EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

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Epsom Derby week read?

28 May 2024



A tale of triumph and tragedy, dreams and disasters aptly describes the life of **Bernard Dillon**, as detailed in a new book by **Stephen Fernane**. This captivating biography delves into the extraordinary journey of Dillon, who won the prestigious **Epsom Derby** in 1910 on **Lemberg**. The 2024 Epsom Derby takes place on Saturday 1st June.



Dillon on 1910 Derby winner Lemberg Agence Rol – Gallica Digital Library Public Domain

For the first time since Bernard's death in 1941, a book captures his astonishing rise to success and his subsequent fall from grace due to heavy drinking. From a talented apprentice to a shrewd professional, Bernard Dillon won the Epsom Derby and the Grand Prix de Paris, epitomizing a life of sporting triumph and human tragedy.

In 1901, at the tender age of thirteen, Bernard left Kerry with dreams of becoming a jockey in England. Remarkably, within three years, he had become the most popular sporting personality in both Britain and Ireland.

Stephen Fernane reveals that his fascination with Bernard's sporting achievements and the overshadowing sadness of his later years inspired him to write this book. The fact that Bernard's story is not widely known also motivated him.

As reported in the Irish Independent on 25th May the author said;

"Discovering Bernard's career and learning about all he achieved is what inspired me to write it. The inner demons that led to his demise in later life are just as fascinating. To think that very little is known about someone as colourful and complex as Bernard Dillon is astonishing," Stephen said.

The book, titled *The Life and Times of Bernard Dillon: The Narie that Won the Derby*, nods to Bernard's birthplace at Caherina in Strand Road, Tralee, in 1887.

"I want to bring Bernard home for the book launch. To bring his story back to where it all started, and present it to people who might not know about him. That is the best tribute I can give him. Bernard is a 'Narie' for sure, which is why the Kerins O'Rahilly's GAA Club is the appropriate venue. It's his spiritual home as he was born only a few yards from the clubhouse," Stephen explained.

Bernard Dillon's journey from 1901 to 1911 was anything but smooth as he grappled with celebrity and adversity. Sadly, his downfall included domestic abuse and the mistreatment of his wife, the famous music hall artist Marie Lloyd.

Bernard and Marie met in 1905 and began a turbulent relationship. They were Edwardian England's first celebrity couple, with Marie eighteen years older than Bernard. However, notoriety came at a cost. Bernard's downfall began when he lost his jockey's licence in 1913 over gambling allegations, marking the end of his reputation as a superstar.

Stephen believes it was essential to write Bernard's story due to the fragmented way it exists in the archives. With Marie Lloyd being the more famous personality, information about Bernard's life is usually viewed through the lens of Marie's biographers rather than Bernard's perspective.

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"He wrote his memoir in 1922 which has largely been ignored until now. While he does not explain the more violent side to his personality in the memoir, I was able to solve this by reading through many court sittings he appeared before," Stephen said.

"Even though the court charges are upsetting to read, my aim is to show Bernard's opposing sides – not just him as a famous jockey. There are examples of closeness and intimacy between the couple that have never been written about before now," he added.

"There is a chapter about Bernard and Marie being incarcerated at Ellis Island in 1913 because they were unmarried. It's staggering to imagine two of the most famous people in Edwardian England being detained with hundreds of immigrants.

"They were the Posh and Becks of their time, for sure. As for Bernard's active service during WWI, a judge accused him of engaging in more violence in London than on the Western Front! Nothing was ever straightforward in Bernard's life from the time he left Tralee in short pants," Stephen explained.

Stephen sums up Bernard's life as 'totally unorthodox' and emphasizes that the book is about more than just horseracing.

"I wouldn't want anyone to get the impression the book is solely about horses. Significant though they are in Bernard's life, there is an undertone to the book that symbolizes a tragic love story between two people trying to deal with fame and infamy," he said.

"This is a global story that started in a quiet Kerry street and extended to far-off places like America, South Africa, and the Middle East. I just felt it was time for Bernard's story to be told in his own words. I think the book is fair to him and shows that no matter how successful we are in life, we are vulnerable to self-destruction," Stephen said.

The Life and Times of Bernard Dillon: The Narie that Won the Derby will be launched on June 6.

The book is priced at €15 and is available at www.buythebook.ie/bernarddillon.

Top image: By Leslie Ward – Published in Vanity Fair, 12 September 1906, as "Men of the Day" Number 1031. Public Domain and background By Hywel Williams, CC BY-SA 2.0

Building bridges across the Borough

28 May 2024



Epsom and Ewell Times welcomes the third Mayor to be appointed since we started. For the year 2024/2025 Councillor Steve Bridger (RA Stamford Ward) has the honour and burden of being the Borough's number one citizen. We wish him and his wife Carol, the Mayoress, a hard-working and enjoyable year. Here is our annual Mayoral interview.

Q. The main thing I want to discuss was charities, I see that you are championing 3 charities in your Mayoral year, could you expand upon why you chose these particular charities?

Mr. Mayor: I am supporting Epsom and Ewell Phab, Puffins and the Ruxley Foundation.

PHAB

We had a disabled son, Richard, who unfortunately was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy when he was 3 and sadly passed in 2018 aged 34. He and his brother Matthew both attended Phab and they thoroughly enjoyed the full integration and raising awareness of disability. This has made Matthew understand disability to become the person that he is by having time for everyone regardless of their position in life.

PUFFINS

Puffins helps disabled people swim and play games and unfortunately the equipment (hoists etc.) were not available in the Rainbow centre when Richard could have attended.

Ruxley Foundation

During our married life my wife, Carol, and I came upon extreme financial hardship and we are fully aware of the issues and stress that this can create within a family situation and the Ruxley Foundation can at least assist in one area to alleviate some of this.

Q. Next question I wanted to ask was what are your priorities for your year in office?

Mayor: Raise awareness of the Borough and the importance of the selfless roles that numerous residents play in supporting all the charities and associations. Without them the world would be a different place.

Q. What do you think could be improved about the Borough?

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Mayor: Whoever you talk to then there is a story of what can be improved and why. Only by listening to the residents in my role as Mayor do you hear of the real areas of concern. I will pass these back to the Officers and Committees to hopefully be able to action some of them.

Q. What are you most looking forward to in your new role?

Mayor: Meeting the volunteers and local small business owners and seeing how these can work together in creating a better environment for everyone and show what a great place Epsom & Ewell is to live.

Q. If you were just named your favourite sport's team's manager, who is the first player you would sign?

Mayor: I do not follow any sports, teams etc. as do not have time!

Q. What hobbies of yours might suffer during your busy Mayoral year?

Mayor: All of them as I put my energy and time into the Mayoral role! – they are DIY, programming, designing web sites, electronics and recycling old items into something useable around the house and to help others. I will miss being part of the Epsom Repair Cafe which I attend every 3rd Saturday each month.

Q. Any other particular message to our readership?

Mayor: I hope that I can live up to and exceed their expectations in my role. I will be pleased if people just come up to me for a chat, I am an ordinary person and have been extremely fortunate to have been offered this position and for that I can thank the residents for showing their trust in the fact that I have shown that I am proud of where I live and will assist wherever and whenever I am able to – I am usually around most days in Epsom unless at an organised event, working at home or meeting!

Please support the many events that my charities have put together and to remember that all monies raised will be donated to charities within the borough. "Local Charities for Local People."

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6 out of 11 Conservative MPs leaving Surrey

28 May 2024



Michael Gove MP for Surrey Heath has brought the total Conservative MP retirees in Surrey to **SIX** out of the **ELEVEN** all present Conservative held **Surrey** constituencies.

On 5th February **Kwasi Kwarteng** the Conservative MP for Spelthorne announced he will not stand at the upcoming General Election.

With Paul Beresford MP for Mole Valley, Dominic Raab MP for Esher and Walton, Crispin Blunt MP for Reigate and Banstead and our own **Chris Grayling** MP for **Epsom and Ewell**, all having confirmed they are not going to run, this leaves 5 Surrey Conservative MPs still standing.

One can expect Jeremy Hunt MP for South-West Surrey, who serves in the Cabinet, to seek re-election. Jonathan Lord MP for Woking, Ben Spencer MP for Runnymede and Weybridge, Angela Richardson MP for Guildford and Claire Coutinho MP for East Surrey are assumed to be still up for the fight.

Epsom and Ewell Conservatives have already put in place their new prospective Parliamentary Candidate, **Mhairi Fraser**, an anti-corruption lawyer.

She will be challenged by **Helen Maguire** of the Liberal Democrats, **Gina Miller** of the True and Fair Party and **Steve Mckenna** of the Green Party and **Mark Todd** for Labour. It is understood a Reform Party candidate will stand but despite asking one of the Party's street canvassers to get in touch with Epsom and Ewell Times, we have heard nothing to confirm.

Related Reports:

Surrey's Tory MPs exiting the County

Conservatives adopt new contender for Parliament

Grayling not to contest a seventh election

Esher & Walton up for GRaabs

Surrey's longest sitting MP to stand-down

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Out of the starting gates in Epsom and Ewell's political Derby

28 May 2024



Today British Prime Minister **Rishi Sunak** announced a General Election will take place on July 4th.

Epsom and Ewell Times asked all the known candidates for their reaction to the news:

Mhairi Fraser, standing for the **Conservative Party** responded: "Epsom has been my family home for almost twenty years. The day after the election, it still will be. I have lived here, I have worked here, I have commuted from here; I have a personal interest in the success of Epsom, Ewell, Ashtead and Leatherhead, and I know what it takes to deliver that success.

From protecting the Green Belt, to tackling crime by securing a more visible police presence, to regenerating our high streets, to improving our transport links – I have a plan, and I have the commitment to deliver on it. And throughout it all, I promise to run a clean campaign, as I have from day one. I have built my career over the last decade as an anti-corruption lawyer, and I will bring the same integrity to our politics. That is the first of many promises I will make to you, but not the last I will deliver on."

Helen Maguire PPC for the **Liberal Democrats** said: "Hard-working families in Epsom, Ewell, Ashtead, and Leatherhead are sick of the same old unfair and divisive two-party politics which is currently tearing our nation apart. They are looking for real change and a positive future, which I am committed to working to bring. Our community have had enough of this Conservative government refusing to help them through the cost-of-living crisis, whilst also allowing our local NHS hospital and local schools to crumble, and sewage to be poured into our rivers.

This Conservative government is out of touch and out of time, and this announcement is long overdue. I am honoured to be fighting on behalf of my local community to rid Epsom, Ewell, Ashtead and Leatherhead of the Conservatives, who have taken us for granted for years. In Epsom & Ewell, it's a clear choice between a fair deal with the Liberal Democrats or more chaos with the conservatives. Enough is enough, this community needs change now."

Gina Miller, leader of the **True & Fair Party**, said: "The decision to call a general election on 4th July is a concession to the inevitable, acknowledging that the time has come to face the electorate's scrutiny. This summer, we are casting our votes to end this dismal chapter of our nation's history and begin a new era with leaders who truly represent us. As I stand for election in Epsom and Ewell, I am ready to bring the voices of our community to the forefront and demanding a government that prioritises the wellbeing of its people above all else."

Mark Todd, Chair of the **Labour Party** (a Labour candidate is yet to be confirmed) said: "At last, the country has got what it wants. Now it's time to choose between more decline under the Tories or a greener, brighter future with Labour. Your local Labour party is here to serve you and we promise that if our candidate is elected they will serve the community with all their heart. They'll be open, accessible and always try to help."

Stephen McKenna of the **Green Party** said: "Like the vast majority of the population I am delighted that the official end date of this Conservative Government has been announced!

Greens everywhere are hoping for a transformation of national politics in this election, a turning point which will resolve the cost of living crisis, introduce innovative new policies for the environment, for a new greener economy, for net zero retrofitting of our homes and a programme of new social housing as well as better public services. This is a time for real change in our society."

In the run up to the election the Epsom and Ewell Times will be interviewing the candidates and staging hustings.

Epsom and Ewell's new Mayor

28 May 2024

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Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has appointed Councillor **Steve Bridger** (RA Stamford) as the new Mayor for the year 24/25. In a ceremonial meeting Tuesday 14th May, speeches were made to propose the new Mayor, to thank the outgoing Mayor, and by both the incoming and outgoing Mayors themselves.

Councillor **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington) proposed his appointment. He said “I hope I will achieve at least one of these requirements,” referring to the traditional brevity and humour expected in such speeches. Cllr Neale detailed Cllr Bridger’s extensive background, highlighting his early career in the family-owned wholesale fish business and his long tenure at Tesco, where he achieved notable success. “Steve proudly states that he managed every department… all except working the tills,” Cllr Neale quipped. He also mentioned Cllr Bridger’s dedication to family, particularly his support for his late son Richard, who battled Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

Councillor **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) paid tribute to the outgoing Mayor, Councillor **Rob Geleit** (Labour Court), lauding his achievements over the past year. He highlighted the Civic Celebration of Culture as a significant event and praised Mr Geleit’s fundraising efforts. “A charity dinner brought a year of fundraising for his three well-chosen charities to a successful conclusion,” Cllr Ames remarked. He also expressed eagerness to have Cllr Geleit return to his duties with the Labour group, emphasizing the importance of his presence in the upcoming general election.

Councillor Rob Geleit reflected on his tenure with gratitude, sharing various highlights from his year as Mayor. “I’ve had a fantastic year serving Epsom and Ewell and its people,” He expressed deep appreciation for his consort, Tina, and the support team, particularly Lolli from the Mayor’s office. He recounted memorable events such as the Derby, Christmas carols at Downview Prison, and the Buckingham Palace garden party. He proudly announced that over £15,000 had been raised for his chosen charities, exceeding expectations. “We managed to keep it all together until the end, which may or may well be unprecedented,” he said, praising the charity committee’s efforts and in particular the dedication of Cllr **Dr. Graham Jones** MBE (RA Cuddington).

In his address, new Mayor Councillor Steve Bridger expressed excitement and gratitude for his new role. He acknowledged the challenges and opportunities ahead and looked forward to serving the community alongside his wife, Carol.

Cllr Robert Leach (RA Nonsuch) will serve as Deputy-Mayor.

Image: L to R Cllr Robert Leach (Deputy Mayor) , Mayor Steve Bridger, CEO Jackie King. The New Mayor takes the chair in Council chamber. Credit EEBC YouTube

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Annual audit of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

28 May 2024



The annual Grant Thornton Auditor’s Report on the workings of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has delivered a positive assessment of its performance across financial sustainability, governance, and value for money, despite acknowledging the ongoing challenges the Council faces. The report was formally presented and noted at the Council meeting of 14th May.

Financial Sustainability: The report highlights that the Council operates in a challenging financial environment with prudent short and medium-term planning. While financial stability remains dependent on continual savings plans, the forecast indicates a need to deliver approximately £1.4 million in savings by 2027/28. The auditors emphasized the importance of finding alternatives to using reserves to manage budget gaps, noting no significant weaknesses in financial sustainability arrangements.

Governance: The Council’s governance structure was praised for maintaining appropriate arrangements and compliance policies. An updated Risk Management Strategy and adherence to CIPFA’s Good Governance Framework were noted as strengths. However, the auditors recommended prioritizing the completion of management actions and reviewing the composition of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee to potentially include independent members.

Value for Money: The Council’s efforts to ensure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness were aligned with delivering value for money. Recommendations were made to develop a partnership governance framework and to address underperformance in processing minor planning applications, despite improvements seen in 2023.

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Overall, the audit reflects positively on the Council's operations, suggesting continued disciplined financial management and strategic governance enhancements.

Criteria	2022/23 Risk assessment	2022/23 Auditor judgement on arrangements		2021/22 Auditor judgement on arrangements	
Financial sustainability	No risk of significant weakness identified.	G	Our work did not identify any areas where we considered that key or improvement recommendations were required	A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but two improvement recommendations have been made.
Governance	No risk of significant weakness identified.	A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but three improvement recommendations made	A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified but two improvement recommendations raised.
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness	No risk of significant weakness identified.	A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but one improvement recommendation made to support more effective partnership working arrangements.	G	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and no improvement recommendations raised.

G No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified or improvement recommendation made.
A No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but improvement recommendations made.
R Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendations made.

The four key recommendations in more detail and the responses of EEBC management:

Grant Thornton Recommendation 1: Timely Internal Audits.

The auditors suggested that internal audits focusing on financial controls should be completed before the end of the financial year to aid the Head of Internal Audit in forming their opinion.

EEBC Management Response: Acknowledging the importance of timely audits, management noted past challenges due to staff turnover and long-term sickness, which have now been resolved. With a fully resourced team, management is confident in meeting the audit schedule, with progress monitored by both the Strategic Leadership Team and the Audit & Scrutiny Committee.

Grant Thornton Recommendation 2: Monitoring Framework for Audit Actions

The council was advised to develop a framework to monitor management actions identified in internal audit reports, ensuring these are completed by the agreed due dates to enhance clarity and accountability.

EEBC Management Response: Management emphasized that a robust monitoring framework is already in place, with the Business Assurance team logging all actions and requiring quarterly updates from Heads of Service. Additionally, new performance management software has been procured to further improve monitoring capabilities.

Grant Thornton Recommendation 3: Audit & Scrutiny Committee Composition

Auditors recommended reviewing the composition of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee to exclude Strategy & Resources members for independence and considering the appointment of independent members.

EEBC Management Response: Management revealed that a review of the committee's operations is already planned following a Corporate Peer Challenge in March 2024. The audit recommendation will be considered during this review in consultation with relevant members.

Grant Thornton Recommendation 4: Partnership Governance Framework

To enhance partnership working, the council was advised to develop a governance framework to guide and evaluate the success and effectiveness of these collaborations.

EEBC Management Response: Management expressed a commitment to positive partnership working, acknowledging recognition from the recent Corporate Peer Challenge. This recommendation will be considered in conjunction with the Action Plan resulting from the Peer Challenge.

County Councillor Community funding

28 May 2024



Surrey residents can now apply for cash grants to improve their local area through the Your Councillor Community Fund. Last year the Fund supported over 380 community projects via Surrey County Councillors, totalling £404,330.

This community fund is flexibly designed to help with costs that can range from purchasing sports equipment for local clubs, to the creation of websites, providing financial support to community groups and projects that improve the quality of life in for residents in Surrey.

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Each year, Surrey County Council's 81 councillors each allocate £5,000 of funding within their local communities. With their deep understanding of the needs and priorities of their communities they can ensure that the funding is targeted to areas where it is most needed and where it can make the biggest impact. It can be used across a variety of projects that help promote the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of their communities.

Surrey County Council Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities Denise Turner-Stewart said: *"As a council we are committed to working together with communities to improve the lives of people living or working in Surrey. The Your Councillor Community Fund is a great example of how even a small amount of funding can make a big difference in the communities we serve. These initiatives can help to deliver such things as sports for fitness, places to come together, providing facilities that help improve health and wellbeing and in other cases an improved pride in their local areas.*

"It embodies our commitment to empowering local residents to have a say and make a real difference in their own communities. By supporting initiatives driven by the passion and dedication of our residents, we aim to create vibrant, inclusive communities where everyone thrives".

The Your Councillor Community Fund is open now and closes in January 2025.

To apply for money from this year's Your Councillor Community Fund you should contact your Epsom and Ewell Councillor. They are:

Epsom Town & Downs **Steven McCormick** Epsom Town & Downs Residents Association **Steven.McCormick@surreycc.gov.uk**

Epsom West **Bernie Muir** Epsom West Conservative **bernie.muir@surreycc.gov.uk**

Ewell **John Beckett** Ewell Residents Association **john.beckett@surreycc.gov.uk**

Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington **Eber Kington** Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington Residents Association **Eber.Kington@surreycc.gov.uk**

More information can be found here **Your Councillor Community Fund – Surrey County Council (surreycc.gov.uk)**.

Examples of projects funded last year include:

£1,493 to help make Spelthorne cleaner and greener by providing group litter picking equipment which can be loaned out to encourage individuals, groups and schools to adopt an area for regular picking and to take a pride in their local environment.

£2,000 towards equipment for the 2023 Shepperton Village Fair, including banners, sail flags, display board and cashless payment devices.

£700 towards replacing a 25-year-old table tennis table used by Leatherhead U3A Table Tennis Group, helping to keep members physically and socially active.

£1,000 towards new uniforms for Godalming Youth Band. The new polo shirts and hoodies are more suitable for events all year round and will be loaned out, much like the instruments, to help keep music-making as accessible as possible.

As well as Your Councillor Community Funding, there is also funding available via Your Fund Surrey for small and large community projects. Visit **www.surreycc.gov.uk/yourfund** to find out more.

Image: Left to right – County Councillors McCormick, Muir, Beckett and Kington

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Two horse race coming to Epsom?

28 May 2024



The Liberal Democrats continue to tighten their grip on Epsom & Ewell's southern flank in Mole Valley, as the Party

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cements its position in Leatherhead. With two out of three seats in Leatherhead South now in the hands of the Lib Dems, the Conservatives are now down to just two seats in the whole of the Mole Valley district.

According to the Lib Dem PPC the general election stage in the wider Epsom & Ewell constituency is now set for a two horse race between the Liberal Democrat's **Helen Maguire** and the Conservative **Mhairi Fraser**.

Commenting on the recent Mole Valley Council elections results Helen Maguire said, "Each month we are knocking on 1000s of doors and hearing from residents who are understandably upset with the way this government is running this country. They are looking for a change. With the boundary changes, Labour declaring the seat a non-battleground seat and the Liberal Democrats now having more councillors than the Conservatives across the country, we know there is a good chance of change here in Epsom, Ewell, Ashtead & Leatherhead."

Mhairi Fraser, the Conservative Prospective Parliamentary Candidate responded: "Although the results were not what we had hoped or worked hard for, I am incredibly proud of the integrity our local Conservative candidates showed. We ran an honest campaign focusing on what the Conservatives will continue to fight for on behalf of local residents, without resorting to attacking our individual opponents on the doorsteps or in our literature. I wish the new and re-elected councillors well in the term ahead, but the Conservatives will continue to be the loudest voice against the Liberal Democrats' plans to forever destroy our Green Belt, and to plaster tower blocks over the green spaces in our towns."

Mark Todd, Chair of the Epsom and Ewell Labour Party said: ""As a rule of thumb, Epsom town centre and the north of Epsom and Ewell are strong for Labour, as you move South the areas become more Conservative. We were very heartened therefore by the results in Leatherhead at the local elections. It was the first year Leatherhead has been part of the Epsom and Ewell Constituency and we fielded fantastic local candidates who live and work in the area. We got really good feedback on the doorstep and the Labour vote across Leatherhead increased by 73%. A similar swing will see us win the Epsom and Ewell constituency in the upcoming General Election."

The Labour Party is yet to select a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for the constituency. Epsom and Ewell Times has been informed that National Labour Party managers are conducting due diligence on all prospective MPs. Once they have completed this, they will give the Epsom and Ewell Labour Party a shortlist for local member's consideration.

Local Council elections in Mole Valley in Leatherhead, which will be within the recently changed boundaries of the Parliamentary Constutuency of Epsom and Ewell, produced two Liberal Democrat victories on 2nd May. In Leatherhead North **Benjamin Wear** secured 671 votes with the Conservative candidate **Alan Gibbs** trailing with 327 votes. In Leatherhead South **Gareth Parsons** gained 970 votes against Conservative **Tim Hall** getting 714 votes.

Wards in Ashtead also went to the polls and returned independent candidates with healthy majorities.

2019 General Election result:

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Conservative	**Chris Grayling**	**31,819**	**53.5**
Liberal Democrats	Stephen Gee	13,946	23.5
Labour	Ed Mayne	10,226	17.2
Green	Janice Baker	2,047	3.4
Independent	Clive Woodbridge	1,413	2.4
Majority		17,873	30.0
Turnout		59,451	73.3

Related reports:

Conservatives adopt new contender for Parliament

LibDem PPC awarded Medal by the King

Grayling not to contest a seventh election

Opposition unite against division of opposition

First Surrey Borough with no Conservative Councillors

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Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner re-elected

28 May 2024

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The result of the 2nd May 2024 election for Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner was announced Friday and the Conservative Candidate, **Lisa Townsend**, was re-elected despite a substantial drop in turnout.

The re-elected Commissioner vowed to continue supporting a "back to basics" approach to policing in Surrey. She received 95,538 votes in Thursday's PCC election. **Paul Kennedy** for the Liberal Democrats closed the gap significantly. Trailing by 12% points in 2021 he narrowed Lisa Townsend's lead to 5% points this time round.

Epsom and Ewell's own candidates fared honourably with **Kate Chinn** for Labour narrowly ahead of independent **Alex Coley** with 42, 813 and 42,052 votes respectively. Ms Chinn is Borough Councillor for Court Ward and Mr Coley for Ruxley Ward.

The result was announced in Redhill Friday afternoon after votes from across the county were counted.

Ms Townsend, who has served as Commissioner for more than three years since winning in 2021, vowed to continue supporting Surrey Police's renewed focus on issues that matter most to residents, such as tackling anti-social behaviour, shoplifting, and targeting persistent offenders.

She said the Force now has more officers than ever before, and under the leadership of new Chief Constable Tim De Meyer, they are concentrating on combatting those crimes that matter most to the Surrey public.

Chief Constable T**im De Meyer** said: "Surrey Police warmly congratulates Lisa Townsend on her re-election as Police and Crime Commissioner. We look forward to continuing to work with her on challenges such as tackling violence against women and girls, improving our response to calls from the public and bringing more offenders to justice."

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Conservative	Lisa Townsend	95,538	36.4
Liberal Democrats	Paul Kennedy	82,213	31.3
Labour	Kate Chinn	42,813	16.3
Independent	Alex Coley	42,052	16.0
	Turnout	265,682	29.9
	Rejected ballots	3,066	
	Total votes	262,616	

Turnout was 29.9 per cent, compared to 38.8 per cent in the last Police and Crime Commissioner election in 2021. The total number of verified ballot papers was 265,682 from a total electorate of 888,083.

Related reports:

Surrey's next Police and Crime Commissioner will be?

Epsom and Ewell candidates dominate Police Commissioner election

Clash Over Funding and Priorities in Surrey PCC Race

Clash Over Funding and Priorities in Surrey PCC

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Race

28 May 2024



On the eve of the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner election, candidates are locked in a battle of ideas over funding allocations and the strategic direction of law enforcement in the county.

Independent candidate Alex Coley, former barrister Paul Kennedy of the Liberal Democrat Party, and Kate Chinn representing the Labour Party have all weighed in on the key issues facing Surrey's police force and incumbent Commissioner Lisa Townsend for the Conservative Party responds.

Alex Coley, (Residents Association Councillor on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council for Ruxley Ward) a vocal critic of current spending practices, has campaigned on the issue of financial management within the force. "Over the past six weeks Surrey has been my treadmill, six weeks of walking and talking to residents all over this county," Mr Coley stated. He emphasized concerns raised by residents about the allocation of resources, particularly in light of a significant underspend by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) office. "The number one question from residents has been: 'how are you going to pay for more police?'" Coley highlighted, pointing to unutilized funds that he argues should be directed towards bolstering the police force.

Furthermore, Mr Coley raised eyebrows with his critique of what he termed "casino politics in policing," alluding to financial dealings between the PCC and Surrey County Council. "I don't think residents want a PCC acting like an investment bank that dabbles in the gilt markets, backed by your council tax," he asserted, painting a picture of fiscal irresponsibility that he vows to rectify if elected. Full statement HERE.

In contrast, **Paul Kennedy** of the Liberal Democrat Party takes a different approach, drawing on his legal and financial background to advocate for prudent fiscal management. "The challenge of funding more community policing requires professional discipline, not simplistic solutions," Kennedy remarked. With experience as a barrister and an accountant, Kennedy positioned himself as a candidate with the expertise necessary to navigate the complex financial landscape of law enforcement.

Mr Kennedy defended the current funding structure of Surrey Police, stressing the importance of maintaining a buffer to address cash flow fluctuations. "Temporary surpluses can't just be run down as some have suggested," he cautioned, echoing sentiments of fiscal conservatism that have resonated with some voters. Full statement HERE.

Meanwhile, **Kate Chinn** (Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillor for Court Ward) of the Labour Party emphasized the human aspect of policing, focusing on recruitment and retention as key priorities. "Of course the budget needs scrutiny and increasing, but as Alex Coley identifies it is ensuring enough officers are recruited and retained that is the real priority," Ms Chinn argued. She outlined a series of measures aimed at bolstering recruitment and supporting existing officers, including streamlining the recruitment process and providing adequate mental health resources.

Ms Chinn's vision for policing centred on valuing and supporting front-line officers, with a pledge to advocate for fair pay and long-term investment in law enforcement. "A Labour government would ensure police pay recognizes the value of the work our officers do and commit to long-term investment," she asserted, positioning herself as a champion of the men and women who serve on the front-lines of policing. Full statement HERE.

As the candidates make their final pitches to voters, the future direction of policing in Surrey hangs in the balance. With each candidate offering a distinct vision for the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner, residents face a critical decision that will shape the county's law enforcement priorities for years to come.

A response from Conservative candidate and current Police and Crime Commissioner, **Lisa Townsend**, was awaited at the time of going to press and just came in minutes after…….

Lisa Townsend refutes Mr Coley's claims: "There is no loan to Surrey County Council. The £43m is the amount of cash held at the 31/8/23. This represents reserves of about £30m as well as cash held due to the timing of council tax receipts, grants, payments out, etc. Rather than holding all our cash in a single bank we pool it on an overnight basis with SCC who add it to their spare cash and invest it in overnight money market deposits with many banks. This reduces the risk as this pooled money is spread over a larger number of institutions than if we were to do this alone, and it also reduces the cost of management."

In respect of underspending the Commissioner points out the small underspend in proportion to the total budget and how it arose from a higher staff vacancy rate than expected. Full statement HERE.

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Epsom UCA alum praised by Taiwan President

28 May 2024



Leo Tsao graduated from UCA in 2017 with a BA (Hons) in Fashion Atelier.

He has just won season 16 of **RuPaul's Drag Race** as his banana-themed glamazon Nymphia Wind.

Chip Harris, Programme Director in Fashion at UCA, who taught Leo for the entirety of the course and helped manage his final collection, said: "Leo developed a great range of skills on the course and as a very conceptual thinker, he was always ambitious and individual in his approach. Leo's graduate collection epitomised this, which demonstrated an exceptional technical and creative skillset that was also selected to show at Graduate Fashion Week.

"I am not surprised to see his ascension within the RuPaul's Drag Race universe, and it is good to see that he used his skills to showcase amazing costumes, styling and visual narratives."

UCA President & Vice-Chancellor**, Professor Jane Roscoe**, added: "The whole of UCA, and especially our School of Fashion and Textiles, is celebrating the unique and incredible talent of Nymphia, and her victory in RuPaul's Drag Race. As 'America's Next Drag Superstar', we are so excited to see what she does next!"



Among the high-profile people congratulating Nymphia on her win, was the **President of Taiwan, Tsai ing-wen**, who said: "Congratulations to you, Nymphia Wind, for being so accomplished in the difficult art form of drag, and for being the first Taiwanese to take the stage and win on RuPaul's Drag Race. Right after being crowned queen, you said 'Taiwan, this is for you'. Taiwan thanks you for living fearlessly."

Top Image: *Nymphia Wind in her finale outfit. Credit: Entertainment Weekly/Mettie Ostrowski*

Left image: *Leo Tsao, pictured for his final collection shoot at UCA in 2017.*

Prairie dogs 'cock a snoop' at planning

28 May 2024

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Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Planning Committee grappled 18th April with the prairie dogs enclosure at Hobbledown Farm in Epsom.

The proprietors of this animal amusement park had established the enclosure without prior permission and were seeking retrospective permission from the Council.

There were several other developments on the site for which retrospective permission was being sought. A number of residents of the adjacent Clarendon Park housing estate objected, being particularly fearful of an increased risk of flooding arising from these unauthorised developments.

The debate began with Councillors complaining of insufficient time to process numerous emails supplied to the committee just minutes before the meeting started.

Cllr **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) protested "I really wouldn't want to consider these applications this evening. I can't even say if the information is relevant to the application or not. It was too much information and it came too late." Later she accepted assurances that the emails did not materially change the application.

Cllr **Julian Freeman** (Lib Dem College) declined to read the emails in question stating: "I made a specific point of not going through all the email exchange, because it doesn't form part of the papers for this meeting. I can understand that there is ambiguity, and there are questions to be asked and answered, and the place to do that is here and now, not by an email exchange."

Cllr **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley) gave her opinion "I've got a question. And probably everyone sitting here will agree, I hope, but I'm heartily fed up. I want to know how many retrospective blooming applications we've had to sit here and go through, only to be told "it's already there, they've done it". So why do we bother to have a planning committee?"

The Chairman, Cllr **Humphrey Reynolds** (RA West Ewell) responded that her question was not a matter for the Planning Committee.

Later in a further forthright statement Councillor Mason said: "I don't think there's anything we can do. This firm knew perfectly well what they were going to do. And they've cocked a snook at us. It's our land. It is on the green belt. They've made it like Disney World. That's what they want. And I'm just angry that we keep doing these little bits of drip, drip, drip. So in the end they get what they want. We'll all say, "Oh we can't pull it down". Me, I'd pull everything down that they've put in."

The applications had come before the committee in February and been deferred for more information about flood risks. The ward Councillor for Horton, Cllr **Kieran Persand** (Conservative) was invited to speak. He argued: "I do not believe any substantial additional information or clarity has been provided. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out strict tests to protect people and property from flooding, which all local planning authorities are expected to follow. Where these tests are not met new developments should not be allowed. One of these tests the NPPF requires is the application of a "sequential test". Where the test is not performed or not met, development should not be allowed."

A local resident, **Alexander Duval,** was invited to address the meeting and he said: "As the majority of committee members and planning officers will be aware, the residents of Clarendon Park have objected to a significant number of the planning applications submitted by Hobbledown over recent years. The majority of these have been retrospective: build first, get permission later. Numerous compelling planning reasons have been put forward by residents for refusing planning permission. Where the developments have not complied with national planning guidance, local planning policies and precedents set by case law. Despite this, all planning applications have been recommended for approval by officers. The residents, those directly affected by the applications, are at a loss as to why this should be the case. Hobbledown is located within the green belt. According to national planning guidance and local development policies, this is supposed to afford protection against development and seems to elsewhere, but not on this site."

There was controversy as to whether Mr Duval's several other written objections had been made available to Councillors to consider. Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Horton) "The planning committee should, when considering an application, take into account all views on material and planning considerations that are expressed in a way that is openly heard and fairly considered. I'm really worried about this process. This happened last time. Mr. Duval repeatedly asked where his comments were on the website, and they weren't there. They were posted by the council on the day of the meeting. Twelve minutes [the time allotted to Mr Duval to speak at the meeting] is not the same as articulating point by point. You've presumed that every councillor here has received something from Alex Duval."

She added: "To be told something is being received, but it is not uploaded to the website, so we can't see it. That's not acceptable."

Discussions continued long into the night with references to planning policies, flood risk assessments, conditions and other details.

The marathon three and a half hour meeting concluded with a series of votes. Generally, permissions were granted across the board of hitherto unauthorised changes at Hobbledown, some on the casting vote of the Chair.

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Image: PictureWendy

The Bucknill plan stops here....

28 May 2024



A plan to cram 5 three-bedroomed houses on a single bungalow plot in Bucknills Close, Epsom did not meet Councillors' approval.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Planning Committee met 18th April and refused an application by Nuro Homes Ltd despite their agent's plea to the meeting to allow it.

Plain speaking Cllr **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley) gave her reasons for refusal and her own strong sentiments on the application in saying to her committee colleagues: "Right, here we go again. Same old "Back Land". Call it what you like: "Development". And as my grandma would say, trying to put a pint into a half pint pot.... They could have designed it so that they weren't in Outer Hebrides with their bins to try and take to the front. Ridiculous." [A reference to challenges to the Council collection of domestic refuse.]

She added: "I think this is not well thought out, any of this. And I put it down to the fact that you're trying to cram too much in. It makes money. We all know the story. I'm not convinced about the flooding, ..., if there's slight flooding around, this will get it. It's just all too much. So I'm sorry, but as far as I'm concerned, this is ill designed. .... So for my part, I'm not happy."

During the meeting it was argued that children would use the short-cut the development would create. Cllr **Neil Dallen** (RA Town) was for refusal on the grounds of highway safety and the distance that residents would have to take their bins for collection. Commenting on a varied application he said "It's fine moving the bins another few yards towards the road, but there is still a huge distance for those to go. The waste manager has said it's unacceptable."

Cllr. **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) observed: "If we were proposing a refusal on highways grounds, we have to take into account that we're flying solo because Surrey County Council aren't behind us on this, and they are the highway authority."

Cllr. **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) was concerned about routine refusal of new housing developments and said: "It is providing for homes for people in Epsom and Ewell and we know how dire the housing situation is in the borough. I don't think any committee with a response to its residents can continue to refuse every single application that comes in front of it."

The application was refused by five votes to four, the Chair Cllr. **Humphrey Reynolds** (RA West Ewell) not voting.

Epsom and Ewell braces for M25 closure traffic

28 May 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.

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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

28 May 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.

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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. **Rammina 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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