

Benches mark the victims of Co-Vid across the Borough

23 October 2022



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is installing 14 memorial benches across the Borough to commemorate all the lives lost in the Covid-19 pandemic. Metal benches have been placed at Alexandra Receptions Ground, Long Grove Park, Nonsuch Park, Shadbolt Park, Stoneleigh Broadway and The Grove in Ewell Village.

Mayor Clive Woodbridge, College Ward Councillors Julie Morris and Nigel Colin, Cllr Hannah Dalton and Elena Ciesco. Acting Borough Chief Executive Jackie King also attended.

More metal benches have been or are in the process of being installed at Auriol Park, Ewell Court Park, Mounthill Gardens and The Wells Centre. Wooden benches will also be placed at Epsom Common, Grandstand Road, Horton Country Park and Hogsmill by the steppingstones at a later date. Flowers will also be planted around the benches where appropriate.

Funding for the benches was provided via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Councillor **Hannah Dalton**, who put forward the CIL bid, said, "The past two years have been extremely hard for everyone in the Borough, but more so for those who have lost loved ones. These benches are our permanent memorial to all those affected by the pandemic. "I hope they will bring comfort to grieving families, ensuring that their loved one will always have a place in and be remembered by our community."

Councillor **John Beckett**, Chair of Environment and Safe Communities Committee, added, "While these benches memorialise the pandemic, they also represent a time for reflection within the Borough. I can't think of a more fitting tribute to those we have lost, than to have something to remind us of and generations to come."



A Robin is a feature of the Co-Vid victims memorial bench

One of the benches, for each of the Borough's Wards, was the place of a moving speech by **Mayor Clive Woodbridge** on Saturday morning 22nd October. In **Alexandria Park** The Mayor spoke of the loss so many across the Borough have suffered during the pandemic. As of the week ending 7th October 2022 the UK Government funded **LG Inform** states that 474 persons have died of Co-Vid in Epsom and Ewell.

Mayor Woodbridge recognised how deep the bereavement is felt by relatives who came to the bench this day especially as he had this year suffered the loss of a son. As an example of the reality of loss he read a tribute to one Epsomian who succumbed to the virus.



Elena Ciesco who campaigned for memorials in the Borough

Luigi Ciesco was born in Italy in 1941 and at the age of 19 he moved to England in 1960 to start a new life. He met Vincenza his wife, at a wedding in Italy and soon after, they were married, settling first in Hook Road and then in Alexandra Road in Epsom for 45 years. They went on to have 4 children and 8 grandchildren and were married for 57 years. He was an amazing, fun loving and cheeky man, a real character and he was known and loved by so many. He loved his family, and he loved his Italian music and he loved to dance. He was an extremely hard-working man and worked in the NHS. He grew all his own vegetables and was an expert gardener and wine maker.

The Covid memorial benches mean a great deal to the bereaved families. The world seems to have moved on from Covid but they have not moved on, they are forever changed. The benches show the reality of how cruel this virus is and how it does not discriminate from young to old. We all hope that it makes people stop and think about our loved ones never to be forgotten."