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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW: Meet Epsom & Ewell's new Mayor, Clive Woodbridge.

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On a rainy, downcast day, Epsom & Ewell Times' Tom Luckham has had the pleasure of sitting down with Clive, Epsom and Ewell's new Mayor.

Epsom might not be too familiar with its new Mayor yet. Clive Woodbridge is a former Journalist who is now Epsom and Ewell's First Citizen. He's dedicated to raising awareness for multiple charities and good causes. He loves a curry and he has a dog named after England legend Geoff Hurst.

Clive took office on Tuesday after the official Mayor-Making ceremony on Monday evening, replacing previous Mayor Peter O'Donovon.

Mayor of Epsom & Ewell being an annual position, Clive will serve in this role for a year.

After a short(ish) discussion about our shared love of West Ham United, we got into the questions that I had prepared.

Tom: The main thing I wanted to discuss was charities, I see that you are championing seven charities in your first Mayoral year, could you expand upon why you chose those particular charities?

Clive*: They're all charities that mean something to me and Mary (The Mayoress) and our family. While Epsom and Ewell is an affluent area there are people who are struggling and I think Epsom & Ewell Foodbank are doing tremendous work. They're working with the Council to set up Epsom & Ewell Pantry. The Foodbank celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, so I thought it was an excellent time to make people aware of what they've done, and the new things that they're doing.*

Shine Cancer Support, sadly, my son passed away at the end of March after a battle with cancer, my wife and I sat down and thought that we'd like to support a cancer charity. I wanted to choose a small charity, and Shine focuses on people in their 20s, 30s, and 40s who have received a diagnosis. They're small, so if I can give them something it'll mean something to them.

Onto JDRF, that's a diabetes research charity, both my son's fiancee and my best friend from university have type 1 diabetes, so I've seen how it can be an inconvenient illness at best and a life-threatening one at worst. JDRF does a lot of good research for type 1, there are others that focus on both but I wanted to raise awareness for JDRF.

Cardiac Risk in the Young: My children went to Glyn school and we lived just around the corner. It is a charity that the School supported since some Glyn students went to sports camp and unfortunately died due to heart issues. The statistics show that many young people die from this, but if awareness is raised and they're all scanned and have those medical checks, we can potentially save lives.

Epsom Sports Club: I'm interested in sports, they do a fantastic job, they support people of all ages, they do a wide range of sports for people of all ages, the Council has always been a supporter of the Surrey Youth Games. They're trying to raise funds for a Pavillion at the moment, I'd like to raise awareness of that fundraising effort.

Racing Welfare: Well, we're a racing town and I'm an Epsom and Walton Downs conservator myself. It seems a very glitzy business but some people involved have quite hard lives, so Racing Welfare does a lot of pastoral care and financial support for those people.

Last but not least, Bliss: My wife was a midwife. She has seen the good work that Bliss does. A few parents started it up. This charity provides support for parents whose children are born very ill and have to go into intensive care.

As you can probably tell, there's no particular theme that runs through these charities, it would be nice to make money for them, but that's not my primary aim, it's about awareness so that at the end of the year, hopefully, I can give them a platform and more people can be aware of them.

Tom: Next question I wanted to ask was what are your priorities for your year in office?

Clive: *That's a good question, Epsom and Ewell is a wonderful place, we've got fantastic people who give up their time to help people, we've got fantastic companies who are innovating and creating new things, we're a wonderful place physically in terms of the Downs and Epsom Common, so I just want to put the spotlight on what's good about Epsom and Ewell and let those things speak for themselves. Also the diversity of our community. On Sunday there's the Hindu chariots event in Stoneleigh. I've never been to it, but I'm looking forward to going. They raise funds for charity. I think it's about celebrating our diversity. Really, it's about meeting as many people as I can, saying well done to them for their efforts and perhaps sprinkling a bit of magic mayoral dust on them.*

Tom: On the other side, what do you think could be improved about the Borough?

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Clive: *I think one of the things the Council is quite keen on is volunteering because Councils and the government can't fix everything. Increasingly we rely on the goodwill and efforts of people who might go out and pick up litter or look after people and provide that sort of support. I don't think there are any specific things wrong, but perhaps there are some things that our society needs that I can help promote.*

Tom: What are you most looking forward to in your new role?

Clive: *That's a good question, I'm looking forward to being the First Citizen. Epsom and Ewell is a place I love. I'm not someone who is naturally in the spotlight. In my political career, I've tried to stay out of it. I suppose that's something I'm not looking forward to but will have to get used to "laughs". I am very much looking forward to taking part in the Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The Queen has done a fantastic job, she's a role model for anyone in public service, and I know Epsom and Ewell will make her proud. The Derby is one of her official events, so I really do hope she does come. Really, I'm just looking forward to meeting people and taking the time out of my working life to do these things. One of the things about being Mayor is that it's not an easy thing, it's a voluntary role. I'm very lucky, as we're entering more normal times post COVID-19,*

Tom: I read that you're a head judge at the British Curry Awards, what was the best curry you've ever had and who made it?

Clive: *Le Raj organises the British Curry Awards. They're my favourite outside-of-London curry house anyway, I've always really enjoyed their Chicken Biryani, so I'd probably say that. The other curry restaurant I like going to is the Cinnamon Club in London. It's very interesting, it's in the old parliamentary library that was converted, the food is fantastic and the ambience is brilliant, you're sitting there in this old library eating a curry.*

Tom: If you were just named West Ham's manager, who is the first player you would sign?

Clive: *Oh that's very difficult, anyone I want? I'll tell you what, this might be controversial, but I loved seeing Dimitri Payet play when he was there, he's doing so well at Marseille at the moment, look at his assists! If I could get him back for one year, we need a player like him. The Brentford centre-forward Ivan Toney is very impressive, he'd certainly be somewhere up there. But do you know what, if Gareth Bale, at his best, was available and willing to play for West Ham then I think I would take him? If not, I'd try and find a good young player from the lower leagues. I mean, my son's dog is called Paulo (Paulo Di Canio), my late dog was called Bobby (Moore) and I now have a Geoffrey (Hurst), so if I live long enough there'll have to be a Martin down the line.*

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