

Surrey Hills now a “National Landscape”

25 November 2023



All designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England and Wales are becoming National Landscapes, including the **Surrey Hills National Landscape**. The new name reflects their national importance; the vital contribution they make to protect the nation from the threats of climate change, nature depletion and the wellbeing crisis, whilst also creating greater understanding and awareness for the work that they do.

This is a significant milestone for the UK and the next step in fully realising the National Landscapes’ vision to be the leading exemplars of how thriving, diverse communities can work with and for nature in the UK: restoring ecosystems, providing food, storing carbon to mitigate the effects of climate change, safeguarding against drought and flooding, whilst also nurturing people’s health and wellbeing.

The Surrey Hills National Landscape was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1958, the second to be designated in the country. It covers around a quarter of Surrey, the most wooded county in England, and is situated within the London Metropolitan Greenbelt with 1.5 million people living within 10km of the landscape. With rising national pressures regarding climate change, the biodiversity emergency the mental health crisis, the Surrey Hills as a National Landscape will better protect precious habitats such as heathland, downland and woodland which are home to important species, as well as providing space for people and nature to thrive.

Kathy Atkinson, Chair of the Surrey Hills National Landscape says:

“There’s often a healthy scepticism around talk of “re-branding” and people might reasonably ask, “What’s the point?” in calling the Surrey Hills a National Landscape instead of an ‘AONB’.

Firstly, the legal status of the Surrey Hills as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is unchanged. This amazing area retains the same protections in law as a National Park. As set out by the Glover review in 2019, AONBs are fragmented, misunderstood and often see even greater pressures with less resource. Glover recommended not only a renaming of ‘AONBs’ to National Landscapes, but the power which could follow in terms of a strengthened network, with increased funding, governance reform, and new shared purposes to help us fight against the challenges our protected landscapes may face.

We need to use this rebrand as a step change to how we connect with our protected landscapes. To excite and engage the widest possible public in the task of protecting the Surrey Hills, a cherished landscape that is under threat like never before. This is a critical decade for our natural world, and National Landscapes brings the opportunity to collectively reduce the impact of substantial threats from a National and localised perspective. So, I urge everyone to embrace our National Landscapes vision as a tool to help us support a healthy and thriving landscape, for nature and for people.”

Text provided by Surrey Hills National Landscape

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Epsom’s leader welcomes more power for Surrey County Council

25 November 2023



Following the Chancellor’s announcement in the Autumn Statement regarding the extension of devolution and further County Deals, **Surrey County Council** is engaging in discussions with Government on a Level 2 County Deal.

Councillor Hannah Dalton, Chair of Surrey Leaders’ and Leader of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, said: “This is a great opportunity for Surrey, which I warmly welcome. The devolution of important functions to the county will, over time, support all our local Councils in their work of delivering for our residents”.

The proposed County Deal will see the devolution of the following functions to Surrey:

Strategic role in delivering services:

- Host for Government functions best delivered at a strategic level involving more than one local authority e.g. Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- Opportunity to pool services at a strategic level,
- Opportunity to adopt innovative local proposals to deliver action on climate change and the UK’s Net Zero targets,

Supporting local businesses

- Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) functions including hosting strategic business voice,

Local control of sustainable transport

- Ability to introduce bus franchising,

Investment spending

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund planning and delivery at a strategic level (*w.e.f. April 2025: District and Borough Councils will individually have control until then*)

Giving adults the skills for the labour market

- Devolution of Adult Education functions and the core Adult Education budget
- Providing input into Local Skills Improvement plans

Local control of infrastructure decisions

- Homes England compulsory purchase powers (held concurrently)

The invitation does not involve or require any structural reform of local government or unitarisation of any form, and crucially does not require there to be a Directly Elected Mayor (DEM). The 12 Councils (11 District and Borough Councils and the County Council) retain their sovereignty, which aligns with the partnership work already taking place across the county.

Surrey is well-placed to seize this opportunity and work together to realise the full benefits of a Level 2 devolution deal for our residents, economy, and environment.

In response to the invitation, work will continue with a range of key stakeholders, including the District and Borough Councils, businesses, LEPs, Further Education colleges and Universities, bus companies, health agencies and other key stakeholders to build a consensus around a positive response to the opportunity to secure a devolution deal for Surrey. As part of this, opportunities for potential onward devolution of functions from county council to district/borough councils will also be explored with the District and Borough Councils.

The counties that have been invited include single council areas, that do not have adjacent, neighbouring unitary authorities or ‘island’ unitary authorities within their boundaries. As such they are not in a position to form Mayoral or County Combined Authorities, which are alternative structures for securing County Deals.

The Levelling Up White Paper published in February 2022, set out three levels of devolution (see Annex A below). A ‘Level 2’ County Deal does not require there to be a Directly Elected Person, and excludes certain powers reserved to Mayoral and Combined Authority areas.

Government officials have expressed an interest in learning about any additional functions local areas would wish to see devolved over the longer term, the Government have made it clear that in the interests of making progress, the Level 2 County Deals being offered will only include the powers outlined above.

Councillor Tim Oliver, Leader, Surrey County Council, said: “I have always been clear in my determination that the residents of Surrey will not be left behind, and this devolution deal with government is a step in the right direction in helping us achieve that ambition.

“Local government and our local communities are best placed to deliver what Surrey needs. I’m pleased that the government is recognising that, with hopefully further devolved powers to local government in due course.

“More control over things like local growth, skills and careers for our young people, lifelong learning provision, the climate agenda, local public transport, and housing, will enable the county council, and partners, to make positive change in Surrey.

“We look forward to working with the government, and with local partners like district and borough councils, businesses, and education providers, to maximise the opportunities this county deal presents for the benefit of all residents.

“This is a positive step in delivering more power to communities.”

Climate Justice. A generation thing?

25 November 2023



With **Epsom Hospital Doctor** and mother of four **Kristine Damberg** in the lead, **Mothers’ Rebellion for Climate Justice**, a global grassroots organization, orchestrated coordinated actions across the UK and 30 countries on six continents on Saturday, November 18, to mark **World Children’s Day**. In response to the escalating threat posed by the climate crisis to children worldwide, the movement held fifteen impactful “Circles” across the UK, drawing attention to the urgent need for action. Dr Damberg was joined by Epsom mother Lisa Davies and several other Epsom residents, including children.

They joined the action that started at the UN Green for a symbolic march to Parliament Square where they formed a Mothers’ Rebellion Circle with speeches, songs and children’s activities.

As part of World Children’s Day, which falls on November 20 and commemorates the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Mothers Rebellion staged non-violent public protests. The focus was on the severe risks children face due to the impacts of global heating, including floods, heatwaves, droughts, storms, ecocide, and violent conflicts. Particularly emphasized was the disproportionate burden borne by children in the Global South due to resource-intensive practices by the Global North.

Operating under the banner of Climate Justice, Mothers’ Rebellion called for respect for the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, demanding that those in power take decisive actions to address the escalating climate emergency. The movement condemned structural violence against children and highlighted the exacerbating factors such as poverty, economic and social inequalities, food insecurity, and forced displacement.

A recent Unicef analysis revealed that at least 43 million children were displaced over the past six years due to extreme weather events. Healthcare professionals, including Dr. Camilla Kingdon, president of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, warned that climate change poses an existential threat to children’s health and well-being, with tangible impacts already witnessed, including air pollution and extreme weather effects.

Mothers’ Rebellion members, including Dr. Kristine Damberg, stressed the urgency of meaningful climate action. Damberg highlighted the need for cleaner air, more green spaces, healthier food, and reduced strain on healthcare systems, emphasizing the tangible benefits for both current and future generations.

Expressing deep concern for the future, mothers and allies globally urged countries to incorporate children’s right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment into national legislation. They called for just measures to implement these rights and emphasized the historical role of mothers and caregivers in protecting and nurturing the vulnerable.

Elizabeth Cripps, Senior Lecturer in Political Theory, and Lisa Davies, a mother of three, shared their perspectives on the collective need for change, stressing the importance of a united effort in the face of a climate crisis threatening the overall future of children.

UNICEF acknowledged the voices of children and young people, stating, “From climate change, education, and mental health, to ending racism and discrimination, children are raising their voices on the issues that matter to their generation.”

Mothers’ Rebellion for Climate Justice concluded its global actions with a resolute stance: “In the face of the climate crisis and its impact on children, we refuse to look away.”

For more information, visit mothersrebellion.com.

Image: Dr Kristine Damberg, Credit Andrea Domeniconi

East Surrey Hospital Inspection

25 November 2023



Maternity services at East Surrey Hospital have been downgraded after inspectors flagged six key areas for improvement. A report following an inspection of the unit raised concerns with infection control, checks on emergency equipment and medicine management.

These areas were listed as steps that must be taken in order for the service to improve along with actions relating to audits, completing documents and safeguarding training for junior doctors.

The Redhill hospital, run by Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, maintains its overall outstanding rating from the Care Quality Commission (CQC), but an inspection of its maternity service took place in September.

‘Safety of women, birthing people and babies put at risk’: In a report published on November 15, inspectors said they visited the hospital as part of the CQC’s national maternity inspection programme.

The service was downgraded to requires improvement with inspectors saying medicines were “not always managed well”, care records were not always completed and leaders did not always implement improvements in a timely way.

Inspectors said: “Staffing levels did not always match the planned numbers, which put the safety of women, birthing people and babies at risk. The service was not always visibly clean, and there were times when equipment checks were not completed.”

As well as this, “adverse incidents” may have been contributed to by out-of-date policies and guidelines.

How has the hospital responded?

Tina Hetherington, chief nurse of Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, said: “Delivering safe, quality care to our patients is our absolute priority. I want to apologise for where we haven’t got it right and the effect this may have on patient confidence in our maternity services. Rest assured that we are taking immediate action to address the issues raised by inspectors to ensure our patients receive the high-quality care they rightly expect.”

Inspectors said feedback from patients as part of the inspection showed there were “mixed views” about experiences of the service. The report said: “Feedback included about concerns about delays, poor communication, and support needing to improve. For example, being spoken to unkindly, short staffing, and not being listened to. Positive feedback commented on the reassurance and care given by staff, especially on delivery suite.”

Some areas ‘not always visibly free of dust, dirt, and bodily fluids’: Under the area of cleanliness, infection control and hygiene, inspectors said: “Staff did not always use equipment and control measures to protect women and birthing people, themselves, and others from infection. They did not always keep equipment and the premises visibly clean, and we saw some staff were not in-line with uniform policy to minimise risk of infection. This included “several staff members” not routinely using gloves when they should, creating an infection risk and bed spaces that were “not always visibly free of dust, dirt, and bodily fluids”.

Inspectors also said delays to discharge on the postnatal ward were negatively impacting on patient and staff experience, with delayed inductions and transfers to delivery suites in evidence.

The service had a rate “well below” the national rate of stillbirths, of between one and two stillbirths per 1,000 births, compares to 4 per 1000 births nationally.

Inspectors were also told by staff there were not enough midwives and managers to mitigate risks of short staffing, leading to “exhaustion and low morale”.

‘Robust improvement plan’ in place: Ms Hetherington said the trust recognised that the national shortfall across maternity had affected services. She said a recruitment drive had been launched this year and since the inspection 13 new midwives had started jobs, with a further five due to start in the coming weeks.

The chief nurse also said a “robust improvement plan” had been put in place since the inspection, which included tougher infection control measures, more frequent cleanliness checks, and more thorough daily safety checks of medicines and specialist emergency care equipment. She added: “We are clear there is more work to do, but our maternity team are passionate about patient care. While the CQC highlighted many examples of good practice such as timely access to services and quick action on any identified patient risks, this report will help us focus our efforts and engage with our patients through forums such as our maternity voices partnership, on making the immediate and long-term improvements that will deliver for our patients and their families year after year.”

Inspectors also raised examples of “outstanding practice” in the report, highlighting an inclusion midwife with a specific focus on promoting equality and diversity for staff and patients, and tackling health inequalities.

Leaders monitored incidents and outcomes for health inequalities and ethnicity to ensure no one was put at additional risk because of their ethnicity or personal circumstances, the report said.

How Surrey MPs voted on ceasefire

25 November 2023



No Surrey MPs voted in Parliament for a ceasefire between Israel and Gaza. The vote took place on Wednesday (November 15) on an amendment to the King’s Speech that was put forward by Scottish National Party MPs.

The amendment called for government to “uphold international law and protect all civilians in Israel and Palestine”, to “condemn the horrific killings by Hamas and the taking of hostages” and to “reaffirm that there must be an end to the collective punishment of the Palestinian people”.

It also called for the “urgent release of all hostages and an end to the siege of Gaza to allow vital supplies of food, fuel, medicine and water to reach the civilian

population”.

Of Surrey’s 11 MPs, six voted against the amendment, and the other five had no vote recorded.

The decades-long conflict in Israel and Gaza escalated and gained further international scrutiny on October 7 after a Hamas attack on Israel.

The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement remains on the ground supporting those affected and said there were more than 1.5million people displaced in Gaza, with more than 240 Israeli hostages being held.

The situation there was described by the charity as “deeply alarming and worsening every day”.

The King’s speech sets out the priorities for the coming Parliamentary session, and was delivered by King Charles for the first time as monarch on November 7.

The amendment calling for an immediate ceasefire was lost by 293 votes to 125.

The Labour Party saw eight shadow ministers and two parliamentary private secretaries leave their roles after going against leader Sir Keir Starmer’s order not to vote for the amendment.

Surrey’s MPs were all elected to represent the Conservative Party in Parliament.

Sir Paul Beresford, Chris Grayling and Dominic Raab have announced they will not be standing in the next general election, due to be held before January 2025.

Reigate MP Crispin Blunt confirmed he was the MP arrested on suspicion of rape and the possession of controlled substances on October 26. He was suspended by the Conservative Party and has been released by Surrey Police on conditional bail.

All the Surrey MP votes are listed in full below:

Sir Paul Beresford (Mole Valley) – No
Crispin Blunt (Reigate) – No vote recorded
Claire Coutinho MP (East Surrey) – No
Michael Gove (Surrey Heath) – No
Chris Grayling MP (Epsom & Ewell) – No
Jeremy Hunt MP (South West Surrey) – No vote recorded
Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne) – No vote recorded
Jonathan Lord (Woking) – No vote recorded
Dominic Raab (Esher and Walton) – No vote recorded
Angela Richardson (Guildford) – No
Dr Ben Spencer (Runnymede and Weybridge) – No

What are your priorities for community safety?

25 November 2023



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has launched a public consultation on the priorities for community safety in the borough and are asking residents, workers, visitors and businesses to have their say on the proposed action plan.

The council is part of the Epsom and Ewell Community Safety Partnership, which also includes Surrey Fire & Rescue Service, Surrey Police, Surrey County Council, Kent, Surrey and Sussex Probation Service, Surrey Downs Clinical Commissioning Group, Surrey Police & Crime Commissioner and Rosebery Housing Association.

Community safety covers a wide range of activities designed to reduce the likelihood of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour, protect victims and hold perpetrators to account. It also involves reducing incidents of domestic abuse and behaviour damaging to the community.

As part of the Epsom & Ewell Community Safety Partnership, the council have committed to playing its part in the following themes:

1. Focus on the most vulnerable or those at risk of harm
2. Serious organised crime and PREVENT
3. Identify and tackle crime and anti-social behaviour
4. Improve Community Engagement

The new Plan is the first time the council has publicly committed to actions in support of those themes and they would like to gather the views of the community.

Cllr **Alex Coley**, (RA Ruxley) Chair of the Council’s Crime and Disorder Committee said: “I asked for this community safety action plan to go to a public consultation so we can hear what local people think our priorities should be. The government recently conducted a national consultation on expanded anti-social behaviour powers and the relationship between Community Safety Partnerships and Police & Crime Commissioners.

“Now it’s time to ask what our local community want from the Council and our partners. Please tell us your community safety priorities and share with others so we hear from as many people as possible.”

The consultation will run until 17 December 2023 and can be accessed via:

www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/council/consultations. Comments can be made by email to consultations@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

Damning report on local prison

25 November 2023



The availability of drugs at one Surrey prison is a “critical threat to safety”, as inspectors said it had one of the highest positive test rates for illicit substances of all men’s prisons in England and Wales.

Inspectors pointed to 11 key concerns, highlighting four priority areas for **HMP High Down in Banstead**.

These were: too many acutely mentally unwell prisoners being held in the segregation unit; the availability and use of illicit drugs; increasing violence and prisoners feeling unsafe; and the prison not reaching its potential.

Charlie Taylor, chief inspector, said in his report that the drug situation in the prison “posed a threat to the stability of the prison, contributing to debt, bullying and fear”.

Other concerns raised included there being few incentives to behave well, high levels of self-harm, poor medicine supervision, long waits for dental treatment and not enough support being offered to “large number of prisoners with limited skills in English and maths”.

The prison was inspected in July and August, with a report published on November 13 saying the regime there was “nowhere near what it should be”.

With a positive drug testing rate among the highest in adult male prisons in England and Wales, Mr Taylor said the facility had had a “turbulent few years” in its delayed transition to a category C training and resettlement prison. He said “a real commitment” from leaders and the prison service was needed to make sure High Down completed its transition and that it was “not yet close to fulfilling its function as a category C prison”.

The prison, which was built on the site of a former mental health hospital and opened as a category A local prison in 1992, had 1,171 prisoners at the time of the inspection, and an operational capacity of 1,180 prisoners.

A survey carried out during the inspection showed fewer minority ethnic prisoners said staff treated them with respect, at 57 per cent compared with 77 per cent of white prisoners.

A Prison Service spokesperson said: “We have already taken decisive action to address the concerns raised in this report including bolstering our support for prisoners suffering from mental health issues.

“We are also strengthening the education and training on offer, including introducing a wider range of courses so offenders can gain the vital skills they need to turn their backs on crime.”

Availability of drugs ‘critical threat to safety’: In the survey 45 per cent of prisoners said it was easy to get hold of drugs, compared with 31 per cent at similar prisons.

In the three months leading up to the inspection, the positive drug test rate was “very high” at 33.73 per cent, and 21.08 per cent for psychoactive substances.

Inspectors said the widespread availability of drugs was causing high levels of prisoner debt and was “the main driver of violence which remained much too high”.

Despite having a proportion of positive drug tests among the highest of all men’s prisons in England and Wales, inspectors also said far too few tests were done on those suspected of using drugs. This meant users were not being discouraged, and inspectors said it was “disappointing” that reducing drugs coming in to the prison was not one of the prison’s priorities. Mr Taylor said: “The availability of drugs, in particular psychoactive substances, was a critical threat to safety.”

The report also pointed to steps being taken such as body scanners being used on those suspected of possessing drugs and joint working with police on the number of items entering the prison on drones and tackling staff corruption.

Prisoners spending ‘almost all day locked up’ in fear: Some prisoners spent “almost all day locked up” because they were afraid of bullying and violence, with some who had been assaulted by other prisoners and many in debt. Inspectors said: “Little was done to address the causes of their fear or to enable them to reintegrate with their peers.”

There were also concerns raised about officers not challenging poor behaviour and not supervising prisoners adequately.

Inspectors were told by staff told they saw “little point” in challenging poor behaviour because they lacked faith in the prison’s disciplinary procedures. The report said: “Too many prisoners felt unsafe. Safety was being undermined by violence and bullying, which were linked to drugs, very low wages, debt and a lack of full-time purposeful activity.”

A survey of prisoners also showed that 70 per cent of disabled prisoners felt unsafe at some point compared with 38 per cent of those without a disability. Inspectors also said: “There were still houseblocks where prisoners with a disability did not have an adequate personal emergency evacuation plan in place.”

As well as this, some prisoners being held in the segregation unit for an extended period were acutely mentally unwell, according to My Taylor’s report. There were also “chaotic scenes” seen by inspectors at medicine queues when officers did not supervise or control them well enough. Inspectors said this meant health care staff were “regularly distracted during the critical task of administering medicines, increasing the likelihood of error”.

‘Many prisoners did not have enough to do’: Inspectors said compared to other category C prisons, the regime at High Down “did not yet match” them, with a quarter of prisoners locked in their cells during the working day, described as “too many” in the report.

There were 200 unemployed prisoners and not enough activity places for those in the prison, which meant many prisoners did not have enough to do. The report said: “Many were limited to very basic and uninspiring work on the wing. Only for the few who were in full time work, was the prison offering an experience that was akin to employment in the community.”

Ofsted also inspected the provision at the prison, rating it inadequate overall.

A Storybook Dads programme, which helped prisoners record a story for their children to listen to at home, had been suspended due to a shortage of library staff. But Ofsted inspectors pointed to a monthly homework club where children could come into the prison to get help from their fathers as having “a relaxed atmosphere with both prisoners and their families enjoying themselves”.

What is done well at HMP High Down?

Inspectors said they saw “many positive and constructive interactions between staff and prisoners” including officers playing pool with inmates, despite poor behaviour not always being challenged.

Inspectors also said: “Prisoners on the drug-free living wing appreciated the respite from the high levels of drug use that took place elsewhere in the prison and here too support was provided by specialist staff. “There were also advanced plans to provide another more specialised unit for prisoners with personality disorders.”

The current prison governor has been in post since March 2022, and inspectors said: “If the governor and her team are to win over hearts and minds, they will need to increase significantly their visibility around the jail and improve the way they communicate with staff and prisoners.”

The report said governor Emily Martin had “developed a clear vision of how she wanted the prison to run and had begun to make progress”.

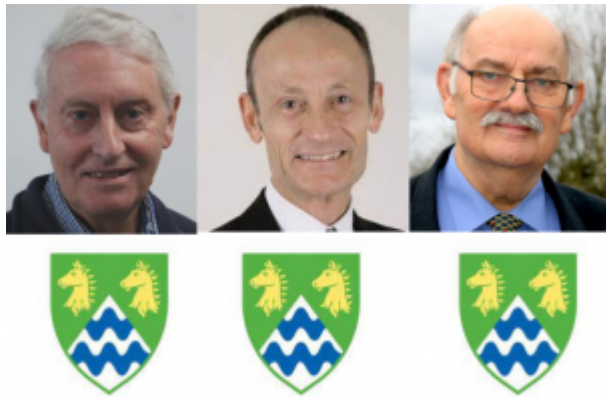
Related reports:

You could re-train to reform offenders

Image: HMP High Down from Google Maps

Local Council stalwarts up for local honour

25 November 2023



In a proposal put to the Strategy and Resources Committee of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council on 14th November, councillors were urged to consider bestowing the prestigious title of Honorary Alderman upon three distinguished figures: former Councillors **Eber Kington**, **Chris Frost**, and the late **Clive Smitheram** (to be awarded posthumously).

The proposed honours come as a customary practice at the commencement of a new municipal term, wherein the Council contemplates honouring Councillors of longstanding and outstanding service, typically those who have held the position of Mayor of the Borough.

A formal nomination for the former Councillors has been submitted to the Council's Chief Executive, underscoring their significant contributions to the community.

Former Councillor Eber Kington, a stalwart in local governance, dedicated an impressive 36 years of service as an Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillor, presiding as Mayor of the Borough in 1999-2000 and Deputy Mayor in 2000-2001.

Similarly, former Councillor Chris Frost, with 24 years of devoted service from May 1999 to May 2023, held the role of Mayor of the Borough in 2015-2016 and Deputy Mayor in 2014-2015.

Tragically, the late Former Councillor Clive Smitheram, who served for 23 years until April 2022, is being considered for the posthumous title. His term included the role of Mayor of the Borough in 2010-2011 and Deputy Mayor in 2011-2012.

Eber Kington last served Ewell Court Ward until he switched to his new home ward of Horton where he lost out in this year's May election. He still serves as a County Councillor. Chris Frost for many years served his local ward of Woodcote and the late Clive Smitheram was a councillor in Ewell West. All three represented Residents Associations.

Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 empowers Local Authorities to appoint both Honorary Freemen and Honorary Aldermen. The criteria for appointment, whether as Freemen or Aldermen, hinge on an individual's distinguished service to the community or the Council.

The Act stipulates that the appointment must take place at a Special Meeting of the Council, convened exclusively for that purpose. The endorsement requires a two-thirds majority of Members in attendance. While Honorary Aldermen do not enjoy legal or social precedence, it is customary for them to be invited to Civic ceremonial events.

The proposal contemplates posthumously awarding the title of Honorary Alderman to the late Clive Smitheram, an unprecedented move prompted by his exceptional service to the council.

Related report:

Long serving Councillor Clive Smitheram dies at 76

Local NHS Trust slow to respond to complaint

25 November 2023



A complaint lodged against **Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust** regarding the care provided to the late **Doreen Pepper**, a Parkinson's patient, has raised concerns about medication management and now delayed complaint response times, leaving her family in distress.

Mrs. Pepper, a former Head Teacher at Merland Rise First School, Banstead, Surrey, lived an active, independent life despite battling Parkinson's for approximately 16 years. However, her experience at St Helier Hospital took a distressing turn after a fall resulted in a broken hip and subsequent admission.

The family's complaint, submitted on April 26, 2023, outlines a series of lapses in medication administration during Mrs. Pepper's five-week stay. Despite the hospital's policy allowing Parkinson's patients to self-administer their medication, A & E staff allegedly denied Mrs. Pepper access to her medication upon admission.

The hospital reportedly lacked an accurate record of Mrs. Pepper's medication until October 27, 2022, causing considerable concern for the family. Instances of incorrect medication administration persisted, despite interventions from senior staff members and the family's visual aids.

The family created an A4 poster with medication times, but Mrs. Pepper was still given medication at inappropriate hours, impacting her ability to participate in crucial physiotherapy sessions for her recovery.

The hospital deemed Mrs. Pepper fit for discharge, intending to send her home with carer visits four times a day. The family questioned the adequacy of supervision between visits and the absence of overnight support, receiving little guidance from the hospital regarding future care options.

Furthermore, a delayed referral for physiotherapy post-discharge resulted in a significant setback to Mrs. Pepper's mobility, exacerbating her condition.

In response to the family's complaint, a spokesperson for Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust expressed regret over the extended response time. They assured a thorough investigation, led by senior clinical and management staff, and pledged to keep the family updated as they work towards a resolution.

The family, while acknowledging the strain on the NHS, urges hospitals to enhance complaint-handling processes to prevent prolonged distress for patients and their families awaiting answers on critical matters of care and accountability.

Staying in bed problems for local NHS

25 November 2023



Hospitals in **Epsom And St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust** unable to discharge almost two thirds of patients. This is according to a national data collection exercise conducted by the BBC. There are variations in the data collection criteria between different NHS Trusts.

In Epsom And St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust between July 1 2022 and June 30 2023 on an average night 64.1% patients who had been identified as ready to be discharged that day were still occupying a bed at midnight.

This is 6.3 percentage points higher than the average figure for trusts across England (57.8%).

On 2 days 100% of patients classed as “no longer meeting the criteria” to be in hospital were still occupying beds at midnight. This means that on 1% of days for which data was provided, not a single patient was discharged.

The day when the most patients were left in hospital was Saturday October 22 2022 when 99 who could have been discharged were still in the hospital at the end of the day.

The proportion of patients ready to be discharged but still occupying beds was worst on Sundays, when 72.9% of patients identified as ready to be discharged that day were still occupying a bed at midnight.

A **spokesperson** for **Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust** said:

“We do all we can to discharge medically-fit patients swiftly and safely, but unfortunately there are sometimes delays. Our hospitals are facing significant pressures and we are working hard to ease these – from providing more beds this winter, to continuing to work with our partners to find solutions.”

The Trust added further background information:

There are a number of reasons why patients who are medically fit remain in hospital. These could include, but are not limited to, needing a care package in place before returning home; waiting for a bed or space in another facility or nursing home; or needing additional therapy, such as physio, before being mobile enough to leave hospital.

We have received £4.5m of national funding to provide more beds in our hospitals this winter

Improving hospital discharge is one of our priorities. We have discharge wards to free up bed space, and employ people in dedicated roles that focus on discharging patients and improving patient flow earlier on in the day

We work with our community partners, Sutton Health and Care and Surrey Downs Health and Care. This includes identifying patients for their virtual wards, which allow patients to get the care they need at home safely and conveniently, rather than being in hospital.

We also work closely with other partners, such as mental health and social care providers, to ensure people are being cared for in the most appropriate setting

Photo by RDNE Stock project