “I thank the officers for a very thorough report, but when I look at the planned maintenance, it does seem to me that this is an area where a stricter financial control is perhaps needed. I look at some of these figures with amazement. £56,000 to change the light bulbs in Bourne Hall. £70,000 to paint the woodwork in Ewell Court House. What controls do we have that we are getting value for money from these contractors?”

The Council Officer replied: “With Bourne Hall, to change a light bulb in this building is not a simple case of getting a step ladder out. It needs scaffolding to get up to these lights here. The costs of replacing the lighting also includes all the equipment to enable those lights to be replaced where they’re in very hard to reach positions. So it’s not just simply changing light bulbs.”

Cllr Leach’s question on financial controls was left unanswered.

Cllr. **Alison Kelly** (LibDem College) wanted to know about the environmental cost of the main entrance doors to the Epsom Playhouse that open directly onto the lobby. It was observed that the construction of an second inner set of doors was resisted by the theatre as it would take away vital foyer space.

Cllr. **Graham Jones** MBE (RA Cuddington) had earlier that day taken a stroll over to the Epsom Playhouse and had a “light bulb” moment. He suggested: “I’ve seen quite a lot of places where instead of taking away from the lobby you go outwards. There’s lots of space there, and it would make a really nice feature and I would recommend that you consider that option.” His idea was warmly received with the officer responding: “That would be exactly the solution. Hence why it would need to be a future capital bid. Because that’s clearly a larger project than creating it within the building itself. But you’re absolutely spot on. Thank you.”

Chalk Pit action - a tale of two committees

22 April 2024



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council grappled with the pressing issue of noise and dust pollution stemming from the waste recycling centre, Chalk Pit off College Road in Epsom. Residents’ longstanding grievances prompted a debate among council members at yesterday’s meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

The discussion opened with an account from an affected resident, urging action to alleviate the suffering. The resident implored the council: “Epsom and Ewell Borough Council must allocate funds to proactively manage the Chalk Pit site, in accordance with your statutory duty to protect residents under the Environmental Protection Act.” There was support from a pro-active public gallery that was asked a couple of times not to interrupt.

Councillors echoed residents’ concerns, emphasizing the gravity of the situation and the need for decisive measures. Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodocote and Langley) emphasized the Council’s duty to support residents, stating, “This Council has been formed to serve local interests and must prioritize residents’ wellbeing by allocating funds to tackle the Chalk Pit issue.”

The legal dimensions of the problem were underscored by Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative – Horton), who highlighted residents’ legal rights and the Council’s responsibility to address statutory noise nuisance. “Residents have a legal right to be protected,” declared Muir, emphasizing the need for unequivocal support for allocating funds.

Cllr **James Lawrence** (LibDem – College) emphasized the importance of prompt action, proposing earmarking funds to respond swiftly to noise complaints. “We must prioritize residents’ protection and ensure prompt action when noise nuisance is experienced,” Lawrence asserted, urging fellow council members to prioritize residents’ needs.

The wide-ranging impact of pollution on residents’ health and wellbeing was emphasized by Councillor **Christine Howells** (RA Nonsuch), who stressed the Council’s duty to enforce compliance with regulations. “Residents’ mental and physical wellbeing are compromised, necessitating urgent action to protect their rights,” Howells affirmed.

Amidst impassioned pleas for action, the Chair of the Committee, Councillor **Neil Dallen** (RA Town), provided a sobering assessment of the financial implications. Cllr. Dallen cautioned against hasty decisions, citing budget constraints and the need for responsible financial management to ensure continued service provision.

An officer provided updates on recent developments and enforcement actions, highlighting ongoing complaints and regulatory interventions. The officer’s report underscored the need for coordinated efforts to address pollution effectively.

Despite financial constraints, Cllr **Shanice Goldman** (RA Nonsuch) voiced support for allocating funds, citing previous actions and the importance of addressing environmental issues promptly. “We must prioritize residents’ welfare and take decisive action to address pollution,” Shanice urged fellow council members. She added: “I think the fact that it’s been passed from committee to committee, started off at full Council, was deferred to the Environment committee then passed on to this committee. I don’t think we can justify passing it on again.”

Cllr **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch) shared residents’ grievances and proposed practical measures to address noise issues, emphasizing the moral imperative to protect residents. “We must cooperate across party lines and take decisive action to address this environmental tragedy,” Leach asserted. He read from a resident’s email: “I was awakened at 6.30 this morning by the sound of the site, preparing for the day, with lorries and presumably other machinery warming up and skips being made ready for transport before 6:45 a.m. A number of skipped lorries were exiting the site last week. On last Friday, 39 lorries left between 6.40 and 6.50. That is before they’re even supposed to be on the site. Let’s tell it as it is. We have two operators there, who blatantly just ignore the regulations.”

Following extensive deliberation, the Committee unanimously resolved to approve the allocation of funds. £40,000 was reserved for independent noise investigation, with an additional £100,000 allocated for potential enforcement and litigation work. The Environment Committee was tasked with identifying equivalent savings or income to replenish the reserve by the end of the financial year 2025-2026.

Related reports:

“Heat and Dust” epic in Epsom

Chalk Pit debate deferred by late abatement

Will the dust ever settle on Chalk Pit conflict?