

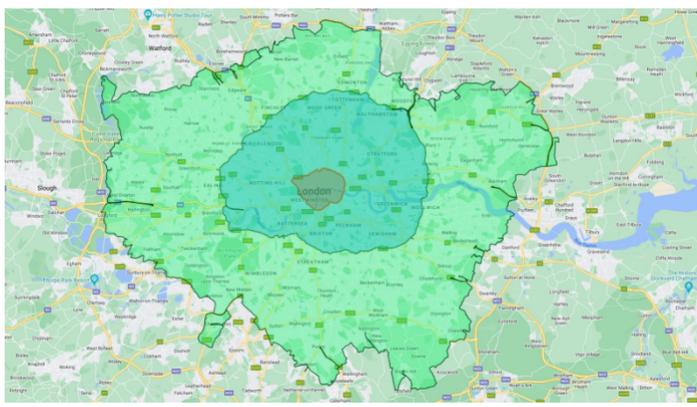
# Will Epsom think on the same lines?

25 November 2022



Trams into Surrey have been raised as one “very possible solution” to improving public transport with the expansion of the capital’s **Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ)**. The zone’s expansion was confirmed on Friday (November 25), and Elmbridge councillors had discussed the matter with a Transport for London (TfL) representative the previous evening at an overview and scrutiny meeting.

Councillors raised issues around public transport in the borough, saying it was not as good as that in greater London, and asking what could be done to improve it so people were less reliant on their cars. The ULEZ will be expanded from August 2023 to cover the area currently in the Low Emission Zone boundary. It will mean the zone, where drivers in non-compliant cars pay £12.50 per day if they enter it, will come up to the border with Surrey.



Speaking before the decision had been announced, Elmbridge Councillor **Graham Woolgar** (The Walton Society, Walton Central) said the question of better public transport in Elmbridge was “one of money”. He said it was unlikely the county council would find more money to improve buses in Elmbridge, and TfL would not help either because the area is outside London.

He asked **Iain Killingbeck**, community partnerships lead - west, for TfL: “There wouldn’t be any prospect of public transport being improved, would you agree with that?” Mr Killingbeck said he did not accept that, though TfL’s responsibility was for transport in the capital. He said getting people out of their cars, especially on shorter journeys, and promoting walking and cycling was what TfL encouraged. He added: “That’s what we do at TfL, that’s what we’re all about. So we can help to collaborate, partner and work with you, but we don’t have the responsibility for the county or for this area.”

According to the Mayor’s office, the existing ULEZ has reduced roadside pollution levels by 44 per cent in central London and 20 per cent in inner London.

Speaking after the meeting, the county council’s leader, **Cllr Tim Oliver** (Conservative, Weybridge) pointed to the authority’s £50million investment in electric buses and the same amount in hydrogen buses in the county. There is also an on-demand electric bus service operating in some parts of Surrey including Tandridge and Mole Valley, and due to be rolled out to other areas.

Cllr Oliver told the LDRS: “We will invest whatever we possibly can. I’m a big believer that we are never going to get people out of their cars if there isn’t a good alternative public transport system.” He said the county council had “put the message across” to the London Mayor about the impact the expansion would have on Surrey residents, including in areas such as East Molesey where drivers will be charged if they cross Hampton Court Bridge towards Bushy Park.

The county council, as well as borough and district councils, responded to a consultation that ran over the summer on the plans, highlighting issues such as scrappage schemes, health appointments and requesting to delay the expansion. Cllr Oliver said: “We’ve done everything we possibly can to say: ‘You can’t do this, it’s not fair on our residents.’”

In Thursday’s Elmbridge meeting, Long Ditton Councillor **Jez Langham** (Liberal Democrat) explained his ward bordered London and agreed public transport needed to be better for residents. He pointed to the success of **trams** in cities such as Sheffield and Manchester, as well as in Wimbledon, though he mentioned the Croydon tram crash of 2016 in which seven people died. Cllr Langham said: “Nonetheless it is a successful line, and given the lack of tubes around, it would seem to be a very possible solution.”

Mr Killingbeck said trams were “relatively affordable” but that there wouldn’t be the option of getting a tram line in place before the August 2023 expansion. He added: “I accept, we need to strengthen public transport.”

Cllr Oliver said trams could work in more urban areas of Surrey such as Guildford or Woking, but believed the on-demand buses were better for many of the more rural parts of the county. He added: “[Trams would be] a major infrastructural investment and if the government were to put some funding behind that, then I’m quite sure we would look at it.”

The Mayor of London, **Sadiq Khan**, said: “Expanding the ULEZ London-wide has not been an easy decision. The easy thing for me would have been to kick the can down the road. But in the end, public health comes before political expediency. We have too often seen measures delayed around the world to tackle air pollution and the climate crisis because it’s viewed as being too hard or politically inconvenient. But there’s no time to waste when people’s lives are on the line and we are facing a climate crisis.”

## Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes..?\*

25 November 2022



Battle for school gets classical with fears of a Trojan Horse. **Kingswood House School** in **Epsom** is asking local people to join hundreds of residents in opposing plans to evict the School from its site and replace it with a small school and housing estate. With objections numbering over 400, local people have risen up in opposition to developer **Steve Curwen**’s plans to evict the 102 year old, 245 pupil school from its site in West Hill, Epsom. **Curwen Group** are working with the landowners, the **Aczel brothers**, with the scheme involving the construction of a small school of only 60 pupils with acute special needs.

It is anticipated that the school would be privately operated on a “for-profit” basis. In what has been described by MP **Chris Grayling** as: “an example of the worst form of business practice”, the Aczel brothers have confirmed that the planning application for the new school will be followed by a second application to build a housing estate on the current school’s playing field.

Amongst its 245 pupils, Kingswood House School is home to 172 local children with special needs and has the highest concentration of special needs pupils at any school in Surrey. The School has been made an Asset of Community Value by Epsom and Ewell BC in recognition of its contribution to the local community.

The School has now filed a detailed objection to the proposed development including reports by independent experts. These documents which are publicly available on the Council’s website include a report by educational expert **Neil Roskilly**, a former member of the General Teaching Council for England and adviser to the Department for Education. Roskilly notes that “...none of the pupils at Kingswood House School would qualify for a place at the proposed new school because their special needs would not be considered sufficiently severe: and the need in Surrey is for schools catering for milder special needs (such as Kingswood House) not acute special needs and therefore the new school would be marketed by its owners towards pupils from outside Epsom.”

Roskilly says that **Department of Education** design guidelines for schools accommodating pupils with acute special needs have been ignored, resulting in classrooms and common areas being too small and that: “... as designed the proposed school would have to operate with a limited curriculum”. As such, Roskilly believes that: “...it is highly doubtful that the proposed school would receive permission to open from **Ofsted** at a post-registration inspection. This is because it would be potentially discriminatory and in breach of the: “Special Education Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25Years (2015)”, which states that all SEND pupils should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum”.

Access for the proposed new school would be via West Hill Avenue, currently a quiet residential road to the rear of the Kingswood House School. Transport consultants **Markides** note that the proposed access and parking arrangements are inadequate given the width of West Hill Avenue, its use for residential parking and the presence of trees restricting visibility. When combined with the intended housing estate and inadequate staff and visitor parking for the proposed new school, Markides conclude that: “... the proposed access and internal layout are regarded as seriously deficient and unsupportable.”The problems identified don’t stop with those spotted by Markides and Roskilly.

Officers employed by **Surrey County Council** and **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** have identified problems relating to both flood risk and ecology. The Surrey County Council Flood Risk, Planning and Consenting Team have reported that they are: “...not satisfied that the proposed drainage scheme meets the requirements...” of the relevant planning legislation and that development should not commence: “...until details of a surface water drainage scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority”.

Curwen’s own ecology reports recommended further reports, not yet done, to establish the presence or otherwise of protected species, Great Crested Newts and Bats. Surrey’s Ecology Officer notes that these reports are still not done and that: “These surveys are required and cannot now be done until spring/summer next year” .

A common concern amongst the hundreds of objections filed so far is that Curwen’s scheme is in reality a sham and a “**Trojan horse**” for the construction of a housing estate. This concern is only likely to have been intensified given the fundamental flaws in the scheme’s design exposed by experts for Kingswood House School’s and the shortcomings noted by Surrey County Council’s Flood Risk team and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Ecology Officer.

A **Spokesperson** for The Curwen Group said to **Epsom and Ewell Times**:

*“We are committed to providing a specialist SEND school at the Kingswood House site, and are currently working through technical responses to our application in consultation with the surrounding community.”*

Those wishing to support or object should do so via the Council’s website [tinyurl.com/epsomewellplanning](http://tinyurl.com/epsomewellplanning) and entering the reference number 22/01653/FUL or by email to the case officer, Gemma Patterson at [gpatterson@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:gpatterson@epsom-ewell.gov.uk) (ref 22/01653/FUL)

\*The Trojan priest Laocoön guessed the plot and warns the Trojans “I fear Greeks, even those bearing gifts”.

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## Ewell Village to get an uplift?

25 November 2022



High Street improvements to come in **Ewell** to revitalise the town and create spaces that are safer and more attractive? **Surrey County Council**’s Ewell project team has worked closely with a group of residents who originally campaigned for change in the village. **Surrey County Council**’s Cabinet is due to discuss £30 million of funding to deliver seven capital projects identified in the **Surrey Infrastructure Plan**.

The proposals for Ewell state:

Ewell Village currently suffers from significant levels of traffic passing through the village, with an imbalance between traffic and pedestrians, both in terms of space consumed and dominance exerted. Pedestrian movement in the village is notable, particularly that of children travelling to/from school, but resident feelings about road safety are poor given the high volumes of traffic.

This project will deliver improvements to the High Street that will support revitalisation of the village through restricting vehicular access to some degree along the High Street, bringing about more pedestrian-friendly spaces that are safer and more attractive. It will bring improvements to local environmental sustainability via new street greening in addition to reducing vehicle emissions, will enhance the economic resilience of existing and new retail outlets through the creation of more attractive spaces that encourage longer dwell times, and will enrich social cohesion by bringing about more opportunities for people to connect with one another.

**Epsom & Ewell Borough Council** (EEBC) is committed to continued engagement with SCC to develop plans for the village and welcomes further collaboration with the community and community representatives to help shape the scheme.

The total scheme cost is approximately £2.5 million. SCC will be seeking a contribution of 50% from third party funding. Funding from EEBC will be determined once a preferred option is agreed.

### **Other proposals for the County include:**

Projects include town centre and highway improvements, active and sustainable travel schemes, and flood alleviation schemes.

£8.64million of the funding would come from Surrey County Council, with the rest coming from external funding sources. These projects include the implementation of active and sustainable travel schemes to provide Surrey residents with greener options of travel, whilst improving air quality and creating healthier places to live. There are also town centre regeneration schemes to support economic growth and provide the necessary infrastructure for growing communities. These infrastructure projects are critical for the council to deliver its ambitions for the county now and into the future.

The seven capital projects are:

### **Town centre schemes**

- High Street improvements in both Ewell and Horley to revitalise the town and create spaces that are safer and more attractive. The Ewell project team has worked closely with a group of residents who originally campaigned for change in the village and in Horley, investment is being made following the impact of Covid on how the town is used by residents.
- Town centre regeneration in Caterham through flood mitigation works, improved connectivity and improvement to public spaces in Caterham Valley and Caterham on the Hill.

### **Active and sustainable travel schemes**

- Electric bikes (E-bikes) in Guildford – implementation of a town-wide bike share scheme to offer an alternative to

car trips within the borough.

- Woking sustainable transport improvements - improvements for walking, cycling and bus infrastructure in the east of Woking, improving connections between Woking town centre, Sheerwater and West Byfleet. For this scheme Surrey County Council have submitted a bid for £12million to the Department of Housing and Levelling up as part of round two of Levelling Up funding.

### Highway improvement schemes

- A320 North of Woking improvements - Plans to make all junctions and roads on the busy stretch between Chertsey and Ottershaw work well together to improve traffic flow. Improvements for walkers and cyclists, including new crossing points and wider foot and cycle paths and improved access to public transport.

### Flood alleviation schemes

- Flooding Alleviation Programme 2023/24 - A mix of schemes and interventions focusing on flood resilience measures, flood risk reduction and protection against flooding.

Cabinet will also be reviewing the allocation of £2million funding to support the expansion of the on-street electric vehicle chargepoint roll-out. The funding required would support the installation of a comprehensive network of publicly accessible chargepoints right across the county. This is essential to support residents who don't have off-street parking to transition to electric vehicles. Surrey's Local Transport Plan has identified as one of its top priorities the reduction of emissions and increase in energy efficient vehicles, specifically to promote zero emission and smaller vehicles. Cabinet will also be discussing the appointment of a new supplier to deliver a wider roll-out of chargepoints across the county to meet the increased demand.

**Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Economy**, said: "Investment in infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth and to cater for the needs of Surrey's businesses and communities.

"The projects being presented to Cabinet take into consideration changing infrastructure requirements for our communities. Following the Covid pandemic, the way people live and work has changed. These projects consider new travel patterns and behaviours, whilst focusing on improving local places."

Surrey County Council News and with additional reporting on Ewell by Epsom and Ewell Times

## Cllr Dalton leads street night light fight

25 November 2022



**Epsom and Ewell's Councillor Hannah Dalton** (Residents' Association, Stoneleigh) said she lived in a zone five area, but when she got the last train home, she would still get the torch out on her phone in order to get home safely once off the main streets. Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner has hit back at a claim she "doesn't understand what she's talking about" as she says the decision to turn street lights on at night is the county council's responsibility.

**Lisa Townsend** said street lighting has been "one of her great frustrations" with "mixed messages" at council level, as another councillor shared her experience of walking home with her phone's torch on to get back safely.

In a heated meeting of Surrey County Council's police and crime panel, in which councillors and non-elected members ask questions of the PCC, Runnymede Councillor **John Furey** (Conservative, Addlestone South) said residents could make a request to get lights switched back on in certain areas.

Street lights on some of Surrey's residential roads started to be turned off at night in 2017, usually between the hours of 1am and 5am, to save money.

**Epsom and Ewell's Councillor Hannah Dalton** (Residents' Association, Stoneleigh) said she lived in a zone five area, but when she got the last train home, she would still get the torch out on her phone in order to get home safely once off the main streets.

In response the elected Conservative PCC said: "You and I have both, I suspect, walked home from train stations using the light on our phone, clutching our keys, speaking to somebody on the phone hoping that if anything happens, there will at least be a record but conscious that by the fact that we're on our phone means we're not paying the proper attention to our surroundings. Any woman I know has been there."

She said she got "very annoyed" when told by officers that the reason that lights hadn't been turned on was because

police hadn't asked for them to be. Mrs Townsend added: "That's not the reason. It's entirely in the county council's gift as to whether they turn them back on or not. I'm frustrated by the mixed messaging that my office gets I'm frustrated by the different answers that I get when I ask about it."

Calling on councillors to lobby the county council that where residents didn't feel safe and wanted street lights switched back on, they should be, she added it was not for the police to be making the case for residents.

Mrs Townsend added: "Something should not have to happen to us, or to any other woman or man, in order for a case to be made to put the lights on. If you don't feel safe, and it's what the community wants, the lights should be switched on. I couldn't be clearer in that."

Cllr Furey had previously interrupted Mrs Townsend, saying: "This is quite out of order. The PCC doesn't understand what she's talking about." He said the police would be asked for their opinion if there was a request for residents to switch lights back on, but that the request went through the county council and that if there was a case, the lights would be switched back on.

Mrs Townsend, saying she had been "rudely interrupted" by Cllr Furey, said she understood the process but was concerned about the "extra bureaucracy" and said she didn't want to see any more delays to requests. She added: "My point is police shouldn't have to become involved in it. If a woman doesn't feel safe and she wants to have the lights turned on, that should be a matter for the county council. It should not be a matter for policing because the police cannot interfere on whether somebody feels safe or doesn't."

Surrey County Councillor **Keith Whitham** (Conservative, Worplesdon) said it was "not a black and white situation". He said in his area he had seen successful examples of lights being switched back on where Surrey Police had supported residents in their appeals to the council. Mole Valley Councillor **Paul Kennedy** (Lib Dem, Fetcham West) said the blanket approach "simply doesn't work" and that people had "to work really hard to try and get the lights back on." He said he would be taking it up with the county council, but also recognised that many people in his rural area valued and wanted to protect their dark skies.

On the wider issues of the safety of women and girls, the meeting heard the responses to a survey carried out in April and May 2021 which showed that 45.6 per cent of the 5,427 participants felt unsafe in their neighbourhoods at night, and 55.7 per cent felt unsafe in the nearest town centre at night. A report into the findings said: "One of the main themes when respondents were asked to explain why they sometimes feel unsafe, was lighting, or lack of it in local areas. A lot of these comments mentioned the lack of street lighting in their local area, and how this made it feel unsafe when out and about after dark."

Mrs Townsend pointed to the almost £1million received from Government to help tackle violence against women and girls in the county, including training for teachers in schools. She said: "We're not going to police our way out of this problem. We do need to take a whole society approach."

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## Neighbouring crematorium plan goes up in smoke.

25 November 2022



Reigate and Banstead borough council has shelved its plans for the area's first crematorium despite having spent £350,000 on the project so far. The facility could have brought in more than £1.5million for the authority, but was rejected by councillors at a planning meeting in September 2021, despite the officer recommendation to approve it.

A decision then had to be taken whether to submit another application, proceed with a third party partner or appeal the decision, though it was then discovered the council could not appeal its own planning decision.

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council's commercial ventures executive sub-committee considered a report into "project baseball" on Thursday (November 17) which detailed the closure.

The project, first brought to committee in December 2019, would have provided the borough's first crematorium, and has been funded by the council through its reserves, or savings. Plans were refused at planning stage because of its location in the greenbelt, with more than 500 public objections to the application.

Council documents show the aim of the project was to provide a much needed and greatly improved level of service to the residents, while also bringing in income for the authority. More than 80 per cent of of dead people were cremated in the UK as at 2021, and facilities in neighbouring boroughs were found to be operating beyond their capacity.

Documents said: "[They] were not considered to serve customers, and particularly local people, well at a difficult time of life, either in terms of service, cost, environment and location/accessibility." They went on to say the crematorium would aim to deliver "a higher quality facility and service" than the nearest competitors, closer to residents and those near the

borough, and also bringing money in for the council.

Operating at full capacity, it was estimated the crematorium could have brought in more than £1.5m per year.

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## Banding against Surrey's top value homes?

25 November 2022



"Very expensive" houses on private estates in Surrey should be added to new council tax bands to make the collection process fairer, according to one councillor. As part of the Autumn Statement, **Jeremy Hunt** announced more "flexibilities" for local authorities to increase council tax by 5 per cent per year without a referendum from April next year. The rise could mean average council tax bills look increase to more than £2,000 for a Band D home as councils look to fill holes in their budgets.

Councillor **Nick Darby**, (The Dittons, Dittons and Weston Green Residents), the Residents' Association and Independent group leader on **Surrey County Council**, said legislation at central government level could make the system fairer. In what he said would be a "significant change" in the system, Cllr Darby said a threshold could be set on homes worth more than, for example £5million, and two new council tax bands created to get those homes to pay more "as a matter of principle". He added: "I don't mean your average three-bed semi. If you go into areas of Surrey, in the private estates in Esher, Weybridge you've got people with very expensive houses."

He asked if it was fair that those who have "those very, very expensive houses" pay the same council tax as someone in a house with "very much less value". But he said the plans should not impact on those who were "already struggling". He said for people who were "asset rich and cash poor" the payments could be put off until the house was sold, rather than having to pay immediately or be forced to sell their home.

County council's budget "already under considerable pressure". The Surrey Liberal Democrats said people in Surrey were being asked to pay for Conservative errors to fix the economy and oil and gas giants were being "[let] off the hook". **Will Forster** (Woking South), Leader of Surrey Lib Dems said: "We know that the county council's budget is already under considerable pressure and today's announcements will not make balancing the books any easier. It remains to be seen whether the Tory administration decides to use the extra flexibility they will have to set a much higher level of council tax, to help make up the shortfall. We need a fair deal, including support for people unable to afford skyrocketing mortgage bills and rents, and protecting funding for local health services. This could be paid for by reversing tax cuts for banks and a proper windfall tax, instead of imposing years of stealth taxes on ordinary families."

Surrey County Council's leader, **Tim Oliver** (Conservative, Weybridge) is chairman of the County Council's Network, and praised the Chancellor's decision to delay social care reforms until 2025 as a "brave" one. He said postponing these reforms and putting money into frontline care services was welcomed and would protect the most vulnerable also giving councils "vital time to stabilise the care system".

The county council previously warned of concerns that without a delay, the authority could face bankruptcy. With his county council leader hat on, Cllr Oliver said there was much in the statement local government could be happy about. He said investment in schools, skills and research and development would allow Surrey residents to access new, higher-paid opportunities, a priority for the council.

Cllr Oliver added: "Businesses in Surrey will also be pleased to know that they will not see business rates going up next year, while central government will also be ensuring local authorities are not out of pocket as a result. "We were also pleased to see that capital budgets for the next two years will not be cut, meaning we can continue to develop the world-beating broadband and transport infrastructure companies need to grow and thrive." He said the authority would work closely with government ahead of the local government finance settlement due in December and would continue with its own budget setting, soon to be published for public consultation.

Another councillor looking ahead to December's finance settlement is the Guildford deputy leader, Cllr **Joss Bigmore** (Residents for Guildford and Villages.) He was concerned there was not enough support to help local authorities protect frontline services. With an increase of more than £1.5m in energy costs just at the borough's Spectrum leisure centre, he said: "It's all well and good being allowed to increase council tax but it's nothing compared to inflationary pressures."

End

Epsom and Ewell Times adds: **Tim Oliver** was interviewed on BBC Radio 4's PM programme 18th November and said he hoped the Council would not have to raise Council tax by 5%. He said the position was ameliorated by the promise of central Government of £6 billion to finance adult social care. So, a rise in Council tax "probably not, possibly not..." In a Surrey County Council press release issued later in the day Mr Oliver has added:

*"Today's autumn statement contained much that local government can be happy about, helping us ensure no-one is left behind. I am pleased to see that government has listened to our calls for a postponement of the adult social care reforms and for further support for the service. It is also good that the government will be developing a workforce plan for the*

sector and the NHS, to ensure we have the capacity to deliver these vital services.

*“Businesses in Surrey will also be pleased to know that they will not see business rates going up next year, while central government will also be ensuring local authorities are not out of pocket as a result. We were also pleased to see that capital budgets for the next two years will not be cut, meaning we can continue to develop the world-beating broadband and transport infrastructure companies need to grow and thrive.*

*“Finally, the new investment in our schools over the next two years, as well as other announcements about skills and research and development, will enable Surrey residents to access new, higher paid opportunities. This is a high priority for us, and will be a key driver to ensuring Surrey continues to lead the country as we seek the growth that will take us through the current economic uncertainty.*

*“We will be working closely with the government over the coming weeks, particularly as we approach the local government finance settlement due in December, to work out the details attached to these measures. In the meantime, we are also proceeding with our own budget-setting process, which we will be publishing for public consultation shortly.”*

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## Council’s secret strategy on public resources?

25 November 2022



Epsom and Ewell’s powerful **Strategy and Resources Committee** went into secret session on four items of public interest at its meeting Tuesday 15th November. The four items were:

1. INCOME GENERATING OPPORTUNITY
2. COST OF LIVING PAYMENT
3. LAND RETENTION
4. COMMERCIAL PROPERTY UPDATE

In each case the secrecy was justified on the following ground:

*“... the business to be transacted/nature of the proceedings..... deals with information relating to the financial or business affairs of the Committee and third parties and the public interest in maintaining the exemption currently outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.”*

However, the Committee did not close the meeting during discussions on the motion to close. During that discussion **Councillor Eber Kington** (RA Ewell Court Ward) revealed in public that the “income generating opportunity” related to a crematorium.

**Councillor David Gulland** (LibDem College Ward) argued that the proposal “is an interesting development which would benefit from a wide-ranging discussion with our residents ... I feel we’re trying to be too secretive...we should be open with what we’re trying to achieve with our assets.” The Interim Chief Executive, responded that “the reason this is a restricted item is because it’s a commercial opportunity and we need to protect our negotiations...with potential suppliers, etc”. However, **Councillor Kate Chinn** (Lab, Court Ward) agreed with Cllr. Gulland. “Part of making the business case is to see if there’s a need for it in the borough,” she said. “Surely the easiest way to do that is to ask the residents.”

It was at this point that Councillor Kington made the statement that “I want to get as much as I can out in the open. But what we have here is the Council looking at a possibility of a crematorium.” He went on to defend the proposal to exclude press and public: “ [If this] is a runner, it would have to come back to this committee and it may well be that that will be the time when it will be a public document. We don’t want to give anyone the heads up that this is what we are planning. In most cases, we will put things not on pink paper if we can help it.” [Ed. “Pink paper” is the colour of secret papers.]

The Residents’ Association majority on the committee agreed with Councillor Kington and excluded press and public from any further details of this and the other three items.

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At the same meeting:

VOTER ID LIKELY FOR 2023 – BUT COUNCILS MAY HAVE TO PICK UP THE BILL

Following public consultation, a new polling station is expected to be in operation for the borough elections in 2023. This is to be situated in the arts centre at the newly refurbished Horton Chapel and will serve the residents of the new Horton Ward. This new ward will comprise the four former hospital sites of Clarendon Park, Livingstone Park, Manor Park and Noble Park, plus some roads that are currently in Court Ward around the northern end of Hook Road.

Receiving the detailed report that included this information Councillor **Hannah Dalton** (Residents' Association, Stoneleigh Ward), asked about the Council's preparedness for the introduction of voter id at polling stations. "There will be a lot of communication from the government about this," the council officer replied. But he went to say that it will be a challenge getting it ready because the Council will be able to issue identity slips where people don't have photo identity.

Councillor **Liz Frost** (Residents' Association, Woodcote Ward) followed this up by asking about the cost implications of this for the Borough Council. The Interim Chief Executive, stated that "there are discussions going on with government at the moment ... At the moment, the proposal is that local councils will fund ID cards ... It's an ongoing discussion."

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## Epsom to help meet children's homes bed shortage?

25 November 2022



With improvements to be made to existing children's homes, and **new ones being built in Epsom** and Walton, **Surrey County Council** is addressing a shortage of up to 60 children's homes beds for young people in the area. High property prices, difficulty securing planning permission and staffing issues, tied in with existing children's homes in need of repair and children with more complex needs have led to a "real problem" with provision in the county.

Image: Wells House or Karibu, Spa Drive - Surrey County Council Childrens Home

According to **Rachael Wardell**, the authority's executive director for children, families and lifelong learning, the county is "quite a long way short" on being able to provide for looked-after children in Surrey, and will need another ten or 12 homes to meet its needs. These would come from both council-run children's homes and private providers, with the county council currently having nine of its own homes and two new ones being built. She said the priority was always to keep children in Surrey where possible, to keep them near their families and communities.

The authority's children's services department was rated "requires improvement" in a January inspection, up from the inadequate rating it was first given in 2015. Asked if the council is playing catch up in terms of provision for young people being looked after by the council, Ms Wardell said it was "quite possibly true". The executive director, who joined the authority in December 2020, said the county council has fewer children's homes altogether than many neighbouring authorities, even across both in-house and private providers. She added: "When we look at some of the provision we've got for our children, it's quite a long way short in terms of numbers. It also often looks quite out of date, it hasn't necessarily been maintained or brought up to date on a regular basis over the years. What I would say is that we're investing really strongly now."

Part of that investment is more than £2million put into staffing, including staff achieving qualifications to be on a higher pay grade, and a recruitment drive since April which has seen 95 jobs offered and the council's residential team fully staffed with managers, deputies and portfolio leads.

With improvements to be made to existing children's homes, and **new ones being built in Epsom** and Walton, Ms Wardell said she wanted to be able to make children "feel like they're in a lovely place" with really good staff. Figures from July show that just under 40 per cent of looked-after children in the county were in homes in Surrey, with the authority aiming to increase that number to 80 per cent.

The county council closed one of its own homes in February this year, within 24 hours of an Ofsted report in which inspectors said "significant" management failings left its residents at risk "of significant harm".

In October, Elmbridge planners rejected an application for a children's home in a Claygate cul-de-sac, despite support from the county council and a recommendation to approve from council officers.

Ms Wardell said those residents who objected to children's homes had lost sight of the fact that they would be housing "children who've done nothing wrong, who've had a really, really tough life, and who need our support more than anything else". Of the shortage of beds in the county, she added: "It is a real problem. Not being able to develop [homes] ourselves and for other providers not to be able to develop them restricts the choices and opportunities for Surrey's children."

She also said she is not the only children's services director asking for Ofsted inspections that allowed more of a focus on the children and their journeys, as she reacted to an inadequate rating given to one of the council's children's homes in a report released last week. Saying regulatory inspections don't look "in the round" at what is going on in a child's life, and since inspectors "can't be in the home every day" they identify problems from months previously that have often since been corrected. While saying she would sometimes want staff to spend time with children rather than updating records, if they had to choose between the two, Ms Wardell also said: "I'm not trying to wriggle out of the responsibility, when homes get that wrong. At the same time, when they're trying to be very child centred, they're sometimes doing things with that young person, and maybe not keeping their records as up to date as they should."

She said being under less pressure with staffing would mean workers could both work with children and on paperwork, and that changes had been made to the system that logs information to make it easier for staff.

But she added that the “bounce” homes made between ratings and after inspections was “really tough” not only on staff but also on the young people living there, who would get a version of the report to read.

She said: “[The report] will say: ‘The thing that you were experiencing as supportive, helping you, getting you back to school and all of the other important things, was something that we don’t think is good enough.’” In small settings, she said a change of one or two key people could make a big difference, describing residential care as “more volatile than the rest of the service” and saying it could move both up and down quite quickly. She added: “Even the inconsistencies [across the county] are a bit inconsistent.”

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## July find of rare May fly in Surrey

25 November 2022



The River Thames Scheme (RTS) has discovered a nationally rare mayfly (*Caenis beskidensis*), which hadn’t been spotted in the UK for 49 years and has never been seen in the River Thames.

The invertebrate, which was last seen in Herefordshire in 1973, was discovered near Walton Bridge as part of the project’s routine survey work. Historically, they have been found in small and medium-sized streams, but have not been seen since 1973, when last spotted in Herefordshire.

This is an incredibly exciting find for the scheme and demonstrates just how important the survey work that the scheme’s ecologists do is. By establishing the value of the existing habitats living around the Thames the scheme will be able to put plans in place to protect them during the work and help them thrive for the future.

Speaking on the discovery RTS ecologist Jenny Stephenson said: “It is such an exciting discovery to identify something that hasn’t been seen in British water since the 1970’s. Now that we have discovered the *Caenis beskidensis* in the River Thames we will be able to monitor it and ensure the colony continues to thrive.

“The discovery of the mayfly, which was found in its nymph stage and part of its aquatic life cycle, represents a major expansion in both the distribution and habitat type the species has historically inhabited. We are confident that with the new habitats that the scheme will create we will encourage these may flies to breed further in the future.”



Image of a generic mayfly in its adult form. Please note this is not *Caenis beskidensis* as due to its rarity no image is available.

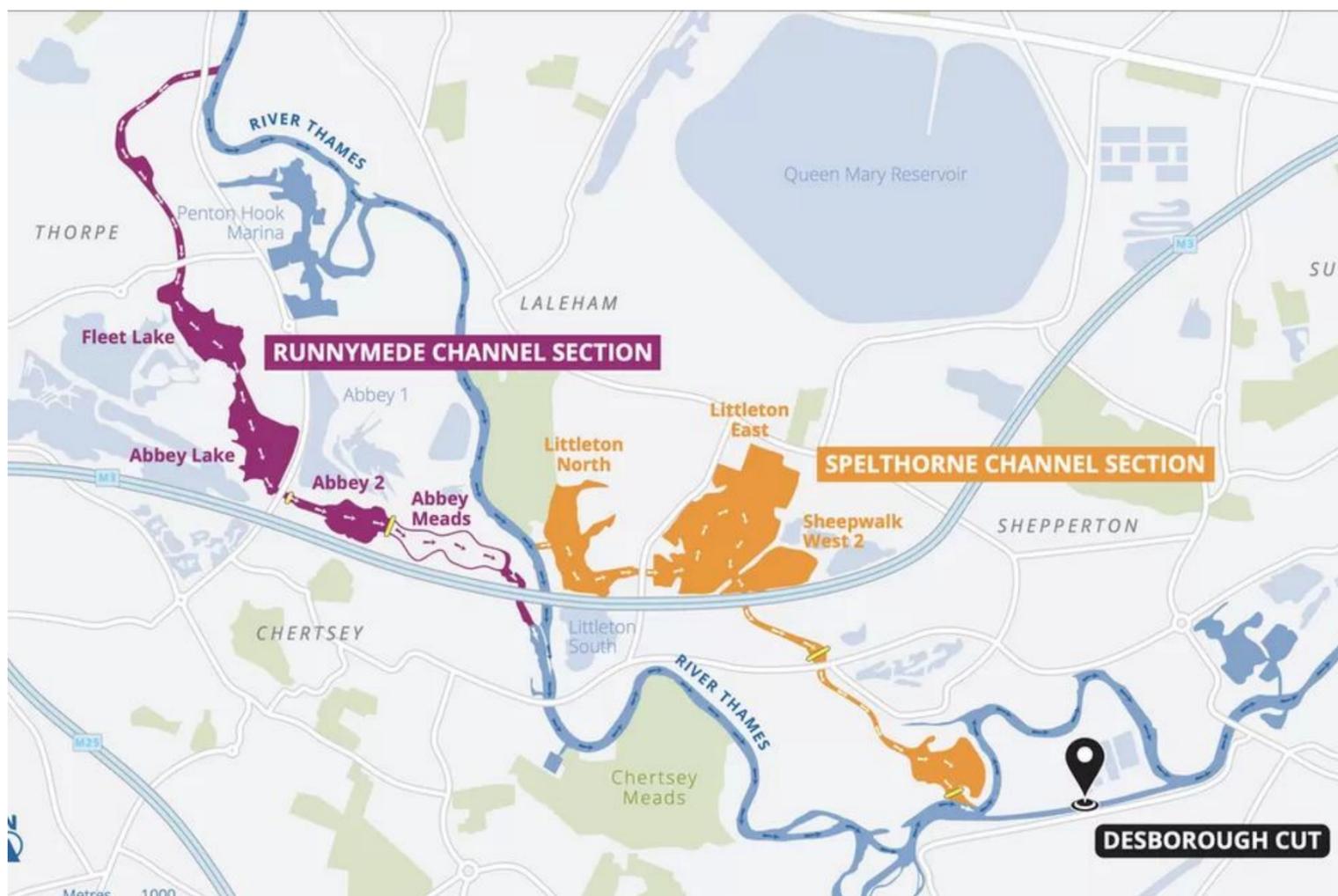
Mayflies form an important part of the river eco-system and are an important food source for fish and, once transformed into its adult form, insectivorous birds. Although the may flies have historically been found in small and medium sized streams they are also found in the upper areas of lowland rivers where they live in slow flowing shallow water. The RTS will create more of these river habitats so the team are hopeful new colonies will thrive.

As part of its work to understand the existing environment the RTS carries out hundreds of ecological and environmental surveys every year. A range of species have been targeted in these surveys, including bats (and their roosts), water voles, breeding birds, great crested newts, fish, invertebrates and species of reptiles.

Hannah Packwood, RTS environmental surveys project manager said: "It's so important that we understand the existing environment so we can continue to protect and where possible enhance it through the RTS. Finding rare and unexpected species is exciting, and we will continue to monitor the environment in our survey work throughout construction and the operation of the scheme".

A team of ecologists undertake the surveys by observing, measuring, taking notes and photographs, as well as soil and water samples. These surveys don't cause any significant disturbance to the environment or to land or property.

The RTS is currently holding a six-week public consultation for people to have their say on plans which includes a new flood channel whilst also providing habitat for wildlife and a new feature in the landscape for recreation. The consultation will run until **Tuesday 20 December 2022**. Full details of the consultation events, how to get involved, and to discover all venues that have brochures available to pick up please visit the website at [www.riverthamescheme.org.uk](http://www.riverthamescheme.org.uk) or call the Environment Agency National Customer Contact Centre on: 03708 506 506.



- The River Thames Scheme is being delivered in partnership between the Environment Agency and Surrey County Council.
- The scheme's wider partners are Elmbridge Borough Council, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, Runnymede Borough Council, Spelthorne Borough Council, Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, Thames Water, Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership, Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership.
- The River Thames Scheme is an integrated scheme which responds to the challenges of flooding, creating more access to green open spaces and sustainable travel, in addition to encouraging inclusive economic growth, increasing biodiversity and responding to the dual challenges of climate change and nature recovery.
- The project aims to deliver many benefits for local communities and businesses. The new flood channel will reduce the risk of flooding to homes, businesses, and infrastructure, while also providing habitat for wildlife and a new feature in the landscape for recreation.
- **The River Thames Scheme will include:**
  - a new river channel built in two sections - one section through Runnymede (between Egham Hythe and Chertsey) and one through Spelthorne (between Littleton North lake and the Desborough Cut)
  - capacity increases around the Desborough Cut and at the weirs at Sunbury, Molesey and Teddington
  - improved access to quality green open space and connections with wildlife, in addition to supporting a more sustainable travel network
  - a network of high-quality habitat to achieve a biodiversity net gain
- The River Thames Scheme will reduce flood risk to people living and working near the Thames, enhance the resilience of nationally important infrastructure, contribute to a vibrant local economy and maximise the social and environmental value of the river.
- There have been serious floods in this area over the past 100 years, namely in 1947, 1968, 2003 and most recently between 2013/2014.
- The new flood channel will reduce flood risk to over 11,000 properties and 1,600 businesses in Hythe End, Egham, Staines, Chertsey, Shepperton, Weybridge, Sunbury, Molesey, Thames Ditton, Kingston and Teddington.
- There will be increased capacity of the Desborough Cut and weirs at Sunbury, Molesey and Teddington by installing additional weir gates.
- Detailed planning and design are under way. The large scale of the project means the government has directed that it be treated as a project of national Significance. This requires a type of consent known as a 'development consent order' (DCO). A DCO removes the need to obtain several separate consents, including planning permission and is designed to be a quicker process than applying for these separately.

# Campaign to save special Epsom school builds

25 November 2022



**Kingswood House School** is asking local people to join hundreds of residents in opposing the school's landlord's redevelopment plan. Around 100 local residents turned out at a community meeting on 10th November in support of Kingswood House School. The School's current landlords, the **Aczel brothers** who own extensive property in Epsom, have for many years made no secret of the fact, that they would like to replace the School with a housing estate.

The brothers have teamed up with local developer **Steve Curwen** and have confirmed that the plan is to get planning for a small school first and then apply to build houses on the remaining part of the site. With objections on the Council's website already approaching 200, local people have made their views abundantly clear.

The application to replace Kingswood House School, a registered charity, which local residents regard as a trojan horse to facilitate the building of a housing estate, was described by MP **Chris Grayling**, in a message of support as: "an example of the worst form of business practice". Grayling continued: "In reality this application is a sham. There is no known requirement for or plan to open a more limited facility like this on the site. Surrey County Council has said clearly that it has no intention of funding the development of such a school on the site, and there are no known private sector plans to do so."



Objectors, public, parents and school governors meet 10th November

A very high percentage of Kingswood House's 245 pupils have special needs and in recognition of its valuable work, the School has been made an Asset of Community Value by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council. Local residents heard first-hand about the difference the school makes as a former parent **Helen Beckman**, described in the most moving of terms, how the School supported her son who moved to it having suffered severe depression and mental anguish brought on by living through the tragic impact of Parkinsons on his father.

Headmaster **Duncan Murphy** explained that this was but one example of many similar cases within the School. If allowed, the new school would be a privately operated "for profit" venture aimed at 60 pupils with severe special needs for whom public transport would be out of the question, requiring travel to and from school to be by private transport. In order, to allow space for the housing estate on the current School's playing field, access to the new school would be via a new road from West Hill Avenue, currently a quiet residential road.

The findings of the independent traffic experts were shown to the audience and demonstrated that given the level of traffic required, total gridlock in West Hill Avenue and surrounding roads would ensue at drop off and pick up times. Additionally, at least four trees would need to be felled to allow sufficient visibility for traffic exiting the new school. Experts explained that the gridlock effect would be exacerbated if the housing estate were to follow. The application would appear to have been made without proper ecology reports having been undertaken.

Curwen's own ecology report submitted with his application, accepts that one of the buildings on the current site that is proposed to be demolished shows a high propensity as a bat habitat. As a protected species a bat survey should have been carried out over the summer months, but has not. It is understood that it is the Council's practice to require full surveys before considering any planning application.

Given the lack of demand locally for the new school, the school would be looking to attract pupils from outside the borough with Curwen Group themselves admitting that pupils will be travelling at least 40 minutes to get to the new school. As regards Kingswood House's pupils, none of them would qualify for the new school and all of them would need to find new homes. Given the special needs of many Kingswood House pupils and the scarcity of places locally, this is likely to pose a severe challenge.

Those wishing to object should endeavour to do so by 21 st November via the Council's website [tinyurl.com/epsomewellplanning](http://tinyurl.com/epsomewellplanning)

and entering the reference number 22/01653/FUL or by email to the case officer, Gemma Patterson at [gpatterson@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:gpatterson@epsom-ewell.gov.uk) (ref 22/01653/FUL)

See our earlier reports:

Battle for Epsom School continues....

Community Asset to be stripped?

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## Surrey County pays asylum child £15,000

25 November 2022



A "vulnerable", unaccompanied asylum-seeking child has been given £15,000 by Surrey County Council after years of failings in his care which led to him sleeping on the floor of a restaurant where his friend worked. The child twice attempted suicide and was hospitalised because of his mental health, having arrived in the UK alone aged 12.

After his arrival in March 2016, the youngster was found local foster placements by the county council until April of that year, followed by a residential placement in Manchester. An investigation by the Local Government Ombudsman after "Mr X" complained about the council said the authority did not "appear to have considered anything other than a 'roof over his head'" at the later stages of his time under its responsibility. The ombudsman said the child was "extremely distressed and unhappy" at the placement in Manchester, telling staff he was 15, and not 12. The older age was accepted "without question" by the council, then the child ran away from the placement and attempted suicide.

There then followed several moves, including a placement with a foster carer of the same nationality, residential placements, including one in Staffordshire, and him being detained under the Mental Health Act. While he was in hospital, after a second suicide attempt, Mr X told staff he was not as old as he had said, but the council "refused to accept" his younger age according to the ombudsman.

The report broke down the "symbolic" payment of £15,000 as £10,000 to reflect the impact on Mr X's education, £2,000 for the failure to assess Mr X's age and needs leading to a lack of appropriate placements and care, £2,000 for his time spent homeless and £1,000 for distress caused, including delay to his asylum claim and legal action taken to establish his age. The investigator said Mr X "was vulnerable, and his distress was severe and prolonged". They added: "It is not possible for me to calculate a financial remedy for the distress Mr X has suffered as a result of fault by the council. There is no formula I can use. Any recommendation I make can only be a symbolic payment to acknowledge his distress. It is not 'compensation'."

The report showed that the child's mental health deteriorated in early 2017, with social care records saying he was distressed and preoccupied by what had become of his family. After he was discharged from hospital, he repeatedly ran away from his residential placement in Staffordshire, eventually failing to come back and being recorded by the council as living "independently" when he could have been as young as 13.

Requesting a foster placement from the council, and being told there were none available, Mr X refused the offers of independent or semi-independent placements from the council. It was at this stage the ombudsman's investigation said the council "should have been concerned with ensuring suitable aftercare to ensure Mr X's recovery" but seemed to be looking only to provide "a roof over his head".

Between January and April 2018, he was "sofa surfing" in London and sometimes slept on the floor of a restaurant where a friend worked, according to the ombudsman's investigation. He then got help from the Refugee Council and a solicitor, who found him a foster placement and asked the council to formally assess Mr X's age, with the authority concluding he was the older of the two ages that had been given.

This assessment was criticised by the courts in May 2019, who decided he was the younger of the two ages when Mr X challenged the council's process. The council upheld parts of complaint made by Mr X, which included that it failed to carry out an age assessment when he first became "looked after" and that it was wrong to appoint his allocated social worker to do the age assessment. As part of the complaint made by Mr X directly to the council, the authority also

accepted it had failed to assist Mr X with his asylum claim, to arrange suitable education for him and to provide suitable placements (because of its failure to assess Mr X's age and his care needs).

He was offered £2,000 compensation as part of the decision as well as an apology and an explanation of how problems had been addressed.

While the ombudsman welcomed steps taken such as the setting up of a specialist team to care for unaccompanied asylum seeking children, the investigator said the council seemed to have missed "the bigger picture" in dealing with the complaint. The findings said: "Mr X was a looked after child. The council was his parent. While the council accepts there were serious shortcomings in the care it provided Mr X, it has not responded in the way I would expect a parent to respond in the circumstances."

The ombudsman found that for two and a half years, the council had treated the asylum seeker as "almost an adult when he was in fact a vulnerable child", which impacted on decisions about accommodation and education. The report said he had now settled and returned to education, wishing to "move on, pursue his studies and make something of his life in England".

The ombudsman said: "In making his complaint, he was keen to ensure council services for other young people in similar circumstances improved."

A county council spokesperson said they could not go into specific detail for safeguarding reasons, but said the authority would always try to place children in accommodation appropriate to their needs and a full assessment would be done to assess this, with fostering being the first option explored. But they added that in some cases, children would come to the attention of the authority in an emergency and a full assessment was not always possible.

The spokesperson said: "We wholly accept the Ombudsman's decision and we sincerely apologise for any distress that was caused. Our Social Workers are trained to undertake comprehensive age assessments in line with national standards. We also have an agreed accommodation strategy that places an emphasis on both the development of accommodation within Surrey and the recruitment of more foster carers."

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## Epsom and Ewell remembers...

25 November 2022



**Epsom and Ewell** came together for the annual **Remembrance Day** service at Epsom's Clocktower, Friday 11th November. The Mayor's Chaplain reflected on the history of Remembrance Day. The first was held in the grounds of Buckingham Palace in 1919 when the two-minute silence was observed. In 1921 the poppy became a symbol of Remembrance. The Second World War saw the commemoration being held on a Sunday, to avoid disruption of ammunition production should the 11th of November fall in the working week. The Chaplain mentioned how the reality of today's television coverage of wars was inuring many to the horror of war.

The service was attended by a full complement of Councillors of all parties, servicemen and boys and girls from Blenheim School and other local schools.

The full service is reprinted below.



**An Act of Remembrance to mark 11.11.11 - Armistice Day  
Friday 11 November 2022**

The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Councillor Clive Woodbridge leads the civic party to the Clock Tower

The Mayor's Chaplain, says:

*We meet in the presence of God.*

*We commit ourselves to work in penitence and faith for reconciliation between the nations that all people may, together, live in freedom, justice and peace.*

*We pray for all who in bereavement, disability and pain continue to suffer the consequences of fighting and terror.*

*We remember with thanksgiving and sorrow those whose lives, in world wars and conflicts past and present, have been given and taken away.*

Act of Remembrance

*Read by The Royal British Legion:*

*They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old:  
age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.*

*Read by a Cadet: At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
we will remember them."*

*All: We will remember them.*

*Non-uniformed male personnel to remove headwear, please*

Bugler will play *The Last Post*

**11.00: Two Minute Silence**

Bugler will play *Reveille*

The Kohima Epitaph, read by the Princess of Wales Royal Regiment

*When you go home, tell them of us and say,  
for your tomorrow we gave our today.*

The Mayor will lay a wreath on behalf of the citizens of the Borough



*We Shall Keep the Faith* — By: Monica Michael 1918  
read by Cllr Clive Woodbridge, Mayor of Epsom and Ewell

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Oh! You who sleep in<br/>Flanders' Fields<br/>Sleep sweet — to rise anew:<br/>We caught the torch you<br/>threw,<br/>And holding high we kept<br/>The faith with those who died.</p> | <p>2. We cherish, too, the Poppy red<br/>That grows on fields where<br/>valor led.<br/>It seems to signal to the skies<br/>That blood of heroes never<br/>dies.<br/>But lends a lustre to the red<br/>On the flower that blooms<br/>about the dead<br/>In Flanders' fields.</p> |
|--|---|

And now the torch and Poppy red  
Wear in the honour of our dead  
Fear not that ye have died for naught:  
We've learned the lesson that ye taught  
In Flanders' fields.

Reading: *Goodbye Young Soldier* - By: Sgt John Norbury, Afghanistan, January 2010  
read by Representative 135 Geographic Squadron

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1 We said goodbye tonight<br/>To a soldier whom I did not know<br/>He did his duty well<br/>But sadly he had to go</p>                                   | <p>2 He did not travel this far<br/>To leave behind family &amp; friend<br/>He came to do his duty.<br/>He did not know it would be his<br/>end</p> |
| <p>3 His short life was just that<br/>A soldier's ultimate commitment<br/>he gave<br/>This earth deserved him longer<br/>He sent too early to his grave</p> | <p>4 He is one of many heroes<br/>Another poor young soldier<br/>For he is not alone<br/>No years left in which to grow<br/>older</p>               |

What comfort lies for those he left  
Never again to be by their side  
A gallery of happy memories  
And deservedly this Nation's pride

|  |
|--|
| <p>6 So farewell young soldier<br/>Whilst here you did just right<br/>I hope your life was not a waste<br/>Farewell young soldier, sleep tight</p> |
|--|

The Chaplain: 'Reflection'

Readings -

*In Gratitude of Silence* - By: Debbie Holick read by a pupil from  
Blenheim High School

*Silent now the soldiers sleep, their tales long laid to rest.  
I knew them not yet still I weep and place a poppy o'er my breast.  
They were husbands, brothers, fathers, sons; so valiantly they fought.  
On shores stained red, on hands and knees; it was our freedom that they sought.  
Courageously they stood their ground, but freedom carries a cost.  
Thousands of men were wounded, and countless lives were lost.  
So, in gratitude of silence and all those who have served,  
sleep now, you have earned it. Your peace is well deserved.*

*Remembrance Day* - read by a pupil from Rosebery School

*We wear a poppy  
On Remembrance Day,  
And at eleven  
We stand and pray.  
Wreaths are put  
Upon a grave.  
As we remember  
Our soldiers brave.*

*Prayer for Peace* - read by a pupil from Ewell Castle School

*Let us know peace.  
For as long as the moon shall rise,  
For as long as the rivers shall flow,  
For as long as the sun shall shine,  
For as long as the grass shall grow,  
Let us know peace.*

The Lord's Prayer (all can join in):

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name; thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily  
bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass  
against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For  
thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

#### Act of Commitment

The Chaplain says:

*Let us pledge ourselves anew to the service of God and our fellow men, women and children: That we may help, encourage, and comfort others, and support those working for the relief of the needy and "for the peace and welfare of the nations.*

Response:

*God of peace, we pledge ourselves to serve you and all people, in the cause of peace and reconciliation and for the relief of want and suffering. Guide us by your Spirit; give us wisdom; give us courage; give us hope and give us perseverance now and always. Amen*

#### *The National Anthem*

God save our Gracious King!  
Long live our noble King  
God save the King  
Send him victorious  
Happy and glorious  
Long to reign over us  
God Save the King!

The Chaplain concludes the service:

*Ever-living God, as we remember those whom you have gathered from the storm of war into the peace of your presence; may that same peace calm our fears, bring justice to all peoples and establish harmony among the nations. Amen.*

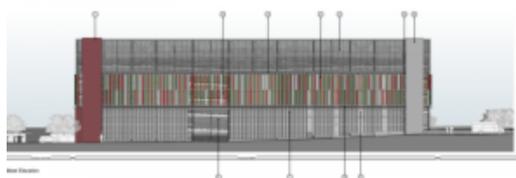
#### End of Service

*The Mayor, Councillor Clive Woodbridge, would like to thank all those who joined us in today's Service and hopes you will keep a special thought for those military personnel, past and present, who gave and continue to give their service for our country.*

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## Epsom Hospital car park appeal

25 November 2022



On Wednesday 2nd November, **Epsom & St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust** appealed **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's** (EEBC) decision to refuse planning permission for a multi-storey car park on the **Epsom General Hospital** site. The NHS Trust had proposed the construction of a car park comprising ground plus five storeys, providing 527 spaces, the redesigning of surface parking to provide additional spaces, and improvement to access from Dorking Road.

EEBC refused the plans in May 2021. It stated that, 'by reasons of its height, mass, scale and poor design', the proposed development would adversely impact the area, and fail to preserve the adjacent Woodcote Conservation Area. The plans had received 125 objections and one letter in support.

At the appeal, The NHS Trust argued that the scale of the proposed car park is necessary. **Thomas Spencer**, on behalf of the NHS Trust, said that the construction of the New Epsom and Ewell Community Hospital, due for completion in March 2023, would require an additional 50 spaces. Mr Spencer said additional parking would also be required to replace land sold to **Guild Living**. Guild Living now lease this land to the NHS, but their plans to build a retirement community will result in the loss of around 270 parking spaces currently used by the hospital.

**Mike Kiely**, on behalf of the Council, said that the proposed height of the car park would dominate the area, and 'dilute the experience' of listed buildings on Dorking Road and the adjacent Woodcote Conservation Area.

**Councillor Liz Frost** (RA Woodcote) said she had received many calls and emails from residents expressing 'grave concerns'. **John Woodley**, a Dorking Road resident, said the car park would be the first thing he saw when he opened his windows. He added: 'It's overbearing; far too big. It just seems excessively large.'

The Trust argued that the car park's height would be consistent with the existing complex of buildings at the hospital site, and that its plans bring the car park as close to existing buildings as possible.

Mr Kiely also argued that building a new multi-storey car park goes against national and local climate policies, and that alternatives, such as offsite staff parking and a shuttle bus, should be considered first. Mr Woodley added: 'For a health trust to be building more space for cars blows my mind. We need to think more sustainably.'

Mr Spencer said that high vehicle use is a reality on a hospital site, since patients often rely on private transport. He added that some staff travel significant distances, and staff also work night shifts, so offsite parking would not be the Trust's preference. He added that the proposals have 'green credentials', including 67 electric charging spaces, with the possibility for adding more in the future.

The Trust also said that there had been 'numerous changes' to the landscaping to improve the building's design, including green walls on the building and a potential mural. Mr Kiely, however, said that the changes would make a 'marginal difference', and that 'there had not been a landscape-led approach; landscaping had been squeezed in'.

Woodcote councillors Liz Frost and **Steven McCormick** also said that the car park could create a safeguarding issue, since it would overlook several sports clubs. However, the Trust said that the sports ground is already overlooked from various vantage points within the hospital, and the same people would be using the car park. It added that there would be 24-hour CCTV, and that any parking above the first floor would be used by staff only.

The Trust said that there would be other benefits of the proposed car park, including reduced congestion, improved access for emergency vehicles, and improved pedestrian and wheelchair access from Dorking Road. Mr Spencer also said that parking pressure on surrounding residential streets, which caused the NHS to be 'plagued with complaints', would be reduced. Mr Kiely, however, said that many of these benefits were not reliant on building a multi-storey car park, and that access could be reconfigured without it.

The appeal was heard by **planning inspector David Spencer**, who said his decision is likely to be made in early December.

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## Surrey road safety played out on the pitch

25 November 2022



On Friday 4 November **Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's** football team played host to **Surrey Police**, with the shared goal of improving road safety during the winter period.

The fixture was planned to highlight the dangers of driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, and general road safety during the winter period. Those in attendance heard a speech from Assistant Chief Fire Officer Jon Simpson, who took the opportunity to underscore the importance of safety on Surrey's roads, and the need to improve behaviours. He was joined at the event by Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey **Ellie Vesey-Thompson**, Chair of Surrey County Council Councillor **Helyn Clack**, Councillor **Denise Turner Stewart**, Mole Valley MP **Sir Paul Beresford**, and Surrey FA's CEO, **Sally Lockyer**.

There were 330 road traffic collision incidents with Surrey Fire and Rescue Service involvement between November 2021 and February 2022 and in 2021 there were 24 Fatalities, 647 Serious casualties and 2490 slight casualties on the county's roads, 15% of which involved young drivers. The services are encouraging drivers not to drive under the influence, as well as warning against the dangers of distractions while behind the wheel. They are also calling on motorists not to speed and to take caution with risks such as adverse weather conditions and country roads.

Filming was carried out during the match, with players from both sides interviewed about their experiences in responding to road traffic collisions and the impact they had on the lives of those involved in these incidents, as well as on themselves.

Surrey Police took the bragging rights at full-time, emerging with a 1-0 victory from a competitive game. However, it is hoped that the main result from the fixture will be the powerful, football-based road safety campaign which will run throughout the World Cup and across the winter. 115 drink or drug impaired drivers were apprehended during the previous three international tournaments in which England's Senior Men's Team have featured (Euro 2016, 2018 World Cup, Euro 2020), and 78% of these were male.

Commenting on the event, **Jon Simpson**, Assistant Chief Fire Officer for Surrey Fire and Rescue Service stated: "*Whilst we are all here to enjoy a game of football between the services, it also gives us a great opportunity to highlight a really important safety message to a key target audience, as we raise awareness of safe driving among young people - predominantly young males.*"

*"We all have a responsibility here to improve our own behaviours on the road and encourage them in others to ensure we all come home safe this winter. During the World Cup, plan your journey home on public transport, do not mix drinking*

*with driving. If you are driving home for the games, then allow extra time for your journey. Speeding could result in three points you really do not need, or the consequences could be even worse – the loss of a life. Adapt your speed appropriately for the road and weather conditions and make sure you always wear a seatbelt.”*

Chief Inspector for Roads Policing at Surrey and Sussex Police, **Michael Hodder**, added: “Road safety is a huge priority for us at Surrey Police and sadly we often work closely with our blue light colleagues at Surrey Fire and Rescue when dealing with collisions on the county’s roads. Although we know the vast majority of road users are conscientious and law-abiding citizens, there is a minority of people who just disregard the law and put not only their lives, but other people’s lives at risk. It really is quite simple – always drive with due care and attention, stick to speed limits and follow the laws to keep all those using the roads in Surrey as safe as possible.”

Ellie Vesey-Thompson, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey commented: “It was great to support the police and fire service working together to share the importance of road safety. The win for Surrey Police was an added bonus of the day!

*“It concerns and saddens me that our young people aged 17-24 disproportionately die in road traffic collisions. With cold and wet weather as well as social events like the World Cup and Christmas parties, it’s a really key time to be sharing the message around driving safely. I urge anyone heading out with friends this winter to ensure you have a safe way of getting home – be that public transport, a taxi or a designated driver. It is also important to always pay attention and to drive to the conditions of the road, particularly when wet or icy.*

*“Ensuring safer Surrey roads is a key priority in Commissioner Lisa Townsend’s Police and Crime Plan, which is why we are pleased to support initiatives such as Safe Drive Stay Alive which helps educate young people on the dangers of the ‘fatal five’; drink or drug driving, speeding, using a phone whilst driving, not wearing a seatbelt and driving whilst distracted.*

*“By working together to spread this message we can reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads.”*

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service have shared their top tips for road safety, for drivers both young and old, here.

Surrey County Council News

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## Local Planning Matters

25 November 2022



Tim Murphy’s opinion piece on Epsom and Ewell’s Local Plan. An up-to-date Local Plan is a necessity. It indicates to those proposing new developments or conversions to properties just what they are allowed or not allowed to do. It is also the yardstick by which locally elected councillors assess whether a particular planning application should be permitted.

The current Epsom and Ewell Local Plan was approved as long ago as 2007. It does not meet the requirements of the most recent planning legislation. In particular, it is failing to deliver the type of housing that is needed locally – affordable and in close proximity to a range of retail and social facilities and public transport. By contrast, the current Plan has been very largely successful in protecting the Borough’s much valued Green Belt from inappropriate development. Two reports commissioned by the Council have confirmed that our Green Belt is performing as it should against the five criteria set out in planning legislation.

A new draft Local Plan is very likely to be discussed by the Council’s Licensing and Planning Policy Committee on 21 st November. The preparation of the Plan has been overshadowed by a quite unrealistic housing target of nearly seven hundred new homes to be provided every year in the Borough.

Where does this target come from? It is set by central government and is based on outdated projections about how fast our number of households will grow in the future. Astonishingly, the number is so high because it incorporates what is known as an ‘affordability’ uplift – because house prices locally are so high, it is assumed these will fall markedly as more houses are built. There is no evidence that this is how our housing market operates.

Our councillors have a choice to make. They can try to meet most, and maybe all, of the centrally-determined housing target. The Borough has only limited built-up areas that would lend themselves to redevelopment for housing so, inevitably, extensive areas of our Green Belt would be sacrificed. Judging by the type of housing that has been approved

over the past few years in the Borough on what are called greenfield sites, it is unlikely that the homes that are provided will meet local needs.

What guarantees will be in place to ensure that such significant increases in population will be matched by more educational and medical facilities and better transport provision? Alternatively, as in neighbouring Elmbridge, our councillors could decide not to meet the housing target but rather prioritise the provision of those types and sizes of housing most needed locally, including affordable homes, on existing built-up areas so that no valuable Green Belt need be lost.

The comprehensive redevelopment of existing commercial estates to incorporate a significant element of new housing should be a component of this way forward. Excellent design standards will be essential. Recent statements by our new Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Communities, Michael Gove, support this approach.

What will our councillors decide?

Tim Murphy

Tim Murphy has worked as a Chartered Town Planner in local government in London, and as an environmental specialist both with WS Atkins and Partners, the Epsom-based engineering consultants, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) where he was responsible for examining the environmental and social impacts of the EBRD's investments in Eastern Europe. Since retiring, Tim chaired the Surrey Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) for several years, and he is currently Chair of CPRE's South East Region and heads up CPRE's Epsom and Ewell local group, campaigning to protect the local Green Belt and other open areas.

If you have views and opinions on "Local Plan Matters" - do write to us [admin@epsomandewelltimes.com](mailto:admin@epsomandewelltimes.com)

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## Battle for Epsom School continues....

25 November 2022



A new planning application has been submitted by land owners the **Aczel brothers** to **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** to redevelop the **Kingswood House School** site. "Demolition of an existing building, relocation and reprovision of MUGA Sports pitch, and construction of new access and parking facilities for a SEND school".

The plan is to replace the 100 years old school for many with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) in West Hill, Epsom, with a new 60 place school for children with "extreme special needs ". Supporters of the existing school suspect the application is a ploy to develop all the land in the owners' possession into a housing estate. The new application relates to the built area and a further application is expected for a housing estate on the current adjacent playing fields. If the owners were granted both permissions but failed to proceed with the new school development the suspicion of The Kingswood school support group is that an application will be pursued in the future for housing throughout the whole land.

Kingswood House School is asking local people to object to the new school application by 21st November 2022. The application can be seen on the Epsom and Ewell BC website under reference 22/01653/FUL.

Kingswood House School is a thriving and vital part of the community that provides a first class education to over 240 local children and which is the only school in Epsom to be listed as an Asset of Community Value.

According to a report commissioned by the land owners "There are (SEND) places available across all year groups in the.... independent ....and.... public sector within Surrey.... and Epsom and Ewell and .....should any pupil from Kingswood House School require a place within (either sector) ... there will be a place available". **Alfredson York Associates Ltd.** The author of this report **Jonathan Powell** goes on to conclude in his report: "Given that Kingswood House School is not a special school and has no particular specialism that is not provided within the same catchment from which Kingswood House currently draws, the proposed development would not significantly alter the choice and availability of places."

**Dr Kugathan Senduran** disagrees and commented: "Education provides us with the fundamental tools we require to live. Switching schools is more likely to demonstrate a wide array of negative behavioural and educational outcomes. If education collapses, everything does. You do not need an atomic bomb or a long-range missile only the collapse of education in a country to ruin it forever. I simply cannot believe the council is even considering their proposal of demolition of an existing building and interrupting children's education. I strenuously object their proposal." He is one of 30 objectors to date who have gone public on the Council portal.

Kingswood House School is holding a public meeting on the plans at the Main Hall, Stamford Green Primary School, KT19 8LU on Thursday 10th November at 7.00pm (doors open 6.40pm).

Although Kingswood House is a private school, it is a charity and any profit is reinvested into the school. By contrast, the

proposed school, which is not backed by the Local Education Authority, would be run by a private operator (with profits going to shareholders) and “would not be aimed at local children”, Kingswood School supporters say.

**Richard Laudy**, a Governor of Kingswood School, adds “There will be problems with access via West Hill Avenue, currently a tranquil street. At least two protected trees would need to be removed. The plans do not include enough space for drop-off, causing queues, overspill parking, and nuisance on local roads. The proposed new school only has 22 parking spaces. This will be insufficient for the specialist nature of the school.”

**Richard Evans**, Chair of Governors at Kingswood House School, confirmed that the School had not been consulted over the plans and that: “...the School vehemently opposes the unacceptable plans and is working with local residents to defeat them. Kingswood House has been serving the local community for over 100 years and provides the unique offering of special needs and mainstream children developing alongside each other. Our school is a listed Asset of Community Value, which would be lost along with our playing fields if the landowners’ plans went ahead. The proposal would also damage the tranquil character of Stamford Green Conservation Area, creating a chaotic new access on West Hill Avenue. We need local people to make their voices heard and object to this speculative and harmful proposal.”

**Cllr. Steve Bridger**, Councillor for Stamford Ward, is aware of the application and has ‘called it in’ so it will be heard in front of the Planning Committee rather than decided by Council officers.

Public comments can be submitted via the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council planning applications website using the reference **22/01653/FUL**, then clicking on ‘Make a Comment’.

See Epsom and Ewell Times earlier reports:

*Community Asset to be stripped?*

Grayling stood up by developers....

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## Tasteless Tweeting Councillor loses Tory whip

25 November 2022



A Horley councillor has lost the Tory whip after posting what his party called “wholly unacceptable and grossly offensive” posts from a now-deleted Twitter account. **Surrey County Councillor Andy Lynch** was investigated by the Conservatives for posts made last month from an account with the handle @TheLandlorduk.

Surrey County Councillor Andy Lynch now sits as an Independent.

On Tuesday (November 1), the chairman of the Surrey County Council Conservative group, **Cllr John O’Reilly**, said the investigation on behalf of the party into the account had concluded. He said: “Having spoken to senior members of the Conservative group, we have unanimously agreed that Mr Lynch’s various comments under ‘The Landlord’ twitter handle are wholly unacceptable and grossly offensive, and, accordingly, the Conservative whip has been withdrawn from him.”

Screenshots taken before the Twitter account was deleted show one post sent in response to a tweet about asylum seekers which said: “When are [politicians] going to recognise the human rights of the indigenous people to have a quiet and peaceful life?” Separately, a county council spokesperson confirmed two complaints have been received about the @TheLandlorduk account, and were being considered in line with the authority’s process for complaints against councillors.

In May this year Cllr Lynch was found to be in breach of the county council’s code of conduct for separate posts sent in February from a different Twitter account, now also deleted, with the handle @cllrAndyLynch. Tweets posted from the @TheLandlorduk account included calling the “police force an absolute disgrace these days”, and responding to a picture of a Muslim woman and child standing at a halal fridge saying: “Throw a packet of bacon in there”.

Posts also called London Mayor Sadiq Khan an “absolute knob” and London a “third world s and the murder capital of Western Europe”. A county council spokesperson said the authority’s code of conduct had no specific guidelines regarding previous conduct of the same nature but the council’s member conduct panel may take it into account when considering a complaint made against a councillor.

llr Lynch had not responded to LDRS requests for comment at the time of publication. In May, the Horley West, Salfords & Sidlow councillor was found to have breached Surrey County Council’s code of conduct for posts from the @cllrAndyLynch account.

He sent a written apology to the county council’s chief executive, its chairman and its leader. At the time, Cllr Lynch was removed from a select committee by the Conservative group, and received a statement of censure from the county council. Minutes from the conduct panel said: “The panel noted that Andy Lynch had fully co-operated with the investigation and had voluntarily admitted and apologised for his conduct.”

At the time of the first account being deleted, from which Cllr Lynch called journalist Yasmin Alibhai-Brown “a racist b\*\*\*”, he was also a Reigate and Banstead borough councillor but did not stand again in May’s local elections. A borough council spokesperson said he was suspended by his council political group as part of its disciplinary process, and remained suspended until the end of his electoral term in May.

The investigation by the borough council’s monitoring officer did not conclude because the complaints were withdrawn. Cllr Lynch was elected to the county council in May 2021.

“The Landlord” account repeated comments about Ms Alibhai-Brown including calling her an “evil, racist loon”.

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## Trading favours for Epsom’s Foodbank

25 November 2022



**Surrey Trading Standards** with Buckingham have donated 1,760 items and over £550 for the **Epsom & Ewell Foodbank**. The items donated include food, household cleaning supplies, personal care items and cash.

The donations are in celebration of Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards reaching the milestone of 150 **Primary Authority Partnerships**, making it the largest regulatory provider of Primary Authority services.

Image: Jonathan Lees of Epsom and Ewell Foodbank

Primary Authority is a means for businesses to receive assured and tailored advice in meeting various regulations through a single point of contact. This is invaluable for start-up businesses to get it right from the outset and enables all businesses to invest with confidence in products, practices, and procedures.

The landmark achievement comes off the back of Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards also winning the “**Service Excellence Award**” at the BEIS Regulatory Awards 2022.

**Michele Manson**, Business Team Manager at Buckinghamshire & Surrey Trading Standards said: “We’re delighted that we and our partners have been able to collate so many donations for Epsom & Ewell foodbanks. The work they do is so vital and it’s great that we have been able to aid them like this. We were determined to celebrate our recent achievements in a meaningful way that supported our local communities, and this has been the perfect way to do that.”

**Jonathan Lees**, Managing Director and Founder of Epsom and Ewell Foodbank said: “It’s great that Bucks & Surrey trading standards have worked with their business partners to make this donation, cooperation like this helps us to continue to provide vital emergency support to people in the local community.”

**James Lowman**, Chief Executive Association of Convenience Stores said: “Entering our partnership with Bucks & Surrey Trading Standards was one of the best decisions we have made, and it has continued to deliver every year. The quality of support from the team, has been consistently professional, pragmatic, and engaged. This has helped us to tackle new and existing compliance challenges with confidence.”

Business partners who have helped contribute donations include:

- Green Motion Car and Van Rental
- Delphic HSE Ltd.
- Natural Instinct Limited
- Coca Cola Europacific Partners
- Global Manuka UK
- E Scooter Professional LTD
- Solution EU Limited
- Bahlsen LLP
- Sports Supplement Ltd
- Creative Nature

For more information on Primary Authority Partnerships, please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/primary-authority-overview>

For more information on Epsom & Ewell foodbank please visit: <https://epsomewell.foodbank.org.uk/>

Surrey County Council News