

# Surrey takes European lead on Hong Kong

23 May 2023



Europe's first research hub dedicated to Hong Kong Studies will be launched at the University of Surrey on Thursday 25 May 2023. Surrey's Hong Kong Studies Hub will look to shape policy debates and the wider question of the role of Hong Kong communities in International Relations.

The hub will also host the Hong Kong Studies Association Secretariat and a new Hong Kong Studies Library.

The hub's upcoming launch will bring together a prestigious expert panel of academics and practitioners, led by Dr Malte Kaeding from the University of Surrey, to investigate the latest research and policy developments, followed by a keynote conversation on Hong Kong's current role in international relations, and the work and impact of local Hong Kong communities.

The launch event is free to attend and will take place from 5pm to 8pm in the Wates House Green Room, on the University of Surrey's Stag Hill campus, with an opportunity to network from 8pm onwards.

Dr Malte Kaeding, Senior Lecturer in International Politics at the University of Surrey, and the Director of the new Hub, said:

"The launch of the Hong Kong Studies Hub at the University of Surrey is a milestone for Hong Kong Studies in Europe.

"Surrey is a leading academic hub for Hong Kong Studies, having hosted two Hong Kong Studies Association conferences in 2021 and 2022. With over 15-years of my own research on Hong Kong politics, supported by a REF Impact Case, and my role as co-founder of the Hong Kong Studies Association, I believe Surrey is at the forefront of this field.

"The hub's multidisciplinary perspective and its focus on methodological innovation, combined with a strong emphasis on engagement with the fast-growing Hong Konger community, positions the University at the cutting-edge of this important and exciting development."

Professor Amelia Hadfield, Head of Department and Dean International at the University of Surrey, contributed her own views, saying:

"The Department of Politics is a perfect location in which to situate the new Hong Kong Studies Hub. We are proud of our track record on interdisciplinary approaches and providing cross-scholarly support, and the hub will help us engage authentically in this highly relevant area."

Surrey University Press Office.

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## Esher & Walton up for GRaabs

23 May 2023



Dominic Raab, former Deputy Prime Minister and Conservative MP for Esher and Walton, will step down at the next general election due to the "increasing concerns over the last few years about the pressure the job has placed" on his young family.

His decision was confirmed in a letter sent on Friday, May 19, to the local party's group chairperson Peter Szanto. The announcement comes a month after he stood down as Deputy PM after the results of a bullying investigation into his conduct were handed to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

Mr Raab was first elected in May 2010 with an 18,593 majority, although this was cut to just 2,743 in the May 2019 election.

As MP, he served as Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor, and Secretary of State for Justice. He was also the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union from July to November 2018. He is married with two children.

His resignation letter, which the Local Democracy Service has seen, read:

*Dear Peter,*

*I am writing to let you know of my decision to step down at the next General Election.*

*It has been a huge honour to represent the Conservatives, since 2010, in this wonderful constituency.*

*Thank you for your steadfast support and tireless efforts, alongside all the teamwork and hard graft put in by our superb officers, Councillors and members.*

*As we have discussed, I have become increasingly concerned over the last few years about the pressure the job has placed on my young family.*

*I will continue to carry out all my responsibilities to my constituents, and provide every support in campaigning, so that we may win here next year - which I am confident we can do under this Prime Minister's leadership.*

*Yours Sincerely,*

*Dominic Raab.*

In April this year, Mr Raab quit as Deputy Prime Minister after a report looking into bullying allegations was delivered to Downing Street.

The Esher and Walton MP announced his resignation via a statement and said he would keep his word if any findings of bullying were found.

The inquiry, conducted by lawyer Adam Tolley KC, upheld two of the allegations against Mr Raab.

His decision now to not stand as an MP was greeted with "deep regret" by the group chair who said Mr Raab had "the full support of the Association to continue as our candidate".

Mr Szanto said that "on a personal level" he knew of the sacrifices Mr Raab and his family had made but that his commitment to the residents of Esher and Walton had "always been outstanding".

The Esher and Walton Conservative Association has since been in touch with Conservative campaign headquarters about the selection of a new parliamentary candidate although at this stage no timetable has been given.

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## Future of the Planet in Surrey hands?

23 May 2023



A Cumbrian coal mining firm is intervening in a landmark legal hearing to determine whether oil drilling should be allowed in **Surrey**. **The Horse Hill** drilling case is set for the **Supreme Court** in June with protesters hoping for a ruling that could severely restrict fossil fuel exploration in the UK.

West Cumbria Mining Ltd, the company behind Britain's first new prospective coal mine for decades has been given permission to intervene in the case over plans for oil drilling at Horse Hill, Surrey according to a Supreme Court order published earlier this month.

In law, an intervention is when a non-party joins ongoing litigation, as the case may affect their rights and they should have the right to be heard. The other intervening parties are Friends of the Earth, the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) and Greenpeace.

The case is being brought by Redhill resident **Sarah Finch** on behalf of the **Weald Action Group**, which represents communities opposing onshore oil and gas projects.

Ms Finch is challenging **Surrey County Council's** 2019 decision to grant **UK Oil and Gas** (UKOG) planning permission for drilling - on the grounds that environmental impact assessments must take into account downstream emissions caused by burning extracted oil.



Horse Hill protest outside Surrey County Hall when planning application was being considered in September 2019. Credit Rebecca Curley.

Her fight has now reached the country's highest court after three judges were split over the lawfulness of the county council's decision to grant permission for 25 years of oil drilling and production - in the same year the county declared a climate emergency.

Carbon emissions from burning the extracted fossil fuels were not included in either the Horse Hill or Cumbrian coal mine's environmental impact assessments.

Ms Finch said: "The fact that **West Cumbria Mining** wants to have its say in a case about a small onshore oil development 370 miles from their proposed coal mine shows the national importance of this case. I hope that the **Supreme Court** will confirm that no fossil fuel development - coal, oil or gas - should be allowed without consideration of its full climate impact."

According to UKOG the Horse Hill site in **Reigate and Banstead** has so far produced about 185,000 barrels of oil. Approximately 1.362 million remain.

Friends of the Earth campaigner, **Tony Bosworth**, said: "The biggest climate impact from gas, coal and oil projects occurs when the fuel they produce is eventually burned - it's unbelievable that this is effectively ignored when planning decisions are made. This landmark legal challenge could have huge implications for fossil fuel developments across the country, including the new coal mine in West Cumbria. West Cumbria Mining are clearly concerned, which is why they have intervened.

"West Cumbria Mining boast that they will build the world's first zero carbon mine, which is a complete contradiction in terms. Their calculations also ignore emissions from when the coal produced is actually used - that's like saying that we should ignore the health impacts of smoking cigarettes and just look at how they are produced.

"We need to stop burying our heads in the sand. Sarah Finch's legal case could play a huge role in building a net zero future."

OEP general counsel, **Peter Ashford**, said: "Environmental impact assessment is so important for integrating the environment into planning decision-making. We are interested in this case because of the opportunity to clarify the law here to ensure proper decision-making that enhances environmental protection. We hope that the Supreme Court will take this opportunity, and will develop principles for determining the proper approach to the assessment of indirect effects under the EIA legislation."

The hearing is scheduled for **June 21**.

The coal firm is now battling on two legal fronts after a judge ruled on Friday May 19 to grant Friends of the Earth and South Lakes Action on Climate Change a hearing to challenge the UK Government's decision to approve West Cumbria Mining's deep coal plans.

That hearing is expected to last for three days when it is heard later this year.

A spokesperson for West Cumbria Mining Limited said it would be inappropriate to comment on a live legal case. UKOG have been approached for comment.

Related Reports:

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[The Hills Are Alive With the Sound of Drilling... ?](#)

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Image credits: NASA's Earth Observatory and Rainer Lesniewski Getty Images

# Woking £490m write down sparks ‘worst fears’

23 May 2023



Epsom and Ewell Times has been following a nearby Surrey Borough’s debt woes. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, in contrast to Woking, has consistently balanced its budgets. The Woking towers in question are visible from Epsom Downs. Chris Caulfield reports.

“Worst fears” have been confirmed in newly published accounts that exposed a half billion pound “black hole” in Woking Borough Council’s finances and plunged the future of many services into doubt.

The figures, released this week on Companies House for 2021, show the council’s biggest investment, Victoria Square, has had £490,479,300 wiped off its value.

Construction on the development began in 2017 after the previous administration signed off on £750m of loans to cover the investment.

It was billed as one of “the most ambitious developments in the South East” and included 429 apartments, retail and leisure space, a performing arts academy, a four star hotel, and a medical centre. It means its fair market value is now hugely below its carrying book value but the scale of the figures, though predicted by councillors, still shocked.

Councillor **Adam Kirby** (Lib Dem, Horsell) told the LDRS: “We’ve been looking at this for a really long time. We’ve taken control of the council a year ago and can now get a better idea of the council’s financial position. This is our worst fears come true. We didn’t want to be right about this but in the last few days the Company’s House valuation has been eye catching. “We were told for many many years that these investments, if you could call them that, wouldn’t impact the budget for council services, but what is likely is it will.

“There are statutory functions we have to provide by law and we could be going into special measures to help us - we are in conversation with a government task force who are working with councillors and the CEO. We are trying to protect things people need. Meals on Wheels, the leisure centre, don’t have legal requirements to support them but we do not want to take them away. Stopping them won’t solve the problem.”

He added: “It would be irresponsible to speculate on what changes will be made at this stage, its people’s jobs and residents who rely on these services. People who were told these investments wouldn’t impact them.” He said there were two ways to look at the problem, cash flow or valuation, but that it was the same problem.

The council borrowed £750m for the project and, according to the latest valuation report, it is only worth £199m. Cllr Kirby added: “There is a black hole in the balance sheet.”

Furthermore the council’s total debt is expected to hit £2.5billion by 2024/25, up from its current level of £2.1bn. The council, he said, was firmly in “section 114 territory” where the government takes over the financial running of a local authority that is effectively bankrupt and unable to pay for even basic services.

Woking Borough Council is running on a budget deficit of about £10m on a budget of £45m. There is £11m collected in council tax with the rest coming from sources such as parking or rent rates.

The Companies House report on Victoria Square Woking Limited (VSWL) indicates the company incurred a net loss of £490,479,300 during the year ended December 31, 2021.

VSWL owns the new shopping centre, residential development, and hotel - backed by a longstanding agreement with Woking Council.

The report adds that its current liabilities exceeded its total assets by £501,988,671 indicating a “material uncertainty exists that may cast significant doubt on the company’s ability to continue as a going concern and, therefore, “that it may be unable to realise its assets and discharge its liabilities in the normal course of business”.

Cllr Kirby said: “We are going to find out the impact on the council soon and it’s not going to be good.”

The council has said the £490 million write down not only “confirms its worst fears” but casts “uncertainty on further funding for Victoria Square project beyond May with imminent reports into financial implications for the council itself.”

Cllr **Dale Roberts**, portfolio holder for finance and economic development at Woking Borough Council, said: “Even though we had fully anticipated massive losses and signalled them earlier in the year, this is still devastating news. He added: “As soon as we won last year’s elections, we took immediate action to limit the damage. First, we reduced the period for which we would commit working capital to VSWL from ten to five years. Then, we began to put in place the

missing systems and processes to properly run a commercial operation - and to protect the long-term interests of all Woking residents.

“Now, these accounts will further inform ongoing work being carried out by public sector finance experts, who we commissioned earlier this year to better understand the sustainability of the council’s own annual budget. Looking ahead, it would be irresponsible to speculate on the details and timings of what happens next. However it is responsible to be transparent about the scale of this situation. Only complete transparency will enable our commitment to finding solutions as soon as possible.”

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## It’s Walk to School Week in Surrey

23 May 2023



May is the month to talk about walking, more walking and even more walking. The weather is brighter, dryer and warmer and is the best time to get outdoors as a family.

We know how important walking to school is for children’s health and the environment. It reduces congestion, improves road safety at the school gates and instils lifelong healthy habits. It’s been proven that children who do some form of exercise, especially a walk before school, do better in class because they arrive refreshed, fit and ready to learn.

### **The school run alone is responsible for generating half a million tonnes of CO2 nationally per year**

Not everyone is able to walk to school, but there might be part of the journey you could walk. This Walk to School Week (15 to 19 May), could you think about turning rides into strides which can really make a difference? Take a look on our active travel webpage for inspiration.

### **Making it safe for Surrey’s children**

It’s important for parents to know that their children are safe when walking along a road. This is where our Feet First: Walking Training comes in - a programme that provides school children aged 7 to 8 years old (Year 3) with the road safety skills to enable them to safely walk to and from school with their parents and carers, whilst also preparing children to travel independently in the future. The training is done in the classroom as well as using online resources, at home activities and taking children outside on Surrey’s streets for them to practice what they’ve learned in a real-world environment. It includes teaching:

- The Green Cross Code and how to cross the road safely
- Road signs and pedestrian crossings
- Recognising safe and unsafe places to cross
- Dealing with distractions and rushing
- How to cross between parked cars
- Understanding vehicle lights and sounds
- Crossing driveways
- The benefits of active travel

Last term, our Feet First: Walking Training instructors taught 3,500 pupils across 65 schools the skills they need to stay safe on Surrey’s roads. By the end of this academic year our instructors will have taught over 5,500 pupils at nearly 100 primary schools in the county.

For more information on the training visit the Walking training for schools webpage or speak to your school to see if they’re signed up.

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## Epsom & Ewell's Coronation Champion

23 May 2023



Brownie leader **Mary Zoeller** from **Epsom** has been recognised for her outstanding volunteer work by Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

Led by **Queen Camilla**, the **Royal Voluntary Service** has recognised 500 outstanding volunteers from across the UK with a **Coronation Champion Award**. The awards celebrate and recognise the tireless work of volunteers around the country, which formed a key part of the coronation celebrations for His Majesty the King.

Mary received the award for her work volunteering with Girlguiding and other local charities. Over the past thirteen years she has inspired girls to have exceptional experiences as leader of **1<sup>st</sup> Ewell Village (St Mary's)**, as well as being Epsom division and assistant county commissioner for Surrey East.

The Coronation Champion Volunteer Awards were judged by a panel consisting of specialists in the volunteering field and charity leaders. Mary is one of only 500 people in the UK to be awarded a Coronation Champion Volunteer Award.

Mary attended the Coronation concert at Windsor Castle on Sunday 7 May in recognition of her award.

Mary said: *"I'm very shocked but absolutely delighted to be named a Coronation Champion. In Girlguiding, we all work hard to make a difference to girls and young women's lives and it's wonderful when our volunteering efforts are recognised. Attending the concert on Sunday was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, one which I will always remember."*

Brownie in 1<sup>st</sup> Ewell Village (St Mary's) Libby, aged 9, said: *"All the brownies are so excited and happy that Brown Owl won this award. When she told us about the award, we clapped really hard. Brown Owl deserves this award for always making sure we have the best time at Brownies every week. Brownies is so much fun, Brown Owl always helps everybody with a big smile."*

### About Girlguiding

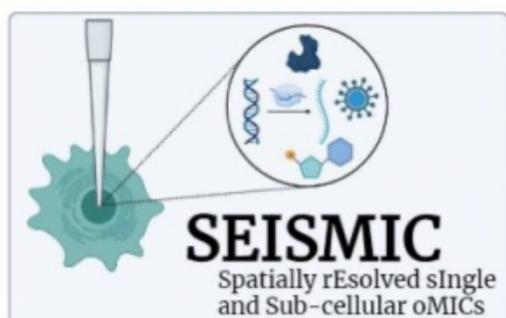
Girlguiding is the UK's largest youth organisation dedicated completely to girls, with around 370,000 members. Girls can do anything. We help them know that, whether they're 4 or 18 or in between. All girls have a home at Girlguiding - whoever they are, and wherever they are. We show them a world of possibilities, big and small. We help them think big and be bold in a space where they can be themselves, get creative, explore, and have fun. We're a powerful collective voice - with girls, led by girls - changing the world for the better.

We're 300,000 Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers, who come together to laugh, learn, explore and have adventures, in communities across the UK and virtually. We're 70,000 volunteers who make guiding happen by giving time, talent and enthusiasm. Registered Charity No 306016 [girlguiding.org.uk](http://girlguiding.org.uk)

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## Seismic change at Surrey University

23 May 2023



A new national research facility could significantly improve our understanding of infectious diseases, ageing and cancers, leading to novel treatments and vaccines.

The University of Surrey's SEISMIC facility will offer scientists access to technology that enables them to pick up single cells or even parts of cells and measure the spatial position of biomarkers like proteins, metabolites and lipids.

Funded by £2.8 million from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and industry, SEISMIC uses an advanced type of microscope manufactured by Yokogawa Corporation.

Professor Melanie Bailey, Director of the SEISMIC facility at the University of Surrey, said:

“Thanks to SEISMIC, we’ve made a breakthrough in measuring lipids in individual mammalian cells. This new technology is a game changer because it allows scientists to measure important biomarkers while keeping track of where they are in the cell. This is important for understanding how healthy cells work and how infections or cancer can affect them.

“We’re really excited about this because it will help us better understand how cells communicate with each other, and this knowledge could lead to new ways to fight diseases.”

SEISMIC enables single-cell and sub-cellular analysis, which will help scientists understand what happens under defined conditions and how cells signal to each other.

Dr Dany Beste, Senior Lecturer in Microbial Metabolism at the University of Surrey, said:

“The new facility is free for academics working in BBSRC-funded areas and also available to scientists in industry. We are confident SEISMIC will enhance scientific training in single-cell work and overcome some of the challenges in this area.”

SEISMIC is the University of Surrey’s third national research facility with the Ion Beam Centre and the Environmental Flow Laboratory.

Prof Bailey said:

“The combination of SEISMIC, the proton beam facility and the Ion Beam Centre are a boon to Surrey’s scientific and business communities and could allow us to understand the interaction between cancer cells and radiation in more detail. This has enormous potential and we are excited to welcome researchers to use our new facility.”

Surrey University News.

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## Epsom and Ewell planning improving after Government threat?

23 May 2023



Three Surrey councils have been warned that their planning departments are “not good enough” and threatened with having their decision-making powers stripped.

Guildford, Waverley, and **Epsom and Ewell Borough Councils** have each been written to by the Housing Secretary Michael Gove over their “very poor” quality of service that fell “far below” expected thresholds.

Councils must determine at least 70 per cent of non-major planning applications within eight weeks - or agree to an extension. The three Surrey councils have fallen well below that figure, the department said.

Mr Gove was therefore “minded” to designate the councils, meaning developers could bypass them completely and submit planning applications directly to the Planning Inspectorate. The impact effectively strips a local authority’s say over planning matters.

The letter to all three councils, part of a group of 10 nationally to be given final warning, read:

“The Government is clear that having an efficient and effective planning service at local authority level is essential to delivering the homes, building and investment the country needs.

“The planning performance regime was introduced to ensure that all local planning authorities contribute to this objective. I have significant concerns about the performance of a handful of local authorities including your council.”

For Guildford, its performance of 50.1 per cent between October 2020 and September 2022 was far below the expected threshold of 70 per cent. In **Epsom and Ewell that level was 52.5 percent**, and in Waverley it was 61.7 per cent.

The letter continued: “That is indicative of a very poor quality service to local residents and a significant deterrent to investment in your local housing market and wider economy. That is not good enough, and despite some more encouraging recent data, I am therefore minded to designate [the council].”

Mr Gove has now asked the Planning Inspectorate to prepare for designations over the summer period but said they had until June to make the required improvement to their planning service and “to exceed our performance thresholds and stay above it consistently”.

If levels were to drop again, he said, he would “not hesitate” to use his “powers to designate your council later this year”.

Waverley Conservatives have since called on the council’s ruling coalition to “get a grip” on planning.

Councillor Carole Cockburn, acting leader of Waverley Conservatives, said: “Communities and local businesses have had

the threat of the planning department being taken into special measures hanging over them for months because of the Lib Dem-Labour-Green-Farnham Residents Party coalition administration's inability to deal with the problem. They need to get a grip, and fast, to save our local voice in planning matters. Otherwise, people and businesses across Waverley will continue to suffer."

A spokesperson for Waverley Borough Council said that planning performance suffered in 2021 and early 2022, was a result of the pandemic, "teething issues" with a new planning IT system, an increase in applications following lockdown and a nationwide shortage of planning officers.

Since then, they said there had been a "significant uplift in planning performance, and we are making headway in reducing the backlog of planning applications, but caseloads for our officers remain high". Staffing remains a "significant challenge".

They added: "Mr Gove has acknowledged the improvement in our performance and rather than moving to formally designate the council, has given us the opportunity to demonstrate this improvement over a longer period of time."

Waverley Borough Council portfolio holder for planning and economic development, Councillor Liz Townsend, said: "We have been working closely with the Planning Advisory Service to improve our performance, and during the three most recent quarters 83 per cent, 92 per cent and 96 per cent of non-major applications respectively, were determined within the allotted time - significantly above the Government's 70 per cent target. Our view is that designation is not appropriate and would be counterproductive to sustaining and improving on the gains in planning performance we have achieved over the last year."

A Guildford Borough Council spokesperson said that it have been working to reduce backlog since June but that caseloads remain high. They said: "To supplement our internal planning team and improve performance, we have employed external planning consultants and temporary planning officers.

"With housing and the cost of living so high in Surrey, recruiting and retaining talent in the South-East remains a significant challenge. However, we are actively recruiting new permanent planners to help build a resilient planning function. Our new executive head of planning development, Claire Upton-Brown, took up post on March 20, 2023. She has a strong history of turning services around and is well qualified to address the challenges we are facing, with the support of the senior management and councillor team."

**Jackie King**, chief executive of **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** said the authority was hopeful the secretary of state would recognise the "significant" improvements it had made in recent months. She said: "The council has been fully aware of this historic issue relating to performance over that period, which was a result of Covid and capacity-related issues. "Having acknowledged the issues, the council took swift decisive action to address issues, resulting in the recruitment of a new management team in early 2022, the securing of additional staffing resourcing within the department as well as investing in IT and improved ways of working. Additional process reviews and follow on improvements were identified and implemented. All actions and process improvements have the full support of members. As a result of the council's actions, performance on planning applications has improved rapidly and significantly. Since early 2022, the council has continued to determine well over 90 per cent of planning applications within the statutory timescale target."

She added: "Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has demonstrated a sustained improvement in service and performance and have been in regular contact with officials at DLUHC over the past year to keep them up to date with the progress which the council has made. When the Minister reviews Epsom and Ewell's performance again in June, the council will be able show five successive quarters of performance well above the 70 per cent target:

APR/MAY/JUN 2022 - 95 per cent  
JUL/AUG/SEP 2022 - 92 per cent  
OCT/NOV/DEC 2022 - 94 per cent  
JAN/FEB/MAR 2023 - 96 per cent  
APR/MAY/JUN 2023 - 97 per cent (to date)

"Once reviewed we are hopeful that the minister will acknowledge and recognise that the issues the council faced were historic and temporary in nature and this council has taken significant proactive steps to address and improve."

The full list of councils written to by Michal Gove were:

Calderdale, Cotswold, **Epsom and Ewell**, Guildford, Hinckley and Bosworth, Pendle, Portsmouth, Vale of White Horse and Waverley councils, as well as the Peak District National Park Authority.

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## A Surrey Borough funds legal fight to stop oil drilling

23 May 2023



The June 8th judicial review against the Government’s decision to allow fossil fuel drilling near an **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** will go ahead. Waverley Borough Council held a special meeting of its executive committee to approve the £82,500 in funding to proceed - £32,500 for legal costs with a further £50,000 set aside in case it is liable for the oil driller’s costs.

According to the published papers, the executive considered “it a moral imperative to continue its legal challenge”. The money was approved on Thursday, May 11, as the council continues its four-year battle to stop UK Oil and Gas from drilling at Loxley Well in Dunsfold - and means the judicial review into the exploratory drilling of £123 million of oil by UK Oil and Gas (UKOG) can proceed.

Addressing the meeting was Councillor Steve Williams, Green Party member and portfolio holder for environment and sustainability. He said: “In July 2019, we held a listening panel where we could listen to the views of residents on this proposal that was in the air to undertake on-shore drilling in Waverley, in Dunsfold. We listened and we listened to the concern after concern in terms of the local environment as well as to the planet and the people of Dunsfold. The impact was absolutely clear and from that point on Waverley Borough Council saw it as its mission to do exactly that, to protect Dunsfold and to stop the drilling. It was consistent in terms of our position in declaring a climate emergency and committing ourselves to carbon neutrality.”

The original planning applications were rejected by Surrey County Council’s planning committee members in 2020. UKCOG then mounted an appeal which was eventually called in for review by the Secretary of State, Michael Gove. Mr Gove recused himself due to possible conflicts of interest, but former Housing Minister, Stuart Andrew ruled in favour of the plans.

Cllr Williams added: “Now is the opportunity for Waverley executive to follow this through. We would, if we did not do so, be inconsistent with our previous clear commitment on this issue. We would be neglecting our duty to the people of Dunsfold, we would be flying in the face of our climate emergency. It is imperative, for if we are to be successful in this, and I very much hope we shall be, but we should be putting our money where our mouth is, for the people of Dunsfold, for the natural environment, and for the planet.” He said the council must “take the next step and secure that judicial review in the anticipation of the outcome we’ve been working for four years”.

Cllr Liz Townsend, Lib Dem member and portfolio holder for planning and economic development, said the application had “wide implications”, not just for the borough, but the country as a whole. She said: “It’s difficult to believe that the UK already has 509 fossil fuel sites specifically in protected areas. More than any other country in the world. South Downs national park already holds nine oil and gas sites. If the Loxley well site is successful how many other sites will be allowed?”

She added, while some may view this as a David versus Goliath battle we “should remember who was the winner of that conflict”.

The committee heard that the cost to residents would work out to about 65p per person but had the potential to set a national precedent.

The committee also called on Dunsfold and Alfold Parish Councils to offer their “substantive” and vocal support.

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## Support your pop-up free local news service

23 May 2023



Even Al-Jazeera's global reaching website is plagued by pop-ups. Your local quality news service, The Epsom and Ewell Times, is determined to resist its website being used to generate income. We say "No" to irritating advertisements, pop-ups and other uninvited interferences with your reading pleasure.

The Epsom and Ewell Times has been in full operational mode for one year and we have not charged readers a penny. We want our service to be available to everyone. The 2019 Report into the Press of Baroness Caithness sets out, with substantial evidence in support, the vital role quality local news services provide local communities: Improvements to participation in local affairs: Council business and politics, community events and volunteer activities.

Our efforts have been recognised by the BBC permitting us to print the reports of its local reporters. The BBC does not provide any financial support.

We still have a long way to go to extend and improve our service and with your support we can continue to build.

Today The Epsom and Ewell Times appeals to all our readers to make a modest donation for us to cover our running costs. All our contributors are unpaid volunteers. However, there are fees to pay for regulation, subscriptions for the use of images, website hosting fees and other unavoidable expenses.

For donors giving us £20 or more there is an option to be entered into a draw for two free passes for the upcoming Satisfied Eye International Film Festival. 26th to 28th May Bourne Hall, Ewell.

We would be very grateful for any donation you can kindly make.

[CLICK HERE TO GO TO OUR DONATE FORM](#) and help the Epsom and Ewell Times maintain its service for another year.

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## Surrey asbestos pay-out to Epsom caretaker's family

23 May 2023



The family of a former Epsom school caretaker has paid tribute to an 'amazing' husband and dad after lawyers recently secured them a settlement in connection with his asbestos-related cancer death.

Colin Bradley, was diagnosed with mesothelioma, a cancer of the lining of the lung associated with exposure to asbestos, often decades previously.

Following his diagnosis, Colin, from Epsom, instructed asbestos-related disease specialists at Irwin Mitchell to investigate his illness and help him access the specialist treatment and care he required. However, he died aged 75 before he could see his case concluded.

The case was continued by Colin's son Darren Bradley, 53, in his dad's memory. His legal team has now secured a significant settlement from Surrey County Council in connection with Colin's mesothelioma.

Colin was employed by the local authority as a caretaker at Cuddington County First School from 1976 to 2003. The school is now Cuddington Primary School, run by the Howard Partnership Trust, who were not involved in the case against Surrey County Council - the defendant in the claim.

Surrey County Council admitted that the exposure Colin had to asbestos dust should not have happened, and conceded liability in his claim.

For this year's Workers' Memorial Day of 28 April, Darren joined the legal team to warn people of the ongoing danger posed by asbestos and to pay tribute to an 'amazing' dad who was taken from his family due to exposure to the hazardous substance.

Paul Ramsay, the asbestos-related disease specialist supporting Darren and his family, said: "The past few years have been incredibly difficult for Darren and his family. To face the distress of Colin's diagnosis and declining health due to mesothelioma has taken its toll on all of them.

"Colin was determined to get at the truth of his asbestos exposure and while nothing can bring Colin back to his family, the conclusion of the case and settlement gives them some closure and the answers they were looking for.

"However, Colin's death is also a stark reminder of the dangers still posed by asbestos, including in public buildings. While many people associate the use of asbestos with heavy industry its use was much more widespread, including in schools, hospitals, leisure centres and offices.

"Our own research shows that the presence of asbestos in public buildings, including schools continues to be a real concern throughout the country. In speaking out, Colin's family hope to make others aware of the risks of this material.

This year's Workers' Memorial Day is an opportunity to remember workers like Colin and pause to reflect and remember all those who have been lost."

Before his death Colin believed he had been exposed to asbestos in the boiler room and various service areas whilst working at the school.

Colin had always been in good health and did not drink alcohol or smoke but began to feel unwell in August 2020, with a loss of energy and appetite.

After consulting his GP and being sent for tests, mesothelioma was diagnosed in December 2020. Colin began chemotherapy on 13 January, 2021, but his condition continued to deteriorate. He died six months after his diagnosis, on 22 June 2021.

Colin was married to Lorraine Bradley, 65, who is step-mum to Colin's sons, Darren, Mark and Simon Bradley.

Darren said: "All of our lives changed the day of dad's diagnosis. As he'd always led such an active and healthy lifestyle, it was hard to accept anything so serious could be wrong. The speed his illness progressed shocked us all.

"Dad was the central figure in our family, always there encouraging, supporting and looking after us all, even long into our own adult lives. His loss has left a huge void - and it is especially upsetting to see Lorraine left widowed and alone when they still had so much to look forward to in their retirement - but I take some comfort knowing that he would have been proud that we secured an admission of liability from his former employer.

"It's hard to imagine you could come across such a dangerous substance in a school environment and it's shocking to think it could still be there in other schools, posing a risk to others.

"I hope that by speaking about my amazing dad, we can reflect on how much we miss him every day, but also warn others of the dangers that still exist by coming into contact with asbestos. If we can help keep another family together or help make the argument for asbestos removal, dad's death won't have been in vain."

Workers' Memorial Day on 28 April remembers those who have died as a result of their employment, and campaigns to improve health and safety standards in the workplace and increase protection for employees.

Research undertaken by Irwin Mitchell suggests more than 4,500 public buildings across 20 of the UK's largest local authorities still contain asbestos, averaging at 225 buildings per authority.

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## A special Epsom school's future secured.

23 May 2023



The future of Kingswood House School on West Hill in Epsom has been secured after the planning brought by local developer Steve Curwen, was refused by Surrey County Council on 21 st March. The School's landlords have also confirmed in court proceedings pending with the School that they have no objection to the grant of a new lease to the School.

Kingswood House School has existed on its site for over 100 years and has within its 250 pupils, 172 with registered special educational needs (SEND) the highest number of any school in Surrey. The School has been awarded the status of "Asset of Community Value" in recognition of its contribution to the local community and has recently been graded "excellent" in an inspection undertaken by the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

The proposed planning application would have seen the 100 year old school replaced with a much smaller school of only 60 pupils for extreme special needs. The application was met with a very high level of local opposition culminating in 440 objections and a petition of 150 due in large part to a fear that it was a precursor to an application to build houses on the school playing field and indeed, across the whole site in the event that the proposed school did not proceed.

Related reports:

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# The Cost of Surrey's Crime Commissioner: "It's criminal"?

23 May 2023



The Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey Police was elected in May 2021 on a turnout of Surrey voters of 38%. That was 5% higher than the national average but the election coincided with Surrey County Council's election in all the County's 81 single-member seats.

The Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner is Conservative **Lisa Townsend**. Her office explains her role: "Your Commissioner is responsible for overseeing the work of Surrey Police, holding the Chief Constable to account on your behalf, and funding key services that strengthen community safety and support victims."

The Liberal Democrats are calling for the abolition of this post after uncovering the cost of running the office. They state the post has cost £3.2 million since 2019. And claim: "Since 2021, the Surrey Commissioner, Lisa Townsend, has had three staff members to run her office social media feeds. The Commissioner has increased the office costs since being elected by £180,000 - the equivalent to seven community police officers. Since the Commissioner was elected, Surrey has also seen a fall in community officer numbers (39)."

This compares with an annual budget for Surrey Police of about £250 million and its employment of approximately 2153 officers.

**Julie Morris** Leader of the Liberal Democrat group on **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council** told The Times:

"I have never understood the purpose of Police Commissioners. Political appointees have no place in solving crime. My experience is that many crimes considered small and personal are unworthy of being given Police attention. These can cause a great deal of emotional distress and are simply neither followed up nor are they treated seriously. Putting resources back into those categories of crime will help grow confidence in the Police."

Top Image is a **mock up** by Epsom and Ewell Times of Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend holding two mobile phones.

**Lisa Townsend** responded to the **Epsom and Ewell Times** and said: "Surrey Police now has more frontline officers than ever before. It will be officially announced this week that the Force has not only met but exceeded its target for extra officers under the government's programme to increase numbers by 20,000 across the country. That means more than 300 extra police officers will have joined the ranks since 2019. This is great news for residents and I believe the new recruits will help to make the Force the strongest it has been in a generation.

"Last year, Surrey Police made an operational decision to temporarily halt the recruitment of Police Community Support Officers which was identified as one way of helping the Force meet its savings target. There were no 'drastic cuts' - these posts were replaced with new warranted officers and there were no redundancies or loss of numbers to Surrey Police's frontline teams. We expect PCSOs to be back to the current numbers within the next three years and I am pleased to say that recruitment for this important role has been reopened and the Force are actively seeking applications right now.

"As far as my office budget is concerned, it is important to stress that it accounts for just 0.5% of the total policing budget for which I am responsible.

"When I was elected as Commissioner in 2021, there were only three PCC teams in the entire country that were smaller than we had in Surrey. I would be failing in my elected duty if I did not make sure it is properly equipped to effectively carry out all the responsibilities and growing demands of the PCC role.

"There was a small increase in my budget last year that added posts where we were at our weakest or least resilient which included one extra post in our communications team. I do not employ three people to 'run our office social media feeds' - the communications team fulfil a number of crucial roles on our wider engagement with the Surrey public across the county.

"My office is also responsible for commissioning vital services across our county that provide life-changing support for a variety of people across Surrey including survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence. In addition to our existing funding streams, over the last two years our commissioning team have worked tirelessly in managing to secure more than £4m in government funding for a range of projects in Surrey. This money will help provide key services helping some of the most vulnerable in our society as well as local projects, such as the Safer Streets initiative, that are making a real difference to our communities."

**Alex Coley** - who has been chairing Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Community and Wellbeing Committee and was re-elected on 4th May for the RA in Ruxley Ward responded: "I attended the Police and Crime Panel on 18th April and was surprised to learn that the Surrey Police Group is showing both a capital underspend and a revenue underspend for this

financial year. Several million pounds of surplus funds. In February the PCC decided to increase the share of Council Tax by 5.07%. This is a percentage increase greater than all 11 districts and boroughs in Surrey, even greater than the increase from the county council. I have to wonder why, given the multi-million pound surplus. How will this money be used?

Perhaps funds are not being effectively committed to policing priorities? The PCC is now half way through a four year plan in which the flagship policy is the prevention of violence against women and girls. A crucial policy for policing nationwide. However, it was revealed in February that Surrey Police have the worst rape charge rate in England and Wales. Furthermore, the PEEL report in June last year, by HMICFRS the policing inspectorate, showed a grading of Requires Improvement for suspect and offender management, with specific issues discovered in the management of sex offenders.”

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“It’s criminal” is a well known expression denoting waste and has not been used here to suggest any criminal act.

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## “Long-live” the Salts. Crowned with promotion.

23 May 2023



**Epsom & Ewell FC 2-1 Wick FC.** Southern Combination League - Division One Playoff Final. Saturday 6th May 2023.

Thirty years to the day after our final first team match at West Street, we made our final bow at Fetcham Grove but in much happier circumstances, as our 2-1 win over Wick ensured us of promotion back to Step Five for the first time since the dark days of our Centenary relegation season of 2017/18.

The pressure was on. Our second place finish and subsequent home advantage for the playoffs had made us favourites and we had come through a nervy encounter against Selsey just seven days previously. How would we fare against Wick? Well, it was never going to be a comfortable afternoon for an Epsom supporter (but then, did anyone expect any different!) and the match will only live long in the memory for three things. 1) Two wonderful strikes from Jaevon Dyer. 2) A horrible challenge on Dyer in the closing seconds. 3) The significance of what has been achieved with this result, with a return to the Combined Counties League appearing nailed on and the challenges that will bring, including another trip to face Jersey Bulls.

Of course playoff finals are rarely of high quality; they are all about the occasion and the performance means nothing whatsoever without the result, so our players deserve a lot of credit. After being hauled back to 1-1 and with momentum appearing to be slipping away, they turned the contest around and finished worthy winners in the end.

An attendance of 384; our largest at home since our final League match at West Street in April 1993 when Aldershot Town supplied a large number of the 1,087 present that day, gathered in the pouring rain to see whether we could clinch promotion. The visitors brought a group of people with them who certainly contributed to the atmosphere at the Leisure Centre end of the ground, and how Wick must wish that they followed them on a regular basis!

We took the field with just two changes from our win against Selsey with Kevin Moreno-Gomez coming in for Johnny “Sonic” Akoto and Lewis Pearch starting ahead of Jamie Byatt. The opening exchanges were fairly tame as both clubs settled into the occasion, with the Wick drummer setting a beat for the match which started to take on a carnival atmosphere as the rain began to relent.

The first chance of the match came our way in the 11th minute after a clever pass inside the defender to Pearch who bore down on goal, only to be denied by a fantastic save from Keelan Belcher who just got a leg to the low shot, diverting the ball a couple of feet wide of the goal. Belcher was then required to punch the ball away under pressure from Dylan Merchant seconds later, but the next real action came just after the twenty minute mark with a snap shot from Dave Crouch that Tom Theobald dealt with fairly comfortably.

The game was meandering a little if I’m honest until it all changed in the 31st minute when Athan Smith-Joseph got down the left wing. His cross went beyond everyone but was collected by Dyer, almost out on the touchline and he beat two men, before cutting onto his right foot and drilling the ball, via a faint deflection, low past Belcher at his near post. It was a superb strike and on a wet day, the ball skidded through at quite a pace before nestling in the net and justifying in one instant why I love standing behind the goal we attack, even if it was difficult to hear yourself speak at times, something that doesn’t often happen at Epsom games!

Smith-Joseph tried his luck five minutes later with Gideon Acheampong, making his 100th appearance for the Salts, providing a great overlap, but the shot was weak and wide. The game then seemed to take on a strange pattern with our boys unsure of whether to push forward for a second goal, and Wick then began to hold a greater share of the possession for a while, although were rarely threatening with it until the final seconds of the half when Theobald palmed away a stinging drive from distance from Sam Connolly.



The rain started again as the players came out for the second half, but the pattern of passiveness continued. We didn't seem to know whether to stick or twist although Moreno-Gomez was notably getting forward more and his perfect centre was missed completely by the incoming Pearch just six yards out just five minutes into the second period! Theobald was out to clear a long ball shortly afterwards but as the half progressed, we seemed happy enough to allow the visitors to retain the ball more; a tactic that is obviously not without risk. Additionally, Acheampong began to see more and more of the ball on his side, but without any help as two players often appeared on his flank and from one of these attacks, we had a close escape when a deep cross was headed over at the far post.

Our Manager Matt Chapman clearly noticed this development and we made a substitution with the ageless Byatt coming on for Smith-Joseph and Pearch moving out to the right, presumably to help out on that flank where required, but before the new plan had really settled in the visitors were level as a harmless looking ball in from the Wick left wasn't claimed by anyone and Theobald had to come out for the ball and was adjudged to have clipped Aaron Tester in the penalty area. It certainly looked like a penalty to me, but people nearer the incident weren't convinced. Either way though Connolly stepped up and clinically beat Theobald from the spot in the 66th minute. It's hard to pin any blame onto any one individual here, especially from eighty yards away, so it's probably best to describe this one as a defensive miscommunication!

Of course, it is easy to make light of it now, but at the time, this was a concerning development. We had surrendered any momentum we had built up and would effectively have to go out and win the match once again. Dyer was a constant thorn in their sides though and was clumsily brought down on the edge of the area, but out wide, from where Gavin Quintyne's free kick went straight through the wall and struck the inside of Belcher's right hand post, flying across the six yard box and away. Dyer was continuing to receive some rough treatment and found himself on the deck in the area a few minutes later, but fortunately was able to continue after treatment.

Byatt then struck at Belcher from twenty yards as we began our push for the finish line before the key moment of our season occurred in the 82nd minute. For anyone who had missed the first goal, Dyer kindly produced a carbon copy for his second, collecting the ball out on the left wing, beating two men once again and then cutting onto his right foot before drilling the ball in at the near post. Belcher got a glove to the ball, but to be fair the shot was much too powerful and accurate and we were ahead again, this time to stay.

It was all down to game management now and we saw out the final minutes without any defensive worries, although there was still time for controversy as we caught Wick on the break and Dyer nicked the ball past Marshall Ball, only to find himself the victim of an assault on the touchline with a horrible knee high lunge. Fortunately for Dyer he saw it coming and wasn't bearing any weight at the time of the challenge, or it could have been really serious and I am happy to report that he is fine now. The referee had the red card out within seconds as our players then converged on the scene and the obligatory scuffles followed, during which Nick Wilson received a red card. Both will now receive a three game suspension at the start of the next season, but it does seem harsh that Wilson will receive the same punishment as Ball, because it was a horrible foul; a dark red card, if there was such a thing.

Fortunately, the final couple of minutes were played out without further incident and after nearly six minutes of injury time the final whistle confirmed our success. The players gathered together and blue flares were set off by the players on the pitch as the celebrations began. It was quite a sight!

It's been a tumultuous season with numerous changes to the Management and the squad for a number of reasons, some of which were unnecessary. However, the players pulled us through and Dyer in particular will deserve his own chapter in our club's history as we now get a chance to establish ourselves back at Step Five once again, which was extremely pivotal, maybe even to our entire existence as a club. The promotion means that we will now be entered back into the FA Cup and the Senior County Cup and will hopefully herald the start of brighter times. Many issues remain at our club, but these are all for another day.

Maybe the final word should go to our defender Steve Springett, who has suffered a broken ankle, a broken nose, a badly dislocated thumb and various other injury concerns over his two seasons here, and described this season as "unfinished business" after falling in the playoffs last season. Now at least he can say it is mission accomplished! Well done chaps!

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Nick Wilson, Steve Springett, Dylan Merchant, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Lewis Pearch, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Jamie Byatt for Pearch (64), Rory Edwards for Pearch (84), Thompson Adeyemi for Stanley (84)

Article here about the 30 years since Epsom and Ewell played at the West Street ground.

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## Horton hustings heat up election

23 May 2023



Conservatives, Labour and Residents Associations battled out their political differences at the hustings Tuesday. Held at local Southfield Park Primary School. Candidates for the new ward of Horton each presented themselves for 3 minutes and then opened to questions. The audience may or may not have contained any genuine floating voters. It was difficult to tell.

Mark Todd and Ros Gordon opened proceedings for Labour, followed by Henal Ladwa and Eber Kington for the Residents' Associations. Kieran Persand and Bernie Muir rounded off for the Conservatives.

The Liberal Democrat candidates did not attend.

The candidates were united in their opposition to the development of Green Belt in Epsom and Ewell, especially on Horton Farm. However, there were differences as to who should get credit for initiating the pause to the progress of the draft Local Plan. Bernie Muir (Conservative) claimed to have written to every other Councillor advising a pause was necessary. Eber Kington (RA) disclosed that he had been pressing for this earlier in emails to fellow RA Councillors and Council officers. It was Cllr Kington who tabled an emergency motion to pause the Local Plan.

A member of the audience highlighted the recent announcement of Sir Keir Starmer Leader of the Labour Party that Labour would reinstate targets and fight nimbyism. Albeit, giving the housing targets to local government to determine.

Mr Kington attacked Labour's expansion of the ULEZ zone to the London borders of Epsom and Ewell but Mark Todd made no apology for this and maintained it was necessary to protect the health of children.

There were some moments of tension and friction but all the candidates were warmly applauded for the courage of their standing for election and for allowing the public an opportunity to scrutinise them.

The hustings was organised by Epsom and Ewell Times and we thank all the candidates for participating.

Photo credit: Steven McCormick Photography

Left to right: Ros Gordon, Mark Todd, Bernie Muir, Kieran Persand, (Lionel Blackman - Chair), Henal Ladwa and Eber Kington.

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## Cautious candidates cause College and Court cancellations

23 May 2023



The three willing Residents Association candidates for College Ward were disappointed that the Liberal Democrats, Conservatives and Labour Candidates did not register to participate in last night's scheduled local election hustings. The Epsom and Ewell Times pulled the plug on the event in the afternoon as we did not think it appropriate to stage a one-party event. Cllr **Nigel Collin** (RA College Ward) and his colleagues **Charlotte Day** and **Kate Brooks** had willingly registered after the first invitation to do so.

Top image - an empty 3rd Scout Hall St John Chandlers, Church Road, Epsom

Similarly, for Court Ward, only **Robert Geleit** of the Labour Party registered to face the public and debate with his opponents from the Liberal Democrats, Residents Association and Conservatives, but they did not show willing and we pulled the plug to avoid a one-man one-party show.

The willing candidates:

Charlotte Mary **Day** - Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell for College.



I aim to create a sustainable future and if elected, I will focus on sustainable development as well as protecting the countryside and our green spaces.

Kate Emily **Brooks** - Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell for College.



I am committed to protecting our area and my 10 month old daughter has made me want to make Epsom and Ewell the best place to enable families to thrive. I will press SCC to improve maintenance of our roads and pavements.

Nigel **Collin** - Residents' Associations of Epsom and Ewell for College.



My aim is to continue to improve the Community and to help resolve residents problems. If elected , I will continue to scrutinize Council Expenditure to ensure value for money and to fight for a cessation of the statutory nuisance caused by operations in the chalk pit.

Cllr Collin was keen to use the opportunity to rebut LibDem claims: On the Local Plan Cllr Collin points out the LibDems voted for the Draft Local Plan, the Government forces EEBC to use Green Belt, Council meetings are only held in private to protect 3rd party privacy and potholes are Surrey's responsibility and we will press them hard.

Rob **Geleit** - Labour Party for Court.



I am standing to stick up for my friends and neighbours in Court Ward. We go out door knocking every weekend and get round the area once a year. Every time we are out we pick up two or three problems to fix, so over the course of an electoral term we really lift the area.

No other Party will do this for you.

We are a strong opposition to the ruling Residents' Association Party. I have heard one of them say that we are their 'conscience'.

Vote Labour!

Related Reports:

Letters › Epsom & Ewell Times - Julie Morris responds to Cllr Collin

Local Elections 4th May 2023

Borough Council Election Hustings 2023

All Candidates listed