

## THE Times backs THIS Times



**Epsom and Ewell Times'** purpose gets a leading endorsement. Today's **Times newspaper** (established 1785) has published a **leading article** headed "The demise of regional news reporting is bad for democracy and bad for communities". The article states: "**Local news** is the lifeblood of local democracy and indeed of democracy itself. If people cannot have confidence that those in local councils, courts and public services whose actions impinge directly on their everyday life are being scrutinised and properly held to account, why should they trust those remote figures who wield power in the centre? A society without rigorous local news is a society vulnerable to corruption, disenchantment, isolation and conspiracy theories...."

## New Epsom Pantry offers more than food to the struggling....



A Pantry has been officially opened by the Mayor Clive Woodbridge last month. It has been launched in Epsom as another way of helping people struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, to try to reduce dependency on foodbanks.

The shop in South Street stocks a wide range of food, including fresh fruit and vegetables, frozen and chilled produce as well as tinned and packaged items.

Members pay £5 a visit and can choose items that value around £30, so they can save money on their grocery shopping bills.

Epsom Pantry has been set up with support from Epsom and Ewell Borough Council. The Pantry is part of the Good Company charity, which runs numerous projects in Surrey including five foodbanks and the East Surrey Poverty Truth Commission.



Jonathan Lees – director The Good Company

Jonathan Lees, Managing Director of Good Company said: "This year Epsom and Ewell Foodbank is marking 10 years of existence. That is not acceptable. We cannot accept dependency on foodbanks, which are only meant to be a temporary measure."

As well as helping with the cost-of-living crisis, Epsom Pantry will offer other community services such as cooking on a budget, debt management and housing and job advice.

Epsom Pantry Manager Bex Loomes said: "Since the Pantry opened its doors, it has been filled with a sense of community and togetherness. The cost-of-living crisis means more and more households are struggling to make ends meet. We know that the Pantry offers vital financial savings, and we hope that access to healthier foods and the development of skills and confidence through volunteering will allow us to tackle isolation in our community."



If you'd like to know more about Epsom Pantry please visit [www.goodcompany.org.uk](http://www.goodcompany.org.uk)

[CLICK HERE FOR LATEST REQUESTS FROM THE FOODBANK](#)

## Ambitious new plan sets out the future for travelling around Surrey.



**Surrey's ten-year Transport plan which includes measures for reducing the 41% of carbon emissions currently generated by transport, was approved by Surrey County Councillors at their Full Council meeting on 12 July 2022.**

The plan prioritises measures to support people to get around Surrey easily and sustainably including increasing the number of walking and cycling routes, providing more charging points and parking for electric vehicles, charging for transport use and introducing car clubs, as well as improving internet connections for home-working and redesigning neighbourhoods to enable easier access to local services, lessening the need to travel by car.

**Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Economy said,** *"Our new transport plan sets out our roadmap for a transport network in Surrey that meets the needs of the future. Crucially this includes proposals to help tackle the climate emergency and become a carbon free county by 2050.*

*"With such a high proportion of harmful emissions coming from transport and their significant impact on our environment, we all need to act. Residents can play their part by relying less on their cars for some journeys.*

*"We know this will be a challenge and we do not expect to eliminate car use. We have recently invested over £39m in buses, £6m to improve cycle routes and footpaths and a further £6m to improve road safety around schools to help make other methods of travel more appealing and accessible for certain journeys, whilst also improving the health and wellbeing of our residents."*

All local authorities are required to produce and consult on, a local transport plan to set out how it will maintain and improve the local transport system.

The full plan will be available at [www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport) from Wednesday 13 July.

## Surrey County raining over local democracy?



The Conservative-run **Surrey County Council** plans to axe "area committees". Will this reduce local people's voice in Council decisions? "Surrey to reign over us? Happy and glorious?"

**"Local and Joint Committees"** have been the mainstay of local democracy in Surrey over the last 20 years, providing a forum for county councillors to join with their counterparts in **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** and other local councils in the County, to discuss issues and make decisions on local county council spending. Members of the public participated in the meetings by bringing petitions and asking questions about council services.

These committees have gradually reduced in the frequency of meetings and their remit. Decision-making on highway functions was removed at the Surrey County Council Cabinet meeting in February this year. Various ideas have been floated about replacing them with a new model of partnership working but as yet, no firm proposals or timeline have been set.

The abolition of Local and Joint Committees is now set for the 31 October 2022 latest.

Epsom and Ewell *and* Surrey County Councillor **Eber Kingston** (Residents Association) said to the Epsom and Ewell Times: "It was a decision taken without consultation with most County Councillors and made without any detailed plans in place to replicate many of the functions of Local Committees. Getting "how will this work" responses has been difficult and met with evasion and delay. However, we now know that petitioners will have their requests for action determined by a Cabinet Member (not from Epsom and Ewell), and residents can only ask in-person questions related to their local community if they travel to Surrey County Council's **Woodhatch HQ in Reigate**, accessible only by car. My ability to promote a highway safety scheme amongst my Epsom and Ewell County Councillor colleagues is gone, and such schemes now have to take their chance in competition with 80 other county councillors across Surrey."



Cllr Eber Kingston losing control over highways?

"The outcome of this centralisation of highway spending decisions is self-evident when you see that for highway improvements to reduce road casualties, tackle speeding and make walking and cycling to school easier and safer in 2022/2023, there are 42 schemes listed with a total spend of £2,200,000. Unfortunately, the

Epsom and Ewell area has just one scheme listed at a cost of £5000. That is just 0.2% of the budget for 2022/2023 being allocated to Epsom and Ewell.”

Epsom and Ewell College Ward Councillor **David Gulland** (LibDem) told Epsom and Ewell Times “This move threatens to undermine local democracy and reduce Epsom and Ewell’s voice in County Council decisions. The Conservatives have been looking to abolish Local and Joint Committees for a number of years but have yet to come up with any firm proposals for anything that will work better. My concern is that if they are completely abolished without their replacements up and running, there could be a temporary or even a permanent deficit in local democracy. We want to press the County Council into committing to a future that provides for local participation in local decision-making. My LibDem colleagues on the County Council will move a resolution to preserve Local and Joint Committees.”

The Conservative County Councillor was also asked to comment.

## Council keep taxpayers in the dark



The Epsom and Ewell Times has previously reported the surprise resignation / departure (?) of Kathryn Beldon, the Council’s Chief Executive Officer. The Strategy and Resources committee decided on Monday night (July 4<sup>th</sup>) to exclude press and public from its meeting to discuss the recruitment of a new CEO.

The motion to hold the meeting in private was opposed by Cllr. David Gulland (Lib Dem, College Ward) and Cllr. Kate Chinn (Labour, Court Ward), arguing that there was no reason for any of the information that would be discussed to be exempt from public scrutiny.

But the council officer presenting the report responded that, while it was a decision ultimately for councillors to make, it would be difficult to discuss the matter without referring to the financial remuneration of other individuals employed by the council. The committee chairman, Cllr Neil Dallen (Res Ass, Town Ward) suggested to the meeting that this would restrict the discussion needed.

A vote on Cllr. Gulland’s motion to keep the meeting open to the public was defeated by 5 votes to 2. The public gallery was therefore cleared and the ensuing discussion in private lasted for about an hour.

The S&R meeting was immediately followed by a meeting of the Full Council, where Cllrs. Gulland and Chinn again argued that the discussion should be held in the open, but were again defeated by the Residents’ Association majority.

The public is still none the wiser in terms of what was discussed or what conclusions were reached.

The **Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO)** has been contacted and advises:

“In recent years public authorities have published an increasing amount of information on salaries of public sector officials. Government departments and other public bodies now routinely publish the names, job titles and salaries of senior civil servants on [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk), as part of the government’s policy on open data and transparency. Salaries are given in bands of £5,000 (eg £120,000 to £124,999). For more junior posts the job title and pay scales are shown.

It is well-established practice that local authorities, fire and police authorities and certain other public bodies in England publish salary-related information in their annual accounts. For example, for each employee who earned over £50,000 in the previous year, they publish actual salaries, allowances, bonuses, compensation and employer’s pension contributions. This also includes the names of those staff who earned over £150,000.”

The **Epsom and Ewell Times** will apply to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council for full disclosure of all the secret papers of the meetings of 4th July and the minutes. Failing which an appeal will be made to the ICO as Epsom and Ewell Council’s secrecy appears to be contrary to the spirit of the age of transparency and accountability.

5th July the Council made a statement through its press office: “These meetings were part of the required democratic process to ensure a robust recruitment of the most senior Chief Officer position of the Council. “

## West Ewell hustings test candidates



Marion Morrison (LibDem), Mark Todd (Labour, leaning on the RA candidate’s empty chair), Keiran Persand (Conservative). Monday 4th July 2022, All Saints Church West Ewell hosted the West Ewell Borough Council Ward by-election hustings. Local residents go to the polling stations on Thursday 7th July to elect a new Councillor. Each candidate paid tribute to the late Residents Association Councillor Clive Smitheram for his long and valuable public service. See Epsom and Ewell Times obituary [HERE](#).

Alan Williamson, the Residents Association candidate, did not attend due to a work commitment. He works in the financial services sector. However, you can see all candidates’ responses to Epsom and Ewell Times questions [HERE](#).

The hustings candidates were quizzed by voters on tackling anti-social behaviour and improving policing, the urgency of getting approved a Local Plan, improvements to transport and local road congestion. The audience was very pleased to have the opportunity to hear and question candidates but were disappointed that Mr Williamson could not attend. There was unanimous support for the Epsom and Ewell Times plan to hold hustings in every ward in the 2023 Epsom and Ewell Borough Council elections.



## Will Council lift the veil of secrecy over CEO's departure?



As **Epsom and Ewell Times** reported 27th May 2022, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council announced the departure of its Chief Executive Officer, **Kathryn Beldon**, *"following her decision that this is the time for a new chapter in [my] life."* Yet, in response to a Freedom of Information Act request submitted by **Epsom and Ewell Times** for disclosure of the former CEO's resignation letter the Council has responded: "We are unable to comply with your request as the Council did not receive a letter of resignation from Kathryn Beldon. The reason for her leaving was stated in the previous press release, which can be accessed on the EEBC website using the following link:

Epsom and Ewell Chief Executive | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council ([epsom-ewell.gov.uk](https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk))"

Tonight 7.30pm onward (Monday 4th July 2022) in the Council Chamber, Town Hall The Parade Epsom, the Council is due to debate the recruitment of a new Chief Executive and no doubt the circumstances of the departure of the previous one will be discussed. However, as we reported 28th June 2022 the meetings may be held in private as first the Strategy and Resources Committee (7.30pm) and then the Full Council (@8.30pm) will determine if the press and public should be excluded on either the ground of the privacy of an individual outweighing the public interest in the matter or to keep Council finances secret.

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## Surrey County Council to be strike free this Summer?



Surrey County Council's lowest paid staff are set to receive a pay boost after unions and council officers **agreed** a proportionate pay offer that sees pay increases on a sliding scale.

The offer will give people at the lowest pay grade a 7.85% increase and will exceed the UK Living Wage Foundations National Living Wage with a minimum hourly pay rate of £10.24ph.

The percentage increase drops further up the scales, with those earning the most receiving no increase.

Surrey Pay is subject to local agreement and negotiations between the Council and recognised trade unions (Unison & GMB). Negotiations this year focused on the sharp increases in costs of living, with the final offer reflecting the council's stated ambition of No One Left Behind - helping those who need us most.

The offer is targeted at lower earners who are inevitably struggling most with the costs of living increases, hence the graduated nature of the pay uplift.

Leader of Surrey County Council Cllr Tim Oliver (Conservative) said: *"I'm pleased that a strong pay offer has been agreed, one that particularly protects our lowest paid staff."*

*"We know that the cost of living is proving a challenge for many, but as a council it is our absolute priority to ensure no one is left behind, and that includes our staff. This offer reflects that."*

*"It is also in recognition of the excellent services staff continued to provide under difficult conditions during the pandemic, which we are all grateful for."*

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## Council Meetings in the Dark?



Monday 4th July 2022 Epsom and Ewell Borough Council will deliberate in secret on the recruitment of a new Chief Executive. This follows the sudden departure earlier this month of Kathryn Beldon from the top local government post, reported by Epsom and Ewell Times.

Firstly, the powerful Strategy and Resources Committee will meet, followed by the full Council. Both will vote on a resolution to exclude the press and public from the meetings. The resolutions infer that it would not be in the public interest for the public to know information "relating to an individual" or "relating to the finances" (of the Council).

Epsom and Ewell Times assume that press and public will be excluded from the debates on the resolutions to exclude them!

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## West Ewell By-election candidates' answers

Epsom and Ewell Times asked each candidate a series of questions. Here are their answers.

**Epsom and Ewell Times - Tell us a little about yourself. The non-political?**

**Alan Williamson** - I am a 58 year old married man with a grown-up son. Since graduating from university I have worked in the financial services industry. For the past three years I have a committee member of West Ewell & Ruxley Residents' Association. I made it known that I was interested in standing for the borough council. Outside work I follow football and rugby, love reading, walking and cycling and spending time with my wife Lucia.

**Marian Morrison** – I’ve lived in the borough for over four decades and my son attended local schools. My working life has been spend in the public sector, both NHS and local government so I have a fair understanding of health and council matters. My professional roles range from quality and complaints to council committee work. I’m recently retired and went back to being a student at Nescot which was a great thing to do. I regularly attend a local church Ewell.

**Mark Todd** – I’m a local dad and businessman, and I’ve lived in the area for over 12 years. I’m part of the Epsom & Ewell Tree Advisory Board that protects and preserves local trees and Treasurer of the Epsom Wells Community Association that is saving and renewing a local community centre. For work, I co-founded a large internet business in which I played a leading role for many years. I’m currently starting a new business.

**Kieran Persand** - I was born and raised in Epsom and Ewell, attending local schools. My background is law but I’m very passionate about education, the environment and mental health. Any spare time I get, I love playing sp

#### How long have you lived in the Borough?

Alan Williamson 11 years

Marian Morrison 46 years

Mark Todd -12 years

Kieran Persand – All my life – 24 years.

#### Do you live in the West Ewell Ward?

Alan Williamson – Yes

Marian Morrison – No but I do live nearby in West Ewell.

Mark Todd – I live close by in Epsom – I know the ward very well

Kieran Persand – No

#### Why are you standing?

**Alan Williamson** – I am a firm believer in local decisions being made by local people without the constraints of national party politics. Epsom & Ewell is one of the most desirable neighbourhoods, with one of the best run councils in the whole country. By electing me as a Residents’ Association councillor we can keep it that way.

**Marian Morrison** – I stood in the West Ewell ward in 2011 and received 500 votes and wish to stand again. It’s important for voters to have a choice of candidates and I believe council decision making is more effective when there is a good opposition.

**Mark Todd** – To give a voice to local residents who have been ignored for too long. To demand improvements to the roads and pavements and to help fix the awful problems of raw sewage going into the local Hogsmill river. Having a Labour councillor as well as the two RA councillors would give W Ewell a stronger voice.

**Kieran Persand** – There are issues that are constantly being overlooked such as housing/developments, the green belt and crime. It is crucial that the Council has a strong opposition to push things forward. It’s been shown what a conservative councillor can do locally, seen with the work Cllr Muir did to help keep the Wells Centre open.

#### Which Council Committees would you like to serve and why?

**Alan Williamson** – My primary interest would be in the Strategy & Resources Committee. I see this as underpinning the whole scope of council activity and requires the best-qualified candidates. My background in economics, financial services and committee work equips me ideally for this. I could also have interest in Community and Wellbeing.

**Marian Morrison** – Having worked in Surrey for the NHS and a nearby London Borough I’m familiar with aspects of health services, and planning and would be most interested in Planning, Community and Well-being, Health Liaison and Environment and Safer Communities committees.

**Mark Todd** – Community and Well-being – to help create a healthier, happier community. Environment and Safe Communities – our green spaces and trees need protecting to stop West Ewell becoming a concrete jungle.

**Kieran Persand** – Licensing and Planning Policy Committee – the lack of a Local Plan is hindering the development of the Borough massively. The local conservative group have formulated a plan which is well thought out and one which will improve the Borough.

Strategy and Resources Committee.

#### What do you think of the decision to spend £225,000 on the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan?

**Alan Williamson** – I welcome the availability and deployment of funds for this purpose. If Epsom town centre is to retain its vitality and attractive ambience it must use best practice to consider the way forward using strategic tools and resources. Expenditure such as this is warranted under the circumstances.

**Marian Morrison** – Epsom and Ewell needs to work together with residents to identify ways in which we can provide for future needs and at the same time ensure Epsom is a vibrant place for people to live, work and visit. Whilst this is a significant cost, good, sound planning for the needs for the next decades is vital for a good future.

**Mark Todd** – I think it’s a lot of money and my understanding is more is actually being spent on it £350,000+. We do need a good plan to create a better, greener town centre fit for the future and I fully support this. I hope that the money will be well spent and I’d be keen to be involved in its management.

**Kieran Persand** – I think a masterplan to guide development in the Town Centre is needed but £225,000 is an awfully huge amount of money to be spending at this moment in time. I hope that it is not mismanaged and that something positive comes out of it.

#### Do you think the ULEZ should be expanded to or nearer West Ewell’s borders?

**Alan Williamson** – I do not feel that at this point there is widespread public support for extending the ULEZ to West Ewell’s borders. Whilst this decision is not solely ours I think residents should make their feelings known on this. I would be personally oppose such a development at this stage.

**Marian Morrison** – Whilst I’m supportive of reducing emissions, due to the proximity of the Chessington Spur being so close to West Ewell many residents will be impacted with charges incurred by short cross boundary car journeys. In my view the main driver for change is to provide income to support the massive costs of Transport for London

**Mark Todd** – As a local councillor here we would have no influence on the decision. No one wants to pay more tax; however we do also need to get old vehicles off the road that create dangerous toxic fumes. Fumes that poison our lungs and, according to one charity, kill 25 times more people per year than car crashes.

**Kieran Persand** – No – many families and local businesses would suffer, especially with the increase in the cost of living. The expansion would be too burdensome. The roll out would also be very costly with the increase in spending on cameras and the enforcement infrastructure that would be needed. That money could be spent on better things which would help tackle air pollution.

#### One question beyond the Borough. Do you support the policy of sending refugees to Rwanda?

Alan Williamson – No. More suitable policies must be found.

Marian Morrison – No. This approach won’t stop desperate people.

Mark Todd – No

Kieran Persand – No.

#### Anything else you would like to say?

**Alan Williamson** – Having attended school in the borough I feel an affinity with the area that has motivated me to seek election. I have been active in organising a Neighbourhood Watch in my street (Revere Way), and I have coordinated a formal petition to the management company for the estate concerning their service provision.

**Marian Morrison** – Liberal Democrats have a good track record in local government as demonstrated by two neighbouring boroughs, Sutton and Kingston, both close to West Ewell. People of West Ewell think carefully and consider voting for change.

**Mark Todd** – The local Labour Party in West Ewell has 30 members and in voting for me you’re not just voting for Mark Todd but for the local Labour team to have influence and help the local area. If elected, we will not let you down and I will work with the Residents’ Association councillors to create a better West Ewell.

**Kieran Persand** – None.