

## Council targeting the homeless



In a vote dominated by abstentionism, a service-specific savings target of £243k to offset this year’s potential overspending for homelessness, was approved by **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** last Tuesday.

The measure was discussed at the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee of 26th July, chaired by **Cllr. Neil Dallen** (RA Town Ward), as part of the strategic financial planning for 2023/24 to balance the books, following the unprecedented impact that the pandemic has had on different Council service areas.

“We have to take an educated guess as to how many people/families will be homeless in Epsom and Ewell next year,” said Dallen. “If we underestimate the issue, the budget is not enough; if we overestimate it, we underspend the budget, but that means we will have unnecessarily reduced other budgets and therefore services for our residents.”

The decision was only achieved with the vote of the Chair. Two Councillors voted against, two voted in favour and five abstained, after a string of concerns over the target were raised. [See today’s editorial.]

“I don’t believe our homelessness problem will improve,” said the substitute for Cllr. Monica Coleman (RA West Ewell Ward), **Cllr. Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley Ward), who abstained from the vote as he disagreed with the cut. “The after effects of the pandemic and the unfolding cost of living crisis” can’t be ignored.

According to a report presented to the Committee, the proposed target considers a neutral scenario ahead, but current projections might be short-sighted at a time when rising inflation and the consequences of other major international events might hold significant sway on those residents at risk of becoming homeless and requiring immediate assistance.

“I think the numbers will continue to rise for a long time,” said **Cllr. Kate Chinn** (Labour Court Ward), who voted against the proposal. “It will put officers under pressure.”

Other councillors saw the target too important to be rejected. The savings would cover the further £243k funding that would be required in the neutral scenario to support an average of 82 families in temporary accommodation throughout 2022/23. Should the pessimistic situation materialise, officers would need to sort out compensating underspends or additional income, or ‘ringfence’ an additional £250k as a contingency, funded from the Council’s General Use Reserve that now holds a balance of £2.672m.

“I don’t have to vote on the basis targets will be kept under review,” said **Cllr. Eber Kington** (RA Ewell Court). “We have a team here, who year on year have found new ways to look after our residents, find properties and do different things.”

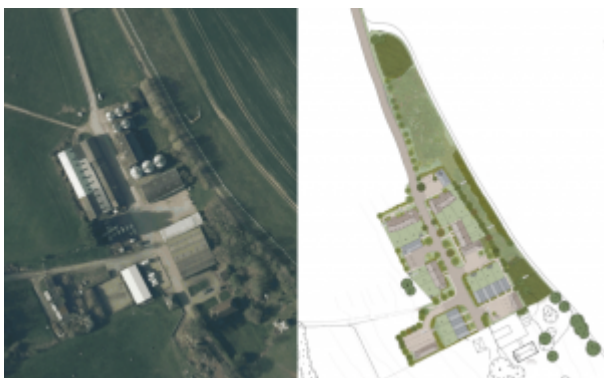
Every five years, the Council is required to conduct a review to assess the nature and extent of homelessness in the borough, after which a strategy is developed to address the ongoing issues and prevent future episodes of homelessness and rough sleeping. A consultation will be open until 23 August 2022 to share views and suggestions with officers who are now drafting an **Action Plan**.

In documents seen by Epsom and Ewell Times, councillors’ doubts might prove well-founded, as official data for the last three quarters seem to depict a gloomy picture. In 2022, already 314 approaches for advice and assistance regarding homelessness have been conducted by the borough’s **Housing Options Service**. The total number of last year’s actions was 316.

In a draft from the Action Plan, the Council shared six objectives to achieve by 2027. Among them, officers aim at early identifying homelessness, so as to intervene on and prevent it. Rough sleeping must be reduced, through the development of a Delivery Plan, the exploration of a ‘Housing First’ model and the collaboration with external partners to maintain the provision of effective services. The health and wellbeing of homeless people ought to be corrected, with a **Make Every Contact Matter** ethos and a close relationship with local health services. Accommodation options are also to be considered. Their number must be increased via social rented housing, private rented accommodation or supported and in-borough temporary lodging.

“Homelessness is one of the Council’s greatest risks; we don’t want anyone to be homeless.” It is “a lose:lose scenario” for both the people becoming homeless and the Council, said **Dallen**. But “we don’t have unlimited money.”

## Did the Inspector get to the Bottom of this?



**Langley Bottom Farm** in Epsom is to become a small housing estate following the decision of Planning Inspector **D Hartley** dated 14th July 2022. Overturning a refusal of the **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** and against overwhelming objections of the public in the 168 recorded submissions the Inspector allowed the appeal of **Fairfax Properties**, despite the location being in **Green Belt land**.

The Inspector made the following controversial observations:

“One of the purposes of Green Belt is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The site includes a number of existing buildings and areas of hardstanding. The latter has the continued potential to be used for the parking of vehicles. Overall, and taking into account the existing use, characteristics and extent of development on the site, I am satisfied that subject to the imposition of planning conditions the proposal would not lead to countryside encroachment and hence there would be no conflict with this Green Belt purpose.”

Concerning **local facilities** for the future occupants he stated “Langley Vale is within reasonable walking and cycling distance of the appeal site. It contains a limited number of facilities and amenities such as the ‘Park and Shop’ petrol filling station convenience store, ‘The Shop on the Corner’, garage, village hall, pre-school and primary school. I acknowledge the Council’s comment that ‘The Shop on the Corner’ appears to have ceased trading. There is of course some possibility that the property could be used again as a shop but, in any event, ‘The Park and Shop’ does provide some food and drink provision albeit that I acknowledge that it would likely only be used on the basis of day to day ‘topping up’.”

On **public transport, walking and cycling** he observed with optimism: “The site is located in close proximity to bus stops within Langley Vale and includes bus service E5 every two hours to Epsom (Monday to Saturday) and school service 618 (Monday to Friday). Furthermore, three mainline railway stations are located nearby (Epsom, Epsom Downs and Tattenham Corner) providing commuting services to London and access to destinations further afield. There is also bus service 408 from Epsom to Cobham and stopping at Leatherhead and which runs Monday to Friday calling at Langley Vale once a day. I acknowledge that services are not very frequent but nevertheless I find that some of the proposed residents would use them on occasion. The evidence is that the site is served well by a number of public footpath and cycle routes where some limited opportunities would be available, primarily in the day time and when there is no inclement weather. These could be used to visit services and amenities both locally and further afield.”

The Inspector did observe that **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** had allowed arguably unauthorised uses of the land to continue unchallenged for so many years that the “developed uses” became lawful. The claims of threats to the Green Belt were thereby undermined.

40% of the houses are to be “affordable”. Time will tell how affordable they will be.

## Safer nights ahead in Epsom with funding boost



**Epsom & Ewell Borough Council** will receive £271,712 in government funding for a project to improve safety for Epsom town centre’s night-time economy.

The Home Office’s Safer Streets funding was secured in partnership with Surrey Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Business Improvement District, Go Epsom.

These improvements are aimed specifically at supporting the safety and vitality of the night-time economy, including reducing violence against women and girls.

The funding will help the following items:

- Upgrade of CCTV in Epsom town centre
- Support businesses operating in the evening with training and accreditation
- Support the existing Street Pastors with equipment and training
- Develop a further night-time presence to build on the work of the Street Pastors
- Provide anti drink spiking equipment to licensed premises and customers
- Deliver a communications package promoting the safety of patrons in the town centre and promote personal safety

In response to ongoing issues in and around Epsom town centre, Surrey Police worked closely with Epsom & Ewell Borough Council to draw up an application for Safer Streets funding.

A survey was sent out into the community and the results were closely consulted when drafting the application. Among the concerns raised were drug use, threatening behaviour, extreme drunkenness, and violence within Epsom town centre, closely linked to the night-time economy.

The survey highlighted a desire for better signposting to help and support, and a need for increased confidence in the police response to issues within the town centre.

The application was drafted by the police and council, then approved and submitted by Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend. Other areas in Surrey to benefit from successful funding bids are Sunbury Cross and the Surrey Towers development in Addlestone.

The money will be used, among other measures, to modernise CCTV use, deliver training packages for licensed premises, and to provide free anti-drink spiking and spiking detection devices within Epsom town centre.

**Councillor John Beckett**, Chair of the Environment and Safe Communities Committee, said, “It’s great to hear Epsom has received the Safer Streets funding, we are particularly proud of the partnership working that took place to bring this resource together for the benefit of local residents and businesses.

“Supporting the night-time economy while ensuring the safety of residents, particularly female ones, is an important priority and we will continue to work with everyone involved to ensure this money is spent effectively. Epsom town centre is a vibrant evening economy and we are delighted to enhance safety and boost confidence for every business and visitor.”

**Inspector Jon Vale, Borough Commander**, said, “This is fantastic news. Surrey Police and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council have worked tirelessly as a partnership in the submission of this bid.

“The community have told us their concerns, and we have listened. The funding made available will allow the partnership to implement numerous measures that would not otherwise been a possibility.

“This will help to make Epsom town centre an even safer place for users of the night-time economy, in particular women and girls. Tackling violence against women and girls is a specific priority for the Epsom & Ewell Community Safety Partnership and this work demonstrates our shared commitment in this respect.”

**Rod Brown**, Chair of the Epsom and Ewell Community Safety Partnership, said, “We know from speaking with residents that the safety of their environment is of great importance. I am delighted that this award will allow us to deliver lasting benefits to the late-night economy in Epsom to allow business to invest with confidence and secure safety improvements for the town.”

**Adam Kick** the Chairman of Epsom and Ewell’s **Pubwatch** enthuses: “This is amazing news for the borough and has most certainly been achieved as a result of tireless work by all parties involved in the proposal. This funding will most certainly help towards supporting the aim of providing a vibrant nightlife where customer safety is paramount.”

**Karen Pengelly**, BID Manager at Go Epsom, said, “Since Epsom’s businesses reopened after Covid lockdowns, the BID has been doing lots of groundwork on safety and security, engaging with our local licensed premises and retailers and working with security experts to reduce offending.

“This fresh investment in a modern and much improved CCTV system provides Epsom with the tools that are needed to reduce theft and anti-social behaviour. It’s wonderful news.”

## Gym and yoga studio to residential



**Epsom Civic Society** brings to our attention:



39 Manor Green Road Epsom KT19 8RN

[Click here to see map for location of 39 Manor Green Road Epsom KT19 8RN.](#)

22/00695/FUL Change of use of gym/yoga studio to residential to create a 1 bedroom dwelling with associated garden and parking.

Following dismissal of a second Appeal for a residential development, the applicant has made an application to re-purpose a not long built existing building used as a gym/yoga studio in the garden of the plot as a new small dwelling, despite all previous residential applications having been refused and two Appeals dismissed.

Assessing this application as if it were the first at this site, the Society has had to re-iterate.....

To see more go to Epsom Civic Society on this application

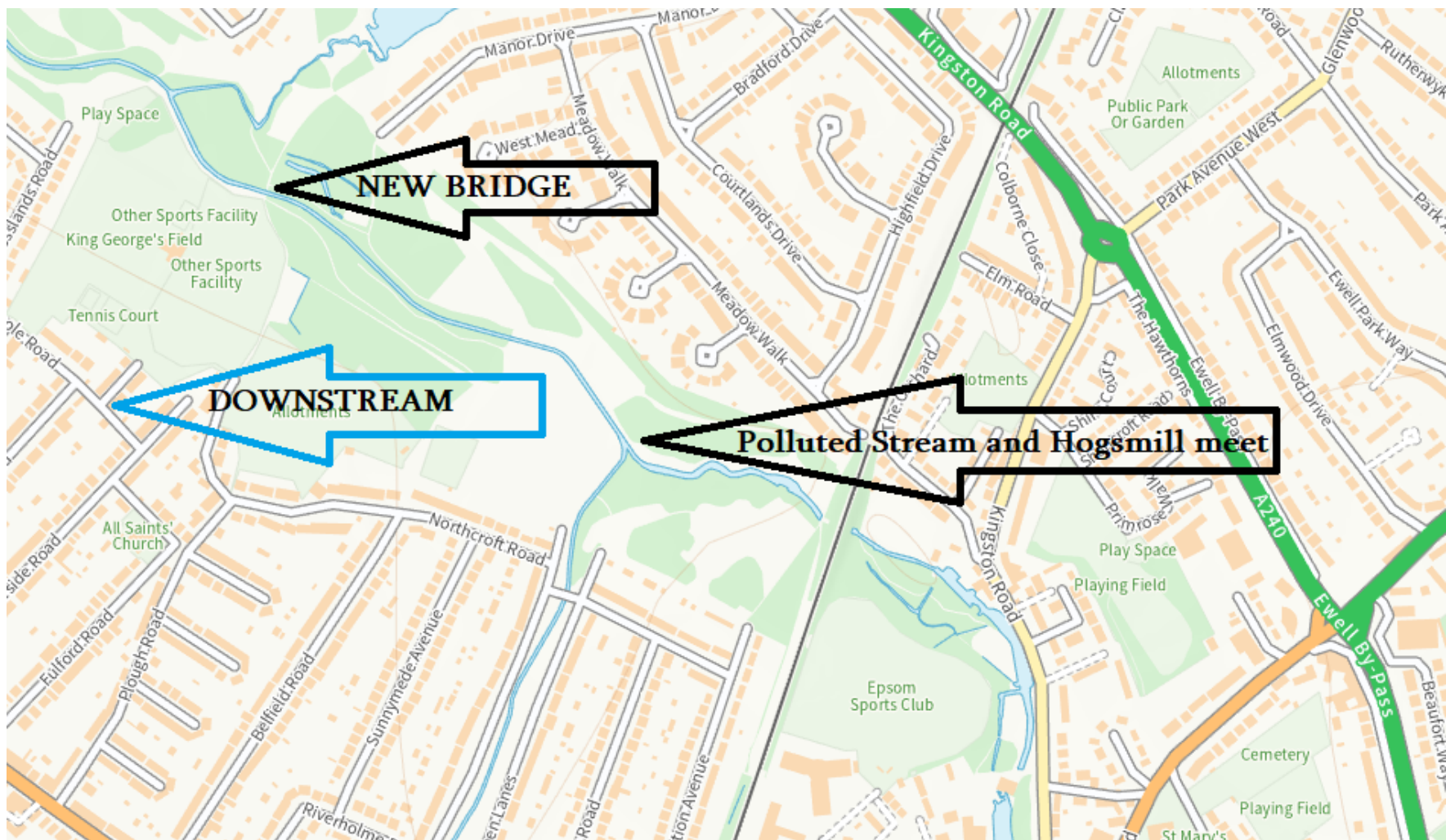
## “Garden of Eden” coming to West Ewell as Wetlands Plan is approved. Will this stop pollution?



A plan to mitigate some of the environmental impacts of sewage on the **Hogsmill River, in West Ewell**, was finally approved by **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** Thursday 21st July.

The scheme submitted by local charity **South East Rivers Trust** in May 2021, was granted by councillors after a 30-minute meeting of the **Planning Committee**, chaired by Cllr. **Humphrey Reynolds** (RA Ewell Ward). Cllr. **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote Ward) abstained from the vote.

The project will divert the **Green Lanes Stream** approximately 50m upstream from its current confluence with the Hogsmill River . The Stream will flow along a new winding channel through **Chamber Mead meadow** within the **Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve**, passing through a constructed sediment trap and wetlands, before entering back into the Hogsmill River approximately 200 metres further downstream from its original confluence. Up to 1,000 m2 of wetlands habitat will be created and the flow of the new channel will attenuate the sewage brought to the watercourse from road runoff, misconnections, and overflows from Epsom Storm Tanks.



Map view of area where wetland will be developed

“I hope it will become like the Garden of Eden,” said Cllr. **David Gulland** (Liberal Democrat College Ward) during the meeting.

According to the application, sediment and contaminants would be trapped, and a level of treatment would be provided to the polluted water in three different forms. A biological treatment would naturally occur with the uptake of aquatic plants and metabolism; a chemical treatment would act on pollutants with the employment of dissolved nutrients, such as nitrate and phosphate; and a final treatment would be carried out physically, harnessing the decrease of flow velocities caused by the sediment trap, to settle sediments and pollutants via gravity.





View toward Chamber Mead open space from the end of Green Lane

In addition to the creation of the new channel, a 12-metre bridge was proposed to let pedestrians, including wheelchair users and cyclists, reach the stepping stones from the south of Chamber Mead.

"It's a very welcome improvement to reducing and mitigating the impact of pollutants entering the chalk stream river and the discharges of sewage," said **Cllr. Kate Chinn** (Labour Court Ward).

Pollution has long been a scourge for a river that is internationally recognised as one of the only 200 chalk streams on Earth, and its chemical concentrations even led the **Environment Agency** to issue a 'fail' status in 2017. Warning signs have been put up advising people not to attend the area.

After the application was submitted, 527 letters of notification were sent to neighbouring properties to advertise the plan. As of July 2022, more than 35 letters of support have been received. Nevertheless, one of the recipients manifested their objection, as pollution "should be addressed at source."

Despite the worthy purposes of the plan and the actual benefits this could achieve, failures at Epsom and Manor Drive Storm Tanks, Hogsmill A Wastewater and Cso At St. James's Road sewer storms – all managed by the private utility company **Thames Water** – appear to be the real problem.

In 2021, a total of 159 hours of untreated sewage contaminated the river across 47 incidents, according to data published by The Rivers Trust.

"We support the scheme to reduce the impact of some of the pollution, however it will only do this on a fraction of the pollution coming into the channel," said **Mark Todd**, local entrepreneur and member of Epsom and Ewell Labour Party, whose petition asking the company to stop the pollution has recently topped a thousand signatures. "Thames Water must, must, must stop overflowing so much sewage deliberately into the streams for wildlife to survive and for the streams to be safe for kids."

In a letter sent to the company and reviewed by Epsom and Ewell Times, the signatories of the petition demand that Thames Water upgrade their "inadequate infrastructure," as "local residents and community groups are very concerned about what is going on and are very disappointed."

Along with coliforms, raw sewage discharge from the sewage network is seen as one of the two "major issues to tackle," according to a joint opinion piece from Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England, Jonson Cox, Ofwat chair, and Emma Howard Boyd, Environment Agency chair, released in June 2022. "The principal public health responsibility for ensuring human faeces and viable human faecal bacteria do not get into waterways people might use recreationally, rest squarely with the water companies and their directors."

A spokesperson from Thames Water, although acknowledging the risks of pollution, seemed to disagree. "We certainly can't do it on our own," they said.

## Surrey's child passports to local culture beat 7 hours queueing for France....



Surrey County Council is bringing back the exciting free summer passport scheme for families with children aged 4 to 11, this time with a focus on culture. The Surrey Culture Explorer Passport holds captivating adventures that encourages families and children to learn about Surrey's rich heritage, arts and culture, with a chance to win exciting prizes worth up to £100.

Designed to offer a fun way for children to discover Surrey's unique culture and arts scene, the activity runs from July until October, giving families ideas and inspiration for days out during the summer holidays.

The Surrey Culture Explorer Passport can be collected for free from one of Surrey's 52 libraries (including Bourne Hall in Ewell and Epsom Square libraries) and will help children to keep track of their adventures as they collect stickers for completing up to 10 fun "local history" challenges.

Explorers who finish 10 challenges can enter a prize draw and win one of the following sponsored prizes:

- A family ticket for 4 people to visit Brooklands Museum, including the Concorde Experience.
- A ticket for up to 5 children and one adult for a Top Golf Experience in Addlestone.
- A £100 voucher to spend at The Adventure Zone.
- A £100 voucher to spend at Godstone Farm.
- A family ticket to the Nova Cinema in Woking.
- 5 tickets for 1 winner for Guildford Airhop.



- A £15 voucher to spend at Appletree Studio.
- A painting kit containing 3 Ceramic Bisque Pieces, including acrylic paints and a brush from Calli's Corner.
- A family ticket up to a maximum of 6 people to Thorpe Park.
- A family ticket for four people for a treetop adventure at Go Ape Chessington.
- A family ticket to the British Wildlife Centre for 2 adults and up to 4 children.
- A family ticket for 4 people to Bockett's Farm.

The activities range from hosting a 'Big Lunch' or tea party with friends, families or neighbours, crafting, learning about Surrey's history, science and making art.

The County is doing this because they want children to discover what culture means to them, whether it's creating a piece of art, learning about history, dancing, writing their own stories and much more. On top of that, they want to raise awareness about all that the County's amazing libraries offer and encourage children to read more. Surrey libraries present fantastic resources and offer an incredible events calendar. Find out what events are happening in your nearest library. Find out about all the services available from libraries.

Mark Nuti, Cabinet Member for Communities at Surrey County Council, said:

*"Before you run out of ideas during the holidays check out the brilliant new Surrey Libraries initiative for the summer holidays – the Cultural Explorer Passport has got something for everyone. The libraries team have really gone to town this year after last year's Surrey Nature Explorer Passport success, this year it's bigger and better than ever. Our libraries are an amazing source of entertainment, information, culture all with an added big dollop of fun!"*

*"I challenge all young explorers to get involved and I assure you, you will open up a new world that you can visit time and time again and a world that will always pleasantly surprise you."*

*"Enjoy your holidays and I'll look forward to drawing the prizes later in the year – I hope to see you at a library near you soon!"*

See the website for more information on the activities, prizes and how to join in.

## Mind the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan!



**Epsom & Ewell Borough Council** will be opening a public consultation on Monday 25 July to give residents, workers, business owners and visitors the chance to help shape the future of Epsom town centre. Epsom and Ewell Times reported on the cost of this planning endeavour [HERE](#) on 13th June 2022.

The consultation is looking to find out:

- How respondents feel about the town centre today
- How respondents would like the town centre to change in the future
- What respondents think should happen in the key opportunity areas that have been identified.

The public's opinions will inform a new **Epsom Town Centre Masterplan**, which will be a key part of the evidence base for Epsom & Ewell's borough-wide Local Plan, guiding decisions about planning, development and investment in the future.

Councillor **Steven McCormick**, Chair of the Licensing & Planning Policy Committee, said, "We want to hear as many local voices and opinions as possible about our Town Centre. To do this we need a range of people who both visit and use Epsom to go online and take part. There will be an exhibition within the **Ashley Centre** (opposite Costa Coffee) from the 8th August, with an opportunity to meet the project team on the 11th and 13th of August"

Respondents will be able to give their views via an online questionnaire at <https://epsom-ewell.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-policy/consultations-and-examination> which has been made possible with the support of the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) "Prop Tech" 2 engagement fund.

## A Greener Future in Partial Sight As Verges To Be Left Unmown



Roadside verges in Surrey will be cut less frequently to foster biodiversity, according to Highway Authority, Surrey County Council. In a move to ease the pressure on native nature from human activity, around 700 species of wildflower will be left unmown, and plants and wildlife in the area restored. "It's time to redefine our ideas about what well-managed public spaces look like," said **Andrew Jamieson**, Projects Director at **Surrey Wildlife Trust**. "It's an essential part of our joint plan to restore and support Surrey's plants and wildlife and take a first step towards a greener future for the neighbourhood."

Feature photo: *credit Jon Hawkins – Surrey Hills Photography*

The decision builds on the **Climate Change Delivery Plan** published in 2020 to respond to Surrey County Council's climate emergency declaration and set a target for Surrey to be net zero by the half of the century. Supporting and increasing biodiversity will contribute to become a carbon free county by 2050, said **Matt Furniss**, Conservative Cabinet Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Economy, in the press release. "Vegetation has fantastic benefits for both Surrey's wildflowers and wildlife."

According to research, over 97 per cent of UK wildflower meadows, equal to 3 million hectares (7.5 million acres), have been lost since the 1930s and replaced with monocultures with a lower ability to store carbon. Emissions relating to the consumption of goods and services by Surrey residents and businesses are estimated to be more than twice greater than those measured as part of the net zero targets.

According to the Climate Change Delivery Plan, land can naturally reduce the county's carbon emissions by 3%. Not surprisingly, the strategy includes the **Growing Back Greener programme**, through the facilitation of planting, the reduction of flooding and the support to native biodiversity, as one of the main goals to achieve. Surrey itself aims at growing 1.2 million trees over the next decade.

Although nature and its safeguard are known to lead to multiple accomplishments, mixed concerns among residents were stirred after the measure was announced. "Many people fear a tick population explosion because of 'wild' grassland: where you have wild mammals, you have ticks," said **Kim Spickett** of **Epsom and Ewell** based **Surrey Wildflowering Project**, a community-led initiative to promote and celebrate the borough's diverse environments. "But ticks frequent parks and gardens too, not just countryside. Our nature reserves have safe paths that you can use to walk safely with dogs and children."





Roadside verges, that tend to thrive on the sides of highways, might also cause safety issues if left untended as sightlines might be affected. “A sightline for traffic can be cut and the rest left to bloom,” said Spickett. “That said, wiping out or “scalping” makes no sense. Mowing blades can have the height adjusted to “top” the grass and leave shorter flowers intact.” Echoing Spickett, SCC acknowledged the risk to sightlines and promised to ensure safety while pushing to keep the verges intact. “Highway safety remains paramount, and sightlines will be kept clear,” said Furniss. “Any issues with vegetation impairing visibility can be reported via our website.”

Advice on ticks and tick bites can be found on the NHS website.

## New plan to transform dementia care in Surrey



A five-point plan sets out to improve the lives of Surrey residents with dementia and their families.

A joint health and social care dementia strategy of Surrey County Council and Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership, outlines an ambition for everyone with dementia and their carers to live in dementia-friendly communities and be able to live well at home for as long as possible.

Research suggests that approximately 17,700 people in Surrey are currently living with dementia. Between 2020 and 2030 it’s projected that this figure will rise by more than a quarter to 22,600.

The five-year plan, which includes direct input from people living with dementia and their carers, sets out how the county council and the wider Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership, that includes the **Surrey Downs Health and Care Partnership** that covers **Epsom and Ewell**, will work with other organisations to support people with dementia, their families and carers so that those diagnosed can maintain their independence and enjoy a good quality of life.

The new joint health and social care dementia strategy will focus on:

- Preventing well – raising awareness of dementia and preventative actions people can take
- Diagnosing well – making sure people have equal access to dementia care by addressing inequalities and gaps
- Living well – making sure everyone has the opportunity to live life to the full following diagnosis
- Supporting well – engaging with communities and faith groups to ensure we reach out to people with dementia and their carers

The work will create dementia-friendly communities and help to deliver the county council’s ambition and tackle inequality to ensure no-one is left behind in Surrey.

The strategy has been created in partnership and collaboration with people with dementia and their carers and other organisations, including Alzheimer’s Society, Dementia UK, Healthwatch Surrey and district and borough councils.

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council’s Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, said:

“Dementia is already an important health issue and the number of people living with dementia in Surrey is expected to increase significantly in the future. Our new dementia strategy is crucial in setting out how we will build on the good work we already do, and continue to improve outcomes for residents across Surrey.

“The new strategy has a much wider focus, encouraging organisations and services to become more dementia-friendly and therefore making a real difference to dementia care in Surrey.”

Dr Sophie Norris, GP and Dementia Clinical Lead for Guilford and Waverley, said:

“The strategy sets out the collective ambitions we want to achieve across Surrey to improve the dementia care pathway. In developing this strategy, we have worked with organisations that support people with dementia, their staff, the local voluntary sector and other partners. The strategy provides the chance to reaffirm Surrey’s commitment and determination to help people with dementia, and their unpaid carers to continue caring if they are willing and able, and to support their health and wellbeing by achieving outcomes they have identified matter most to them. The jointly held vision is for all people with dementia and their carers to live in dementia friendly communities. They will know where to go to seek information, advice and help. They will have access to the care and support that enables them to live well at home for as long as possible and to die with dignity in their place of choice.”

An easy read version of the joint health and social care dementia strategy is also available.



To find out more about support for dementia in Surrey visit the Surrey County Council website.

## Local £1200 per job matching service to continue, unquestioned by Council...



The Director of **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's** Environment, Housing and Regeneration, requested the July 12th's meeting of the **Community and Wellbeing Committee** to approve a funding bid already submitted to keep the **Epsom and Ewell Hub** running for a second year. The Hub is paid for by the **Department of Work and Pensions** and was set up in August 2021 to help young people in the Borough find work. The DWP had invited applications for a second year's funding for the Hub, which if approved, will start in August 2022 for a period of 12 months. The DWP had also requested that year 2 funding should develop the role of volunteers in helping young people get back to work or training. It should also increase engagement with businesses, including Surrey Chambers and the Federation of Small Businesses. The Council officers had already submitted the bid for the 2nd year ahead of the Committee's approval and stated that the application could be withdrawn if not approved. This situation may have arisen following the cancellation of the Committee's scheduled meeting of 9th June.

[Photo above: Adviser Ana helps a young job seeker in the Hub.]



The **DWP** bid forming this proposal is intended to cover all staffing costs, including any associated overheads and managerial costs. The extent of financial support being sought from the DWP is **£97,407.72**

The main Council contribution is in the provision of accommodation for the Hub to operate from. It is intended that the Hub will continue to operate from the unit it currently occupies free of charge in the **Ashley Centre**. Should this no longer be available spare accommodation in other Council owned buildings, such as Bourne hall will be considered.

**The Hub** should be fully funded by the DWP bid as there are no Council budgets currently allocated to the scheme.

In the first 10 months of operation, the Hub exceeded its central government target of 150 by engaging with "over 160 young people". Of which "dozens" of them got jobs, Kick Start placements and apprenticeships (**61 in total** – see below for the breakdown). The Hub relocated in October from Bourne Hall to the Ashley Centre, raising its profile even more with young people and their families as well as local businesses. The hub supports young people who are not in work or training, helping them to find employment or approved training courses. The Hub also provides support to build confidence, develop good mental health as well as introduce employers to potential candidates. The role of the Youth Hub is not to replicate existing DWP services but to leverage a range of additional partner and industry resources to provide employment information and advice, support employer connections, work placements and mentors to support young people find pathways into work. The Hub has achieved getting 36 young people into work, 14 into Kick Start placements, 4 Apprenticeships, 7 work placements (61 in total) as well as 175 "social inclusion steps."

The **Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership** (SLLP) run the Hub. SLLP is a company founded by **Kevin Delf** in 2001 and was registered as a charity in 2011. Kevin Delf is the chief executive officer of the charity. He told Epsom and Ewell Times: "We support around 800 people every year through projects such as skills hubs, digital and literacy support and Bike Project Surrey. The **Epsom & Ewell Skills Hub** builds on previous work undertaken by SLLP in Epsom. There are three SLLP employees (2.8 full-time equivalents) devoted to the Hub. But, the Hub is also a place where other partners are also on hand to provide support to those needing employment and training, such as **NESCOT** and **Jobcentre Plus** and many others. In addition, we organise events on site which bring together local employers and those seeking employment, and we run events to explain and promote apprenticeships for example. **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council** has been extremely supportive in securing the funding to support the project and securing accommodation which is highly visible in the heart of the busy **Ashley Centre** for the foreseeable future."

He added: "In addition to recording successful job placements we record examples of "social inclusion steps". These are steps towards employment, for example attending a mentoring programme to develop confidence and resilience. An individual might complete a number of such steps (e.g. gaining basic digital skills as well as enabling participants to access local support services more easily)."

Given the stated figure of engaging with "over 160" individuals then "social inclusion steps" probably means as indicated by Mr Delf that more than one step for the same individual is counted. Kevin Delf confirmed the year 1 funding was £90,000. Thus the cost was £75,000 for the first 10 months. Then the 61 actual employment opportunities matched with clients of The Hub came at an approximate cost of £1200 each or about 1.5 matches per week. The cost per "engagement" with youth averages about **£425** or about 4 per week.

The committee unanimously agreed to approve the application that had been made to the DWP for funding for a second year.

The single Conservative Councillor on the Borough Council (**Bernie Muir**) is not a member of the Community and Wellbeing Committee. All other groups and parties were represented (Residents Association, Labour and Liberal Democrat). The Committee is chaired by W. Ewell RA Councillor **Alex Coley**. No Council taxpayer money is spent on **The Hub** but it is still surprising that not a single Councillor asked a question about the value for money for the wider public of this service.

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## Disability Facilities Grants

By our correspondent Tim Rogers

At the same meeting, Councillor **Monica Coleman** (W. Ewell RA) urged financial caution when paying out exceptionally large Disabled Facilities Grants. These grants pay for improvements to disabled people's homes, for example to widen doors, install ramps or improve access to rooms and facilities by installing stairlifts or a downstairs bathroom. The committee considered whether to increase the limit on Council top-ups to grant payments from **£15,000 to £30,000**, or even more in exceptional and complex circumstances. The Director explained that this would have a hugely positive impact on the level of assistance provided by the Council to disabled residents, in particular children. The committee unanimously approved the top-up increase as long as any exceptional payments did not cause the Council to spend more than its overall central government grant allocation.