

Doctors' strike: advice

12 July 2023



A wave of back-to-back strikes will severely impact hospital services over the coming week – and will follow the busiest month of 2023 for one hospital group.

St George's, Epsom and St Helier hospitals have faced significant pressure in recent weeks, with emergency attendances in June ramping up. Last month about 880 people visited one of the Group's three emergency departments (EDs) daily – about 10% more than is usual.

The emergency departments also saw extraordinary demand some days – including one record-breaking Monday when they had their busiest day ever. Now, ahead of this week's junior doctors' strikes, which get underway at 7 am on Thursday and continue until 7 am the following Tuesday (18 July), members of the public have been warned to expect disruption and longer waits, and to avoid visiting the ED when it's not an emergency.

There will also be an additional challenge when hospital consultants go on strike just days after the junior doctors' action ends. That walk-out is due to take place on Thursday 20 July and Friday 21 July.

Dr Richard Jennings, Group Chief Medical Officer for St George's, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group, said: "June was very busy and that's also continued into July – which makes it more difficult when we're trying to prepare for the inevitable challenges strike action brings. Ahead of each round of strikes I've urged the public to take steps to help us and to come to our EDs in an emergency only – and I am making the same request again now when it is more important than ever. We have a very tough week ahead and we need your support to ensure we can prioritise care for our sickest and most seriously ill patients."

The hospital group recognise that it's going to be the first time this year that a junior doctors' strike has taken place over the weekend and into a Monday. This has prompted further concern, as Monday is normally the busiest day of the week in the Group's EDs. This was even more pronounced last month, with 1,000-plus average daily attendances on Mondays – significantly higher than a typical day of 800.

Dr Jennings added: "If people need medical help – during the strikes or at any other time – we would encourage them to contact NHS 111 online for 24/7 advice on where to go and what to do if they have an illness or injury. When it's a real emergency or life-threatening, of course, people should always call 999 or go to an emergency department."

Strikes will also impact other services at the hospitals, and will mean that some appointments, procedures and operations may be postponed to ensure emergency care can be prioritised. Patients will be contacted directly if their appointments are rescheduled, and should continue to come forward for care as normal unless they hear otherwise.

NHS 111 online should always be the first port of call when you have a health need that's not an emergency, as it will direct you to the best place to get help for your symptoms.

Pharmacies, meanwhile, can offer advice and over-the-counter medicines for a range of minor illnesses, such as coughs, colds, sore throats, and aches and pains. Some pharmacies will be open at weekends, and you can find your nearest one here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy/find-a-pharmacy>

In a life-threatening emergency, you should always call 999 or go to an emergency department.

If you need mental health support in a crisis, and live in Kingston, Merton, Richmond, Sutton or Wandsworth you can call South West London's 24/7 Mental Health Crisis Line on 0800 028 8000. There's more information about this service here:

<https://www.swlstg.nhs.uk/patients-carers/crisis-support/mental-health-support-line>

For adults, young people, and children in Surrey and North East Hampshire, 24-hour support is available by calling: 0800 915 4644. There's more information here:

<https://www.sabp.nhs.uk/our-services>

St George's, Epsom and St Helier hospitals press.

Epsom medics sky-dive for babies

12 July 2023



A team of obstetricians, gynaecologists, neonatologists and nurses who work at **Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust** have raised nearly £10,000 for **Bliss**, the UK's leading charity for babies born premature or sick.

Radhika Viswanatha, Nina Underwood, Ramesh Ganapathy, Demetri Panayi, Salim Yasin, Charlotte Pearse, Vicky Minns, Cristina Arias-Rey and Sharon Young took part in a skydive on 28 May 2023 at the Old Sarum Park in Salisbury.

1 in every 7 babies born in the UK will need specialist care and the group have a special link to Bliss, as they each look after women and their babies during pregnancy and delivery and beyond at Epsom and St Helier Hospital.

Some of the babies they deliver are more vulnerable than others, so are looked after by the hospital's neonatal team.

Demetri Panayi said: "Our charity skydive was born out of moments of madness, midlife crises and irrational personal desire! But it gave us the opportunity to raise money for a cause close to our hearts, and to our patients."

Donations to their skydive are helping Bliss to drive improvements in neonatal care, to ensure that the needs of babies are at the heart of policy and planning for the future, and to provide information and support to all families with a baby born premature or sick.

Richard Moody, Director of Fundraising at Bliss, said: “We are so grateful for the exceptional fundraising efforts of Demetri and his colleagues. Each donation to Bliss is going towards our mission of helping all babies born premature or sick in the UK have the best chance of survival and quality of life.

“This is a great example of how a perinatal team can come together to raise awareness and money for Bliss.”

You can find more information and donate here: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/skydive2023>

Molly Gorman

We are the greenest?

12 July 2023



Epsom and Ewell is the greenest local authority in the UK, according to most recent data. Industries located in the borough produced 5 kilotons of carbon dioxide per year in 2020, a Utility Bidder report has shown.

The report also showed the most polluting businesses in the UK to be those in the electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply industries which produce almost 81,000 ktCO₂e of greenhouse gas emissions per year. This is followed by the manufacturing and transport and storage industries.

Neath Port Talbot had the most greenhouse gas emissions with 6,356 kt of CO₂. Located in South Wales, it is a key producer of steel and tinplate.

East Renfrewshire had the second lowest emissions with 5.5 ktCO₂e and The Orkney Islands was third with 8 ktCO₂e of greenhouse gas emissions.

The report drew on data from the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and the Office for National Statistics. The report does not include data for consumer expenditure.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council say on their website: “Under the Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999, certain industries require a permit to operate. This permit contains various conditions in order to minimise the emissions of pollutants to the air. Our Environmental Health service carries out periodic inspections to make sure these industries are compliant with the conditions of their permit.”

Surrey’s 999 services under one operator?

12 July 2023



A review into Surrey’s Police and Crime Commissioner taking control of the county’s fire and rescue service has been branded “a waste of time” and “unwarranted” by councillors.

The proposals could mean the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service would no longer be under the control of the county council, but councillors questioned the possible move at a time of “considerable change” in the service.

Councillors raised concerns at a meeting of the authority’s communities, environment and highways select committee on Wednesday (July 5) that such a change had previously been ruled out, and that the review was a waste of money.

Lisa Townsend told the LDRS she was responding to central government proposals to reform fire and rescue services, and has commissioned an independent review to see if there would be any benefits of a change.

The Conservative PCC said this was not something she had “dreamt up overnight”, but claimed the county council had made clear they wanted “no active part” in the work to look into the change.

Councillor **Denise Turner-Stewart**, deputy leader at Surrey County Council and cabinet member for communities and community safety, told the July 5 meeting a previous proposal put forward by former PCC David Munro showed there was “no significant benefit” to a change in governance. She said: “As far as I’m concerned, nothing has really changed since. There are no direct benefits that could be generated by a potential change. There is no mandate for a potential change.”

She said the service had been through “considerable change” since an inspection by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services in 2018/19 found it required improvement, and was now in a “steady state”.

Cllr **Turner-Stewart** said it would not be “beneficial or advantageous” to look at further changes for the service, and called the PCC’s review “unwarranted and not legitimate”.

Mrs Townsend said she had written to all MPs and to the county council’s leader outlining the work she planned to undertake and the reasons behind it. She added: “This is government policy which I have been encouraged to consider. So I believe establishing an up-to-date understanding of the picture of fire and rescue governance in Surrey is an entirely prudent and legitimate exercise for me to carry out in the circumstances.

“I want to be clear that at this stage, this is purely a review. Any proposal to take on responsibility for the governance of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service would require the preparation of a full business case. This would be subject to extensive consultation prior to being submitted to the Home Office for any approval.”

Cllr **Keith Witham** (Conservative, Worplesdon) told the meeting he had already made his views on the proposals known to the PCC. Saying he knew how much hard work had gone into improving the service in the past five years, Cllr Witham said a change would be “an entirely inappropriate, unnecessary distraction at this time”.

He said: “It is a waste of time, a waste of her funds, for she is financing this investigation, and will be a distraction, unnecessarily.”

Mrs Townsend said she had “no desire” to distract from progress made in the service but that a government white paper on future legislation was “imminent”.

She told the LDRS: “[Government] have been clear they want to simplify and strengthen governance for fire services and if that process is to involve Police and Crime Commissioners, this review will ensure I am properly placed to make an informed decision for the Surrey public.”

Brawling Bowling Club reprieved

12 July 2023



The “level of violence and hostility” during a mass brawl inside a Surrey bowling club was unlike anything a serving police officer had ever experienced before, they have claimed.

A fight involving about 30 people erupted at the **Old Dean Bowls Club in Camberley** last April with officers arriving to scenes of people having their eyes gouged, women knocked on conscious, men slumped in corners with life threatening head wounds and shattered glass all over bloodied carpets.

The officers were called out at 10.55pm and could hear “screams, shouts and smashing glasses coming from the building”. The details came from Surrey Police officer witness statements read as part of a Tuesday, July 5, Surrey Heath Borough Council licensing sub committee review into the club.

One said that as they got out of their cars they saw “around five people have been running from the building or sat down nearby crying or with injuries. A woman has been holding another female up partially as I have walked towards the door, she has shouted ‘you need to go in there now’.

“A male has said something similar next to another female in a vehicle shouting ‘don’t go, you’ll be lambs to the slaughter’.” The officer added: “The level of violence and hostility upon entry was something I have never experienced before.”

Another officer said they were warned by a female who “genuinely seemed concerned” they would be vastly outnumbered, that it was “f*g carnage in there”.

The sub-committee had already seen a lengthy clip of CCTV footage of what the police called an “utterly disgraceful scene”. The committee was hearing evidence brought by **Surrey Police** recommending the club lost its licence. Others argued it should be give a reprieve as it played an important role in the community - particularly as a bowls club but also in more wider terms.

Trefor Hogg, Surrey County Councillor for Camberley East said at the meeting revenue concerns pushed the club to host more events and that without the bar takings the club would find it difficult to remain open. He said the club, the town’s only secular meeting place, played a critical role in the community - which he described as an area of deprivation.

The venue, he said, is used for NHS sessions and job fairs as well as by Surrey Heath Borough Council for consultations.

Cllr **Shaun Garrett** Councillor, Conservative group leader at Surrey Heath, said, there was “no getting around the incident” - that the brawl failed the the four pillars of licensing; prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, prevention of public nuisance and protecting children. But he argued that the club was a “really important community space”. He said: “If the licence was revoked for even a short period of time the club would fold and once it’s shut it will never open again.”

The committee also heard that the club’s chairperson had since resigned and replaced with a new board that would put in strict rules to prevent any repetition of the night. The club also runs as a private members bar that hosts functions. The committee heard many functions were increasingly attended by non-members.

Licence hold **Chris Turner**, acknowledged the failings of the club and pledged to make changes to it’s rules, including appointing new officers to run the club, bar staff training and apply for personal licences for at least two of the committee members.

After a break to discuss the evidence committee chairperson, Councillor **Valerie White**, said the panel would: “Suspend the licence for a minimum of 28 days so that the mandatory steps can be taken and the club reopened with trained staff and new policies in place all proposals as per the club’s submissions...with the following amendments and additions.”

She said the club would need to have two members gain certification in order to carry out risk assessments for any functions held and to act as door supervisors if needed.

A signing-in book is to be used at all times to keep record of those attending functions, members and non-members, and that the club joins and becomes an active member of the pub-watch scheme.

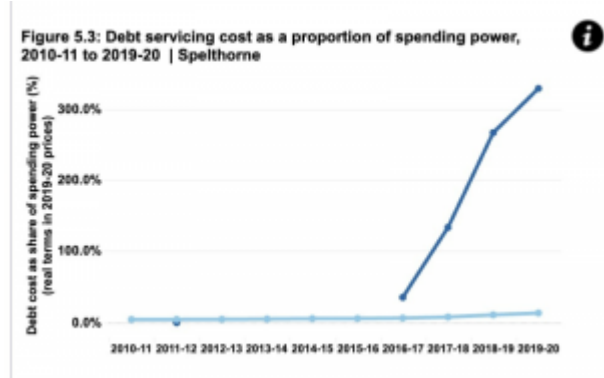
Any children must be accompanied by an adult and no children under 12 after 9pm are allowed in the club. All staff who serve alcohol are to be trained every six months with written records kept.

A spokesperson for Surrey Police said they were called out to the Old Dean Bowling Club in Camberley on Friday, April 14 at around 10.50pm following reports of 30 people fighting.

A 32-year-old man, a 29-year-old woman, a 33-year-old man, a 45-year-old man and a 38-year-old man were all arrested on suspicion of violent disorder. All have been bailed while the investigation continues.

Accountants shortage blamed for Surrey’s rising debts

12 July 2023



The scale of the financial problems unearthed by initial forensic exams of Woking Borough Council’s left many shocked. The council’s accounts had not been

signed off by an independent auditor for more five years as part of a national shortage of qualified accountants that has left a high backlog across local government bodies.

Meanwhile, the borough's chief financial officer warned things could get worse as they uncover more.

On June 23, the Public Accounts Committee said that delays to publishing audited accounts increases the risk of governance or financial issues being identified too late, and hinders accountability for £100billion in local government spending, with knock-on impacts for central government and the NHS.

It led to the committee's deputy chairperson asking "how many more horror stories such as Croydon, Slough, Thurrock, and more recently the shocking case of Woking council are there remaining undetected?"

Following the report, the LDRS looked at three other Surrey councils with either high levels of borrowing, or that had experienced recent write-downs in the value of their assets and asked if residents can be confident their councils won't go bust too.

Woking Borough Council - £1.7bn estimated debt in 2022, expected to rise to £2bn. There has also been an "absence of external audit opinions on the council's accounts" since 2018/19. The majority of the council's debt was built on complicated development deals. It borrowed hundreds of millions to pay companies it owned for town centre regeneration projects. It also funded its own loss-making businesses. Like many council's Woking's central funding fell significantly over the past decade.

According to the **National Audit Office** its Government-funded spending power dropped 69.2 per cent in the past decade. To counter this, it embarked on an investment strategy to cover the deficit, regenerate its town centres, and maintain non-statutory services.

In 2019/2020, the council received £6.7m from the Government, £9.9m from council tax and £28.7m from its investments.

The problem was that it spent £17.7m on services, £6m on minimum revenue provision, and £33.1m just on the interest on its debts.

The Public Audits Committee published the "Timeliness of local auditor reporting" on June 23, three weeks after Woking Borough Council issued its section 114 notice declaring it could no longer balance its books.

Chairperson, **Dame Meg Hillier** MP, said: "Our Committee warned in 2021 that the system of local government audit was close to breaking point. Disappointingly, since then the situation has only gotten worse. The cases of Croydon, Slough, Thurrock and Woking councils all should serve as flashing red signals for the Government, and our report finds that the rot risks spreading to central government finance and the NHS.

Deputy chairperson **Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** MP,said: "How many more horror stories such as Croydon, Slough, Thurrock, and more recently the shocking case of Woking council are there remaining undetected, which ultimately always have to be bailed out at huge costs to the taxpayer? The fragility of the number of qualified people and firms tending to carry out these important audits means that the system will only get worse before it gets better."

Spelthorne Borough Council - £1bn debt as of 2022, last set of audited accounts signed off: 2017/18. In 2022, there were nine local authorities with borrowing of more than £1bn.

They were either major population centres, Transport for London, Birmingham, Greater London Authority, Leeds, Warrington, Edinburgh, and South Lanarkshire, or bankrupt; Woking.

The other is Spelthorne Borough Council, with a debt of £1,084,655.00 and a capital programme under review from central government. Last week, it emerged that £50m development plans for Thameside House has now jumped to £80m - mirroring, albeit on a smaller scale, Woking's Victoria Square development originally budgeted to cost £150m but now stands at £750m and a book value of around half that.

Since 2010, Spelthorne's Government funded spending power has fallen 66.3 per cent creating the same environment of needing to find alternative funding or reduce services. The council borrowed £1bn over a three-year period from the Public Works Loans Board and income from its investments brought in £55.3m in 2019/20 - out of a total of £72.8m. That allows the council to spend £16m on services while paying off £24.2m in interest payments with £11.1m set aside to pay off the principle.

The sustainability of the strategy is less obvious with the council's debt servicing as a proportion of spending power climbing to 328.1 per cent, higher than even Woking's 295.2 per cent for the same 2019/20 year. A spokesperson for Spelthorne Borough Council said: "The financial situation is significantly different between Spelthorne and Woking Borough Council. Spelthorne has taken steps to ensure that the commercial property programme is sustainable, and our investment model is very different. We have always taken a cautious approach, paying down debt on a year-by-year basis (like a mortgage) and ensured that the council has fully complied with the CIPFA requirements for Minimum Revenue Provision. The council took a long-term strategic view to acquire key investment and regeneration properties in order to generate income to support and fund council services, affordable housing, and regenerations programmes.

"We save up funds over a long-term time frame and have set aside £37.8m sinking fund to cover potential dips in income. Spelthorne Council has the highest ratio of usable reserves to net revenue budget of any district or borough council in the country."

Runnymede Borough Council: £600m debt as of 2022, last set of audited accounts: 2018/19

Runnymede Borough Council is awaiting the findings of a Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Committees report into its finances and its strategy to borrow heavily for town centre redevelopment projects.

It is another council that followed the investment/redevelopment route, in part to cover the 55.5 per cent decrease in its Government-funded spending power. High profile developments such as Addlestone One and the Egham Town Centre have changed their local areas with new shopping centres, hotels and cinemas. But they have also resulted in the council's debt servicing costs climbing to 168.9 per cent, about half of the levels in Woking or Spelthorne but still way above the national average of 13.4 per cent for local authorities.

The investments brought in £28.1m in 2019/20, from a total of £40.8m in income, which covers the borough's £13.4m spending on service as well as its £11.1m in interest repayments and £3.2 for the principal.

A spokesperson for Runnymede Borough Council said it "only undertakes borrowing where it is prudent and affordable. Our current capital programme, approved in February 2023, does not include any new major schemes that require additional borrowing. We have a robust policy covering the repayment of debt, which is reviewed annually as part of the budget process and is included in all the council's financial plans. We continue to set a balanced budget and to hold sufficient reserves to manage known risks alongside contingency for unforeseen events.

"The local government sector is suffering from the effects of the backlog in the audit profession. The Council is still awaiting final sign off for its 2019/20 accounts. "Since 2010 there have been significant cutbacks to local government funding. We calculate the loss of revenue support grant to be in excess of £5million, which equates to a third of our net budget. This has been partially offset by other grants, but only modestly. To protect services, we have had to raise our own sources of income whilst making efficiencies."

Surrey Heath Borough Council: £51m debt at 2022, last set of audited accounts 2018/19. Debt levels in 2022 stood at £51m, putting Surrey Heath Borough Council in a different position compared with Woking, Spelthorne and Runnymede. However, it has since emerged in unaudited accounts that its debt grew to £160m and its biggest asset dropped by £79m. This prompted the council to announce it was updating its property acquisition strategy despite its government-supported funding dropping by 60 per cent in the last decade.

This change in approach is taking place even though its 2019/20 debt servicing levels were comparatively low among Surrey peers at 41.8 per cent - although its debt levels have since climbed. The council balanced its books in a more conventional manner with just £3.3m of its £15.5m income coming from its investments that year. This covered the £9.96m to run its services, with £2.3m paid in interest and £2.2m set aside to pay off the debt.

A spokesperson for Surrey Heath Borough Council it was considered to have a "sound strategy for debt management as per the annual Treasury Strategy agreed at Council in February. We are not interlinked with Woking Council and therefore it is considered that no changes are required. The Medium Term Financial Strategy approved at February council contains a minimum revenue provision for future debt repayment. This has been calculated in accordance with central government and CIPFA guidance.

They added: "The council no longer receives any revenue support grant from central Government. The council retains business rate income, but also has to pay a tariff on this to central government. It is difficult to put a £ and % figure on this as the real term reduction is a great deal higher than the actual cash reduction."

The committee report concluded that the backlog of audit opinions for local government bodies remains unacceptably high, and that there is still no plan to reduce it.

Only 12 per cent of local government bodies received their audit opinions in time to publish accounts for 2021-22 within the already extended local authority accounts publication deadline.

Derby disrupter doesn't quite go down

12 July 2023



Ben Newman ran onto the Epsom racecourse seconds after the starter gates opened on the 3rd June 2023 Derby flat-race. Though the horses were still out of sight by the time several security and police officers dragged him off in front of the Grandstand, his act was prosecuted as a public nuisance.

Appearing in custody before Recorder David Ockelton at Guildford Crown Court he was sentenced today (6th July).

The court heard from Wendy Cottee prosecuting that it was only the swift action of security and police that ensured the race itself proceeded undisturbed. Nevertheless, it was clear from video and audio footage that many members of the public were "seriously annoyed". She also told the court that Newman had sent an appeal on social media calling for a large number of sympathisers of "Animals Rising" to join him in his protest. An appeal the Judge commented had not been successful.

Defending Mr Nick Goss said that Newman was passionate and well intentioned. He did not intend to create danger but only to protest. His time in custody since 3rd June had been a "salutary lesson" and caused him to reflect on his actions.

Newman has been arrested over the last year in connection with various sporting events and was on bail with a condition not to attend public sporting events on 3rd June. Mr Goss stated that none of these investigations had led to any criminal charges.

The Judge said to Newman "The proud liberties of our constitution have limits – you went beyond those limits. There was a clear danger to police and security. You could not predict how long it would take them to remove you."

"The offence is serious with a maximum of 10 years. However, I will make the sentence as short as possible. It will be 18 weeks and it will be suspended for 2 years."

The court ordered Newman to undertake 80 hours community service and to pay costs of £1800 and a victim surcharge of £126.

Met poaches Surrey police claims Commissioner

12 July 2023



Surrey has more police officers than ever before despite attempts by the Met to "poach" officers, according to the county's Police and Crime Commissioner. **Lisa Townsend** told a meeting of the Police and Crime panel on Thursday (June 29) there were challenges around retention in the force and what was being done to address them.

But she said Surrey Police had beaten a government uplift target by 136 officers. Mrs Townsend described it as a "deliberate move" to over-recruit because officers in Surrey faced issues such as competitive wages and a high cost of living.

With the Met Police "offering quite large sums of money" to try to "poach" Surrey officers, Mrs Townsend pointed to targeted adverts on Surrey trains as one tactic used by the London force.

With 2,325 officers, she said the force was bigger than it had been before. Mrs Townsend spoke more than once in the meeting about the need for police to attend fewer non-critical mental health call outs.

She said "pushing forward" with work to reduce police attending such calls would help with both recruitment and retention in Surrey.

The commissioner said: "People are coming in [to policing] because they want to catch the bad guys, they want to prevent crime, they want to protect the public. Increasingly they are being asked to do what is social work, particularly around mental health and concerns for welfare."

Tandridge District Councillor **Richard Smith**, a former police officer, described officer retention as "like lemmings falling off a cliff". He claimed in most organisations senior management "won't tell the truth from what's being said at the bottom end of the company because it makes them look bad".

Mrs Townsend responded to say she spent a lot of time both with those at the top of the force and out on attachment with officers who she said she hoped were comfortable talking to her about the challenges. She said: "They do like to have a good whinge, and I am more than happy to listen. So I think we do have a pretty good grasp."

With 395 officers having joined the force since 2019, **Cllr Alex Coley**, a member of **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**, asked for the number of officers who had left in that period.

But Mrs Townsend didn't give an answer on how many had left the force, saying the "total uplift" was what really mattered and it was "totally normal" to lose officers to retirement and other factors. Her office committed to giving the number to Cllr Coley after the meeting.

Mrs Townsend outlined measures to keep officers including adding to the force's estates plan to provide more affordable homes, which 85 per cent of officers asked had said was important to them.

Image: Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend at the Surrey Police and Crime Panel budget hearing

Image: Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend at the Surrey Police and Crime Panel budget hearing

ULEZ court challenge begins

12 July 2023



The coalition of councils opposed to expansion of the ULEZ to outer London is optimistic of success on the first day of its legal challenge.

Representatives from the five councils – Bexley, Bromley, Harrow, Hillingdon and Surrey – met on the steps of the High Court in central London on Tuesday 4 July, ahead of the opening day of the Judicial Review the coalition has brought against TfL and the Mayor of London, over planned expansion of the ULEZ to outer London.

The coalition’s case will be argued on three grounds:

- Failure to follow statutory procedure – Schedule 23 Greater London Authority Act 1999
- Unlawful and unfair consultation regarding expected compliance rates in outer London
- Unlawfulness regarding scrappage scheme, including failing to consider a buffer zone, irrationality and inadequate consultation.

Through the new proposals, anyone driving a non-compliant vehicle in the expanded zone after the scheduled start date on Tuesday 29 August, would stand to be charged £12.50 per day – whether the journey is a 30-mile commute, or a short trip for essential groceries.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Growth at Surrey County Council, said: *“I’m pleased that our hearing begins today, as we continue to highlight the significant financial and social impacts expansion of the ULEZ scheme would have on many of our residents and businesses.*

“However, it is very disappointing that it has had to come to this. Our concerns have never been addressed by The Mayor, forcing these legal proceedings in order to have the voice of our residents heard.

“We remain committed to delivering a greener future, but it must be done in a practical and sustainable way. We will now await the findings of the High Court.”

The hearing is scheduled to last for two days, with a ruling from the judge expected to follow at an unconfirmed date but expected ahead of the courts break for summer on 28 July.

Related Reports:

[ULEZ driving old cars to Epsom market](#)

[Challenge to ULEZ gaining grounds](#)

[Many Surrey motorists will be paying the ULEZ charge.](#)

[ULEZ Court battle looming](#)

Confusing debate on police attending mental health calls

12 July 2023



An ex-police officer has responded to **Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner**’s calls for coppers to attend fewer mental health call outs – saying the first murder he attended was initially a non-critical mental health call.

Surrey’s Police and Crime Commissioner, **Lisa Townsend**, recently called for officers to stop attending every mental health call out, saying officers are being taken off the front line. She has called for the “Right Care, Right Person” model to be introduced, following the Metropolitan Police also saying from August they will no longer attend mental health call outs where there is not a threat to life.

Councillor **Richard Smith**, a Tandridge District Councillor, said he had been a police officer for 30 years and that he was in agreement with Mrs Townsend’s comments. (*sic*)

Cllr Smith (Residents’ Alliance, Burstow, Horne & Outwood) spoke at the annual meeting of Surrey County Council’s Police and Crime Panel on Thursday (June 29). He said: “Probably the first murder I went to was a non-critical [mental health] call to a person who then decided to stab the nurse to death with a carving knife out of the kitchen. I feel that’s where we are going to come unstuck when it comes to removing police from mental health calls.”

Mrs Townsend responded that was “absolutely the right place for police to be” and there would always be a role for police to play in such cases. But she said police officers should not be attending where there was a role for other agencies, such as adult social care or the NHS, to follow up.

Earlier in the meeting she had pointed to additional money given to the NHS for mental health support, which police don’t get. But she was clear the police should not get additional money, in her opinion.

She said: “If somebody has broken their leg we would not expect them to be in the back of a police car. “If somebody is having a mental health crisis I do not want them in the back of a police car.”

Mrs Townsend said she’d had “difficult” conversations with NHS representatives about police officers not being able to attend all mental health calls.

She told the meeting the difference was: “I’m not walking into A&E in St Peter’s on a Friday night saying can we borrow a couple of nurses because we have got some burglaries that need solving in Woking?”

She said in February, officers spent 515 hours on incidents relating to mental health which was the highest number of hours ever recorded in a single month by **Surrey Police**.

Image: Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey Lisa Townsend. Surrey Live photographer Darren Pepe.