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

12th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Chinn up for women

9 March 2024

On International Women's Day (Friday 8th March) and Epsom and Ewell's association with the struggle for equal rights for women through the actions and death of Emily Davison, local Labour Councillor **Kate Chinn** (Court Ward) shares her thoughts on the special day:

Today is **International Women's Day** and this year's theme is to inspire inclusion.

It means breaking down barriers, challenging stereotypes, and creating environments where all women are valued and respected. I've heard repeated the old idea that women don't really understand figures. Tell that to the three women at NASA who did the maths that were instrumental in one of history's greatest operations – the launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit celebrated in the book and film **Hidden Figures**. A great read and watch

World renowned feminist, journalist Gloria Steinem reported:- "the story of women's struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist nor to any one organisation but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights"

We can all do what we can to support and advance women.

As the IWD website states:- "When women aren't present, we must ask: "if not why not." When women are discriminated against, we must call out poor practice. When the treatment of women is not equitable we must take action"

Local politics is a way that women can get involved with their local communities and work with the community, other councillors and partner agencies to make a difference in their local community.

I became active as I believe local politics matter. People need a decent home, to feel safe in their communities, access to the services they need and the opportunity to enjoy the good things in life. We need "bread and roses too", a phrase attributed to a strike in Massachusetts in 1912 now often referred to as the "Bread and Roses strike". The slogan pairing bread and roses, appealing for both fair wages and dignified conditions. Now a poem by **James Oppenheim**.

It's only good governance that can enable both and why local and national politics are so important to all of us.

If anyone is interested in getting involved in politics then please do get involved and there is plenty of available help and support. Talk to your local councillors and the local political parties. Both the political parties and Epsom and Ewell Council run sessions on being a councillor; some in person and some on line

I believe it is important to mark International Women's Days. One of the many reasons is to celebrate the inspirational women we have both past and present. **Emily Wilding Davison**, Mary Seacole, Rosa Parks and Malala Yousafzai, to name just a few of so many women who have made the world a better place.

Cllr Kate Chinn

Verging on the ridiculous

9 March 2024

Opinion by County Councillor **Eber Kington**: The decision by the Conservative ruling group at **Surrey County Council** to take back from April the cutting of highway verges from **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** was heralded as means of securing consistency across the County. Whether that was meant to be a consistent levelling down of the service (but not the height of the grass!) I am not so sure. But so far it has been a very public display of how not to launch a new service to the public.

It's nine weeks into the new regime and still many verges in Epsom and Ewell have not been cut, and the latest website information shows that many roads in Epsom and Woodcote will have to wait another week before the mowers move in.

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ISSN 2753-2771

There is grass so high that street name plates, bollards and signs cannot be seen, and sight lines that are dangerously obscured, making driving hazardous. Clovers, trefoils and daisies in verges that are of most nectar value and will best cater for our wildlife, are swamped by tall growing grass and weeds. And a policy of blowing back grass cuttings on to the verge, whilst sensible and manageable when the grass is cut at a reasonable level, is not workable when the grass has been left to grow so high. The blow back just spreads the grass on to the footpaths and has the potential to block the drains.

And when the machines have actually done their work, residents in our urban streets are far too often looking out at poorly mown verges peppered with clumps grass, as though our verges were experiencing a bad hair day!

SCC puts it down to “operational issues at the start of the new contract and the wet weather we had in April and at the start of May”. Is that politicians way of saying a failure to plan effectively and ensure sufficient resources were deployed from the start. And if a period of rain delays the schedule by nine weeks, that does not augur well for the future given our unpredictable climate.

Sadly, the problem has been compounded by poor communication from SCC. A website page with the scheduled dates for cuts regularly missed and not updated, and just general locations listed (Epsom, Ewell, Stoneleigh) so that residents of Cuddington and Langley Vale, for example, have no idea when their verges will meet up with a SCC grass mower.

At least the Leader of SCC has acknowledged this is not his finest hour and set up Task and Finish Groups to find what went wrong and how it can be fixed. Residents’ Association and Independent County Councillors have put in a joint submission highlighting the failings and offering solutions. Those solutions include a commitment to return to the 6 to 8 cuts previously provided by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council – the verges in residential roads are too narrow to support the meadow look.

It is going to take some time for our verges (and residents) to recover from this. Sadly there may be more to come……from April SCC has also taken back responsibility for weeds, alleyway clearance and highway roundabouts!

County Councillor Eber Kington (RA Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington)

Related reports:

Verging on reason?

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

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Eviction Notice: Got one? Need one?

9 March 2024

Epsom based solicitor Daniel Bolster advises landlords and tenants alike. In this sponsored article he sets out the basis of the law for both landlords and tenants.

Sending out or receiving an eviction notice is unfortunately something that a considerable number of landlords and tenants will experience. It may be that a landlord requires vacant possession of their property to sell it, or that tenants require a notice to show their local authority in order to seek assistance to find a new home.
What is an eviction notice?

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Daniel Bolster

One of the most common notices is a section 21 notice. This is commonly known as a “no fault eviction notice” and basically means that a landlord does not need to give a reason for seeking vacant possession of their property. These types of cases can potentially be dealt with by the court on paper (without a hearing being necessary). However, there are a number of technical defences that tenants can bring to invalidate a section 21 notice. If the court deems that there is a point to be answered, then there will be a hearing. It can be useful for landlords to contact a solicitor before issuing a section 21 notice, in order to take advice on whether the section 21 notice is likely to be valid. Equally, a tenant can take advice from a solicitor as to whether any technical defences may be available, such as:

 Prescribed information issues – such as the existence of an energy performance certificate
 Deposit protection issues
 Tenant Fees Act issues
 Notice from the Local Authority
 House in multiple occupation licence and selective licence issues

Aren’t all eviction notices the same?

In short, no. Another common notice is a Section 8 notice. This is normally used by a landlord when they allege that a tenant has breached the term of their tenancy agreement. This could be as a result of failing to pay the rent, anti-social behaviour such as causing a nuisance or annoyance or breaching another term of the tenancy agreement. After serving the notice and waiting the correct amount of time for the notice to elapse, the landlord will be in a legal position to issue a claim seeking possession of the property. There will then be a hearing and both parties should attend this hearing. It may be in both parties’ interests to be legally represented at such a hearing.

What about a possession order?

Some grounds for possession are mandatory, meaning that if the ground is proven at the hearing, then the court will have to give a possession order. However, other grounds are discretionary, which means that the court will have various options with regards to orders that it can make. It can be useful for both landlords and tenants to take advice on this before either issuing proceedings or defending proceedings.

If you are dealing with any of the issues above, our dispute team can help. Contact us on
020 8944 5290 for more information, or email Daniel.Bolster@peacock-law.co.uk.
Peacock & Co Solicitors, Park Place House, 24 Church Street, Epsom KT17 4QB. peacock-law.co.uk

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Local Plan Battle: early skirmishes on Downs Farm

9 March 2024

As **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** is expected to publish a draft **Local Plan** in February 2023 **Epsom and Ewell Times** carries below an opinion piece authored by the **Keep Epsom & Ewell Green Belt Group**. We cannot confirm these campaigners’ contentions but we are happy to stimulate public discussion and interest through our pages. The Local Plan will shape for several years to come the decisions on new housing development locations in the Borough.

Opinion Piece:

Alarmed by well-sourced leaks, residents have decided to come out fighting early against joint landowner and developer discussions with Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) to build hundreds of homes on the 110-acre Downs Farm, destroying forever one of the closest Green Belt sites to London.

Other Green Belt sites near Epsom’s Hook Arena and Horton Farm are also believed to be earmarked housing in the Local Plan process, and it is even feared that other areas within Epsom’s 42% of Green Belt land could also have been offered up and included.

Residents in Surrey’s already highest populated borough are so concerned that they are not waiting for what they say could be a flawed consultation process, expected in February.

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Under Government pressure to deliver nearly 700 homes for each of the next 20 years, planning officers and councillors should instead be prioritising developer partnerships for an imaginative alternative “brownfield” core scheme, claims the residents’ campaign group.

However, following much-publicized Government climbdown guidelines announced this week by Secretary of State, Michael Gove, that top-down housing targets were to be “advisory only” and could be challenged by local authorities if the character of their area would be irrevocably changed, EEBC should be in no doubt, say residents, that Green Belt sites should be now removed from its Draft Local Plan.

By redeveloping the Kiln Lane/Longmead area closer to town centre facilities, “more starter and lower cost young family homes could be built – and bring much needed rejuvenation and job opportunity benefits. Yet there is little sign that the planners are engaging with developers on this opportunity, preferring the easier, but devastating, option of

building higher end housing on Green Belt fields.”

The borough-wide residents’ campaign, *“Keep Epsom and Ewell Green Belt” involves* social media, mass leaflet drops, a new petition (https://www.change.org/EpsomGreenBelt) and its own website(https://epsomgreenbelt.org/). Some residents may well stand as independent Green Belt candidates in the May elections.

‘Our advice is that once a site has been publicly designated as suitable by the Council in the Local Plan, public consultations rarely change what are perceived as “done deals” – and we are not simply prepared to stand by and let that happen. In 2019, EEBC listed Downs Farm as a Green Belt site not suitable for development, yet it now appears to conveniently ignore this just because the site has been offered up to them’ said Yufan Si, campaigner of Keep Epsom and Ewell Green Belt.

Downs Farm is a rare chalk grassland habitat for protected species such as skylarks and bats, with regular sightings of deer, redkite and pheasant.

“Destroying forever high quality Green Belt sites will result in mainly luxury houses. We are deeply disappointed that the Residents Association controlled EEBC appear set to prefer Green Belt desecration over redeveloping a core brownfield scheme in central Epsom. Properly phased, this could be promoted as a creative industries hub, focussed on the town’s University of Creative Arts centre for excellence. As well as a much better mix of around 5,000 affordable starter and rented homes for young families, this would provide job opportunities in a much-needed Epsom rejuvenation.”

The campaign group also points out keeping Green Belt spaces also helps sustainability and the UK commitment to net zero by 2030.

The Elmbridge Council Local Plan is cited as an example where the council and residents challenged unrealistic top-down government housing targets. It proposes redeveloped brownfield sites without any Green Belt destruction – despite having a greater proportion of Green Belt land (57%) than Epsom.

The residents’ campaign urges EEBC planners to quickly engage with brownfield developers using a £75,000 grant recently announced by the Government. Given its overriding remit to only prefer Green Belt development in “exceptional circumstances”, *and the recent Government policy rethink on housing*, this should be done before the draft Epsom Local Plan is issued in February, say residents.

“Keep Epsom and Ewell Green Belt” Campaign Group – for further information contact epsomgreenbelt@gmail.com

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Special Correspondent June 7, 2022

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Cllr Alex Coley: Refugees in Epsom and Ewell

9 March 2024

Imagine living in a place where nowhere is safe. Soldiers are on the streets, the threat of violence is everywhere and just leaving your home means risking your life. If you even have a home left. As a teenager in the 1990s, I became friends with Bosnians that arrived here as child refugees, escaping the most appalling persecution. Later, as an adult, I lived in Croatia where I was shown the greatest warmth and kindness, just as people fleeing the Yugoslavian civil war were shown warmth and kindness here in the UK.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has helped the most vulnerable refugee households fleeing war and violence to resettle in a safe and stable community. We have done this by seeking private landlords, partnering with local voluntary groups and administrating funding from the central government. We do not use properties intended for local families in housing need.

We have also supported 'Community Sponsor' status for the Epsom Refugee Network. They help refugee families to live independent lives, learn English, access schools, healthcare and employment and participate fully in the community. We are very lucky to have them.
Work began in October 2015 when the Council passed a motion considering refugee assistance. Since then the Council has participated in four government schemes to help refugees from three countries; Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine.

The first, in November 2016, was the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. Most of what we have learned about supporting refugees came from this experience, particularly how we work with partners. Considerable work has been undertaken by the Epsom Refugee Network to provide wrap-around care within the framework operated by the borough council. This work is crucial to integrating refugees into our community.

In September 2021, just after the allied withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Council agreed to participate in the Afghan Locally Employed Staff refugee scheme, recognising the extraordinary contribution of those who supported our troops and diplomatic staff. In March 2022 the Council extended its offer by participating in the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme, which benefits vulnerable and at-risk individuals under the evacuation programme.

In April 2022 the Council unanimously agreed to support the Homes For Ukraine programme, following the Russian invasion. This scheme is different to the others, with sponsors who open up their homes to host Ukrainian refugees. This will require a unique approach to making sure that households meet safety standards and that hosts pass vetting checks. Most of the arrivals are expected to be women and young children, many of them traumatised by their experiences. We will help them. We will work with our partners and deliver support where it is needed. With this community-led scheme, our efforts will focus on signposting sponsors to information and support while coordinating the work of government agencies and voluntary groups at a local level. It's unglamorous work but necessary for safeguarding and financial probity.

If you would like to get involved with the Epsom Refugee Network or you are a private landlord with available property you can find out more on their website https://epsomrefugeenetwork.org/.

Alex Coley is a borough councillor and Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee. He proposed the motion to Council for the first Afghan scheme, brought the committee recommendation to join the second Afghan scheme and proposed the Stand Together With Ukraine motion to the Council. All were passed unanimously.

Want more from us? You can read more about the motion Cllr Coley proposed HERE and read an interview with Nataliya Irvine from SSWU (Surrey Stands With Ukraine) HERE

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