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

Current Front Page

ISSN 2753-2771

Watch Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillors at work

29 May 2023

Not only can you watch online all Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and Council committee meetings live, you can also catch up on those you miss on the Council's YouTube channel.

The live online links can be found by navigating the pages of the Council website starting HERE. You will also find on those pages the agenda and background papers and minutes.

Not forgetting that the public gallery is always open for personal observation of proceedings.

Whatever grumbles you may have about your local Council it cannot be denied that its decision making is open to public inspection.

There are times when committees go into closed session and the Epsom and Ewell Times has challenged some of the secrecy. But at least you will be aware when they have gone into secret session and can challenge such decisions through the Freedom of Information Act.

The Epsom and Ewell Times champions accountability, transparency and democracy. The provision by the Council of windows for the public to its business, using today's technologies, is to be praised.

In a world in which authoritarianism and autocracy are gaining ground it is vital at all levels of British society that we value the liberties we have. We can demonstrate how much we do so by living our democratic ideals daily, not merely paying lip-service to them at periodic elections.

Differences of view held passionately can give rise to personal antagonism but where debates are conducted fairly, mutual personal respect should prevail. Democracy leads to better decision making and can be fun. The alternatives will never be fun for anyone.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's transparency through public video recording is in itself a significant contribution to maintaining a higher quality of respectful debate.

Who should be moved?

29 May 2023

Today we have published a report about the case of a Reigate resident's rights to be moved away from nuisance neighbours.

Why should she move? Why do the rights of the nuisance neighbours to stay trump the rights of their victim to remain and quietly enjoy her residence?

Is it because it is easier and less expensive for the authorities to shift the innocent than it is to move the guilty?

The report recounts the failure of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council to do either. The Local Government Ombudsman, who investigated the victim's complaint, does not address the powers of the police or the Council or the social housing landlord to tackle the nuisance neighbours. The latter having powers to apply to a court for an eviction of the anti-social neighbours (if also their landlord).

The complaint of the victim was limited to her claim that the Council had failed to deal with her request for re-housing in an appropriate way. Hence the Ombudsman's investigation was carried out within the narrow tramlines of a re-housing application process.

The wider context of all the issues raised by this case are not addressed. E.g., the impact on the neighbourhood or a future resident taking the victim's place, of the nuisance neighbours remaining. The responsibilities of the Council , her landlord and the police, to use their powers to inhibit the nuisance. Those powers ranging from warnings and anti-social behaviour orders to evictions.

Ruse within a ruse?

29 May 2023

Yesterday the full Council of Epsom and Ewell voted to pause the process of the Local Plan. Cllr **Eber Kington** (RA Ewell Court) proposed an emergency motion to delay the next stage for the Government's latest position on housing targets to be clarified. Expected some time after the local elections on 4th May.

© 2021-2025. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Cllr Eber Kington

His arguments for the motion included the protection of the Green character of the Borough. He observed that the draft Local Plan conceded the need for using Green Belt to accommodate a proportion of the 5400 houses planned for. Yet, the Government's target is over 10,000. Therefore, Green Belt encroachment for the lower figure is a Green Light for Green Belt development for the higher figure.

He said that more work needed to be done on how brownfield sites could be used to provide the housing requirements.

In an unusual intervention Cllr **Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley) described the proceedings of the Council meeting as a pantomime. He argued that the timetabling of the Local Plan process is one for managerial direction and that Councillors were playing politics. Fitting his description of the proceedings he then made a somewhat dramatic exit stage left in a bit of a huff.

Cllr **Peter O'Donovan** (RA Ewell Court) opposed his ward colleague. He stressed the need for a new Local Plan. Delay would mean the Borough's resistance to inappropriate planning applications would be weakened.

All opposition Councillors (Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Labour) spoke for the motion. After Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Stamford) called for the ruling Residents Association to be "kicked out", she and her Party were targetted in responses by RA Councillors. Firstly, Cllr **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley) suggested Cllr Muir had not long lived in the borough "just five years". On a dubious "point of order" Cllr Muir corrected this: "12 years actually".

Cllr Mason struggled on to make her point. A journey into a time nearly 50 years ago when the Council bought Longrove hospital land, thus preventing a 5000 housing development from taking place. Cllr Muir would not have known that, she said. Cllr Mason relied on this 1974 purchase to prove that the RA ruled Council do care about the Green Belt.

This brief spat passed and it was Cllr Kington in his reply to the debate who said that the Conservative Government should be "kicked out". This was because the Government insist on using 2014 figures to determine housing need when much lower numbers are yielded by a 2018 analysis.

Cllr **Steve McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Chair of the Licensing, Planning and Policy Committee) opposed the motion. He relied on the ability of the Council to respond to the public's views and amend the draft during the next 5 of the processes's 7 stages.

There were a significant number of empty chairs in the Council Chamber for this important meeting. Four Councillors voted against Cllr Kington's motion. It was carried by a large majority.

The motion passed is HERE in FULL.

This confusion in large part arises from Michael Gove MP and Secretary for Housing Development etc signaling an end to compulsory and centrally set housing targets. First indicated as long ago as May 2022. Then unstated when the Government confirmed its targets remained and then reinstated just a few months later. But no regulations or legislation have been introduced that lift the compulsion of the targets from local government planning obligations.

Cynical observers suggest that Gove's manoeuvres are a ruse to quell the flames of rebellion in the Tory shires and avoid defeats in upcoming local elections. Will we see actual legal change after 4th May?

In Epsom and Ewell was walk-out man Cllr Coley right to hint that the pre-election motion to delay is also for political gain?

A ruse within a ruse?

"That which we call a ruse by any other name would smell as bad."

Time will tell if words are matched by action.

Housing need or desire?

29 May 2023

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has embarked on a public consultation on its Draft Local Plan. The consultation ends on 19th March 2023. As we report today it appears that already the most densely populated borough in the County, the Council envisages a growth of new housing that also tops the target unit/KM sq density table.

The voluminous documentation supporting the draft Local Plan predicates the target volume of new housing units on "need".

Epsom and Ewell is a most desirable place to live in. Served by three mainline London railway stations, close but not too close to the M25 and short journeys to the two main airline gateways to the world. We enjoy many publicly accessible open spaces including Epsom Downs, Epsom Common, Horton County Park and The Hogsmill Open Space. No wonder you hear new neighbours say "We came to Epsom for the green space and access to London".

Controversially, the Local Plan proposes turning Horton Farm over to a minimum 1500 housing development. The question the Draft Local Plan raises is if piece by piece open countryside in Epsom and Ewell is given to housing will the place become less desirable? Should those who live here, born here, moved here ….. not now enjoy the space they live in, were born in or moved to? Should other boroughs with more space not carry a greater burden of meeting need? Should housing targets be a County wide responsibility? The three Councils of Guildford, Woking and Waverley joined forces in establishing housing targets through a West Surrey Housing Needs Assessment.

Is the Council catering for those who want to move here or for new generations born here?

The Council is providing the residents of the Borough with every opportunity to ask questions and make their views known.

We suggest you do so.

© 2021-2025. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

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

ISSN 2753-2771

Filling the Gap?

29 May 2023

Thank you for reading the Epsom and Ewell Times in 2022. Throughout 2023 we are all set to continue to "fill the gap" in local journalism identified in the Government commissioned Cairncross Review of the press of 2019.

"*The challenges to public interest journalism are most acute at the local level.*" See Chapter 5.3 page 79.

The Epsom and Ewell History Explorer accounts for the demise of local news services and today its website confirms Epsom and Ewell Times as "The local newspaper providing Boroughwide current news".

In 2022 we have reported consistently on Epsom and Ewell Council meetings. The first time this has been happening for 10 to 20 years. We secured a valuable partnership with the BBC's Local Democracy Reporting Service. The only officially recognised press regulator in the United Kingdom is IMPRESS and we qualified to be regulated by this body in 2022.

To sustain our service we need to attract more readers. Many readers can be reached by connecting to our website through the social media of Facebook and Twitter. We publish on those platforms website page links to all of our reports. Please do what you can to help us promote Epsom and Ewell Times. Remember we welcome your letters, opinions, events, news, family and other official notices for publication.

We remain strictly an unpaid, not-for-profit, volunteer service. It's the only way this can be done in a Borough our size.

Have a great 2023.

The Team at Epsom and Ewell Times

Abstaining from responsibility?

29 May 2023

As exclusively reported by Epsom and Ewell Times today 10 Borough Councillors sat on 26th July's all-powerful budget setting Strategy and Resources Committee. On a crucial vote to establish a savings target of nearly £1/4 m from the "homelessness budget" for the next financial year, half the committee abstained, including one Councillor who spoke against the proposal.

Pressures on the Council's budget continue to mount with the projected deficit rising in the current financial year from £1.5m to £2m. The Council's ability to raise Council tax is strictly limited. Any increase above £4.95 on a Band D property (mid-range in value) requires a local referendum to authorise. Moreover, on the horizon for the Borough are the dark clouds of further Central Government redistribution of local tax revenues that is likely to see a diminishing proportion of business rates revenue being kept by Epsom and Ewell in favour of the County and poorer parts of the country. Epsom and Ewell is to receive the minimum grant from central Government under its "levelling up" agenda.

The Councillors had been provided with a detailed report by hard working Council officers setting out the figures and financial projections. Granted, Councillors do not have a crystal ball and as the committee's chair, Neil Dallen implies: "You're damned if you do (make hurtful savings) and you're damned if you don't (setting aside funds that could have been spent elsewhere)". All depends on the future demands on the homelessness budget which in turn depends on the unpredictable lives of people.

These hard decisions have to be made. This is what we elect our Councillors to do. To take ultimate responsibility. By local convention rather than rule the Chairs of the Council committees do not vote. So, on a minority participating tied vote of 2:2 the Chair took that hard decision and voted in favour of the target savings. Should he alone carry the burden of that decision? Was the abstention of the majority of the usual voting number an acceptable response to the financial dilemmas the Borough faces?

Epsom and Ewell Times is suitably Impressed

29 May 2023

© 2021-2025. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Your new independent community news service is now officially recognised and regulated by **The Independent Monitor for the Press**. **IMPRESS** is an independent press regulator in the UK. It was the first to be recognised by the **Press Recognition Panel**. Unlike the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), IMPRESS is fully compliant with the recommendations of the **Leveson Inquiry**. IMPRESS regulates over 200 titles, consisting of a variety of independent local, investigative and special interest news publications across the UK. No national newspaper has signed up to the new regulator; most continue to be members of the unrecognised IPSO. Its founder is Jonathan Heawood and its current Chief Executive is Ed Procter.

"IMPRESS is at the vanguard of a new, positive future for news publishers, ensuring quality independent journalism flourishes in a digital age. We help to build understanding and trust between journalists and the public – and provide the public with trusted sources of news."

IMPRESS

THE INDEPENDENT MONITOR FOR THE PRESS CIC

This is to certify that

Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd

has demonstrated that it complies with the requirements of the IMPRESS Regulatory Scheme and is hereby authorised to display the IMPRESS Trust in Journalism mark in the publications that are named below.

Epsom and Ewell Times

Richard Ayre
Chair of IMPRESS

TRUST IN JOURNALISM IMPRESS

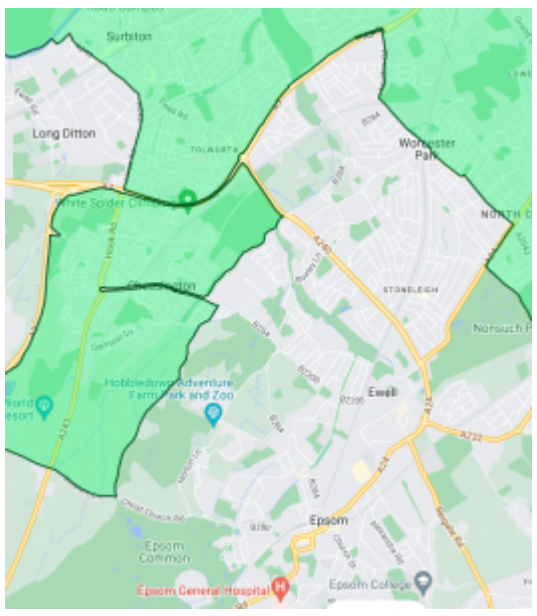
27/07/2022
Date

You can now be assured that the Team at **Epsom and Ewell Times** will continue to strive to meet the highest standards and that we are accountable to an outside body for our mistakes. Readers may lodge complaints to us in the first place and then to IMPRESS if the complaint is not resolved. Members of our own Team have protected "whistleblower rights" if they need to report a breach of standards.

Why not join our team of writers, photographers and contributors? You can give as big or as little as you like. We are all unpaid volunteers, filling the big gap that has grown in recent decades in quality local journalism.

Where to draw the line?

29 May 2023



Mayor of London's proposal to expand the charging area for old and polluting vehicles to the borders of the Borough of Epsom and Ewell inevitably brings out the "not-in-my-backyard" responses from local residents. Let's be clear. It is only residents with old polluting cars that will be effected. And, yes, that is likely to impact greatest on those on lower incomes, who cannot afford newer cars, let alone the very expensive electric ones. What should come first? The health of residents in neighbouring London Boroughs or the freedom to continue to use the more polluting cars kept in Epsom and Ewell? If the expanded ULEZ discourages the use of old polluting cars locally then there is also a health and environmental benefit for our residents too.

The health and climate benefits of the ULEZ are well established. So as a nation is it not equally inevitable that the ULEZs will continue to expand, together with legislation banning the old cars anyway? Should we yield willingly to the inevitable and spend the next year, before the expanded ULEZ is likely to be implemented (August 2023) helping residents to change their vehicles?

© 2021-2025. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

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

ISSN 2753-2771

Continuity in a time of change

29 May 2023

This week will witness the climax of Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations and, Her Majesty's health permitting, the Borough of Epsom and Ewell will be privileged to receive The Queen, when she attends the Derby race-meeting on 4th June.

70 years of continuous service as the United Kingdom's Head of State is unprecedented. Equally unprecedented is Prince Charles's longest ever service as Heir Apparent to the British throne. Never before has anyone served such a long apprenticeship nor has a "handover" of responsibilities ever been so thorough.

Closer to home the Heads of the Council Administration of the Borough of Epsom and Ewell have served declining periods of service in a societal era of constant changes, career progressions and "movings on".

The post of Chief Executive Officer of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, previously known as "Town Clerk", has been occupied by Douglas Grimes for 11 years (1973 – 1984), David Smith for 23 years (1986 – 2009), Frances Rutter for 8 years (2009 – 2017) and lastly Kathryn Beldon for 5 years (2017 – 6th June 2022).

Ms Rutter's departure was announced several months before her final day, presumably allowing for an orderly transfer of responsibilities to her successor. At the time of her leaving it was reported that her salary was £133,000 per annum. For such rewards, one would expect a requirement for the service of a reasonable notice period. What has happened today that a CEO on a Council taxpayers' funded salary of that magnitude leaves with apparently little more than 11 days' notice? Alternatively, with the aid of computers and central government-driven detailed operational guidelines, is it possible the Chief Executive post is now not so demanding? That a shorter handover or no handover period at all, is adequate? If so, is a salary of £133,000 or more still justified?

Whatever the answers we wish the departing CEO well for the future and good luck to her successor. If the Borough attracts a good one let's hope we see a return to long-service.

Editorial 25/04/22

29 May 2023

In February 2019 the Cairncross Review "A Sustainable Future For Journalism" was published. The Report stated the decline in public interest journalism was most acute at the local level. The Epsom and Ewell History Explorer website tracks the loss of our Borough's last dedicated local newspapers in the first decade of the 21st Century.

The Independent Community News Network states "Independent community and hyperlocal news outlets are fulfilling the traditional role of the fourth estate in local civic society, complementing the diverse range of news provision available."

In establishing the review former PM Theresa May said "Good quality journalism provides us with the information and analysis we need to inform our viewpoints and conduct a genuine discussion"

ICNN has 122 members from Armagh to Eastbourne. Most of these local news services are run as the Epsom and Ewell Times is: "For the community, by the community", though their organisation varies from one to another.

The Epsom and Ewell Times is politically neutral. As our values provide, *we seek to promote community cohesion and celebrate the positive activities, businesses, lives and events in the Borough while being fearless in reporting matters of controversy, ensuring opposing points of view are represented in a balanced and fair manner.*

Our news service is not run for profit and depends on local citizen journalists giving their time voluntarily. If you wish to join the team please contact us at admin@epsomandewelltimes.com

We hope you enjoy The Epsom and Ewell Times and will support us in the months and years to come. We rely on you and each other.

© 2021-2025. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY