



Filling the Gap?

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?

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

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



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?

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?



Continuity in a time of change

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

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.