

Lib Dems’ Helen Maguire - “Getting Things Done”

22 June 2024



Epsom and Ewell Times is publishing the appeals of the Parliamentary Candidates standing in the General Election for the constituency of Epsom and Ewell. This is the appeal from **Liberal Democrat** candidate **Helen Maguire**.

My Army training gave me focus, my police work gave me a determination to maintain good order, while being a working mum of three in Claygate taught me a great deal about my local community.

It’s these and other aspects of my career that led me to become a Liberal Democrat and to stand for Parliament to serve my local community – and to get things done to make the constituency of Epsom & Ewell a better place.

While there are many issues the Liberal Democrats want to tackle in the next Parliament, there are three big issues in Epsom & Ewell close to my heart. I want to see them fixed. I have been campaigning on these for the last 18 months and I want to take them to Parliament as your local representative and get them resolved.

My first concern is health and social care. Previous Conservative governments have run the NHS into the ground, and as far as Epsom & Ewell is concerned, have consistently failed to resolve one of our biggest issues, which is the overcrowding at Epsom and St Helier hospitals.

Our health care professionals across Surrey came up with an exciting and practical plan to build a third hospital which would be designed to treat the most difficult emergency cases, so that local people could get world class care in an emergency. The building of this new critical care hospital at Sutton would then free up Epsom and St Helier to be upgraded to significantly better district hospitals, caring for all other aspects of medical care.

The Conservatives have consistently promised to build the critical care hospital, but nothing has happened. As a result, our pressurised NHS workers are having to deal with overcrowding and poor facilities – even getting into Epsom to park can be an issue!

At the most basic level successive Conservative governments have failed on health and social care. So many people can’t get to see their GP when they need to. The Lib Dems want to give everyone the right to see a GP within seven days, or within 24 hours if they urgently need to – and we’ll train another 8,000 more GPs to deliver this.

Finding NHS dental care can be as difficult as finding hen’s teeth. The running down of NHS dentistry is causing great concern and so the Lib Dems will guarantee access to a NHS dentist for urgent and emergency care, putting an end to the dental deserts we see emerging across the country.

Mental health services need shaking up so we will push for mental health hubs for young people. We also must produce better results in terms of cancer survival rates and want to introduce a guarantee that all patients will start treatment for cancer within 62 days for urgent referral.

Successive Conservative governments have promised to do more to resolve the social care crisis, but nothing of any substance has happened. We have come up with a raft of fully costed measures aimed at making people’s lives much easier than they are now. We want to introduce free personal care based on the model we introduced in Scotland in 2002, so that provision is based on need, not ability to pay.

We also want to establish a Royal College of Care Workers to improve recognition and career progression and introduce a higher Carer’s Minimum Wage. We want to establish a cross-party commission to forge a long-term agreement on sustainable funding for social care. A subject very close to our leader Ed Davey’s heart is to give unpaid carers a fair deal so they get the support they so desperately need, including paid carer’s leave and a statutory guarantee of regular respite breaks.

Everyone in Epsom and Ewell will benefit from better healthcare provision, but perhaps even more fundamentally is the need to build a stronger economy enabling us to shake off the cost-of-living crisis. One of the greatest opportunities is in the booming ‘green economy’ where the Liberal Democrats want to invest in renewable power and home insulation to drive a strong economic recovery, bring down energy bills, and create clean, secure, well-paid new jobs.

This means we need to develop an industrial strategy that will give businesses certainty and incentivise them to invest in new technologies to grow the economy, create good jobs, and tackle the climate crisis. In Epsom & Ewell we need to boost small businesses and empower them to create new local jobs, including abolishing business rates and replacing them with a Commercial Landowner Levy to help stimulate our high streets.

The mismanagement of our economy and public services by the Tories extends to the inability of government to sort out the water companies who have been for too long polluting our rivers and waterways with raw sewage. Instead, they have pandered to the water companies in whose interests are best served by doing nothing other than the bare minimum about pollution.

I, and my fellow Liberal democrats, will hold the water companies to account by giving them a duty to protect the environment, including banning water companies from dumping raw sewage into rivers, lakes and coastal areas. Trashing our environment is totally unacceptable.

We want to make homes warmer and cheaper to heat. We will introduce a ten-year emergency upgrade programme, starting with free insulation and providing low-cost heating – heat pumps for those on low incomes.

We want to extend this to solar generation by expanding incentives for households to install solar panels. We will invest in renewable power so that 90% of the UK’s electricity is generated from renewables by 2030.

All these issues can be resolved providing we plan well for the future and elect politicians whose life experiences are about taking on problems and solving them, this is what I have been trained to do, and I wish to do so to the benefit of everyone who lives in Epsom, Ewell, Ashted & Leatherhead.

The other candidates:

Conservative who promises to serve “with integrity”

The Green promises

A True and Fair view of the world

Reform candidate for Epsom and Ewell

Mark my words for Labour candidate

The Green promises

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Epsom and Ewell Times is publishing the appeals of the Parliamentary Candidates standing in the General Election for the constituency of Epsom and Ewell. This is the appeal from **Green Party** candidate **Stephen McKenna**.

Britain is a wealthy country. Yet underinvestment the last 14 years has adversely affected the country. We have a series of ongoing crises notably in the health care system and in terms of cost of living impacting millions of people. In housing, transport and our energy and water bills, costs are rising to levels that are unaffordable for many. All of this set against a backdrop of growing climate crisis and it's impacts on, drought, flooding, rising food prices, declining biodiversity and so on.

The Green Party manifesto proposes that to "fix Britain" we need to invest significantly more that might otherwise have been the case if proper investment had been undertaken. We do not apologise for being honest about the problems we face and the fact that our plans involve raising taxes.

However it is clear that a lot of investment now will bring solid benefits for the whole of society and avoid further worsening of the situation. We want to progress towards a fairer, greener society.

The main parties are in denial about the scale of these challenges. There is a "conspiracy of silence" about funding what has to be done which amounts to a policy of "no change" for the next five years. This would be disastrous. Independent reports say the NHS will decline further under Labour's plans.

Labour say they will involve the private sector at a time when we spend a lot less per head on health services than other European countries. This is a further step towards privatisation which the Green Party rejects. We need a proper Investment Plan for the whole NHS. Our tax and spend plan is about investing long term in people and capital assets. So for instance recruiting more home grown talent to fill vacancies will be vital. "Earn while you learn" apprenticeships will incentivise our young people to study whilst full time students should benefit from maintenance grants. The end of tuition fees will help but universities will need to be properly funded as well.

Having said all of this, the state has broad shoulders to carry this weight - after all over £400 billion was raised during the pandemic without the sky falling in and the Institute of Fiscal Studies has made supportive qualified comments about our tax and spend plans. More importantly IFS has not suggested there are any risks to the economy as a result of our proposals. Don't forget, much of what we propose is about spending now to save later.

No party should enter Government without a commitment to ending the housing emergency. Our programme will generate greater tax receipts and will save on things like subsidies to landlords and developers. We want to create 150,000 council homes a year nationally across the country including conversions, refurbishments, buying empty or houses in disrepair as well as new build. All Councils should produce a five year plan to provide Council or social housing in their areas which should also reduce their current extortionate emergency and accommodation spending.

One of the biggest threats facing this area is the weakening of the planning system proposed by the main parties. Rather than address the core issues of our broken housing market they engage in a numbers game about who can build more unaffordable homes! "Unblocking" the planning system would enable further destruction of our supposedly sacrosanct Green Belts, without reference to any constraint. Nationally building 300,000 homes per annum would amount to two cities the size of Birmingham over a five year period!

This is not sustainable and is unnecessary. Imagine all the consequences that flow from this - new roads and a loss of tranquility is the least of it - traffic congestion, air pollution, noise, water and sewerage discharges into streams and rivers and impacting on biodiversity, a lack of GPs, hospitals, dentists, school places. This at a time when our Government is supposedly signed up to delivering protection of nature on 30% of our land by 2030. At present only 3% of our land is protected.

So if elected, what would my main priorities be as your MP?

- Protect and expand Green Belts and integrate these with nature recovery and community health based strategies, banning any development in such locations
- I will prioritise NHS and social care funding including an upgrade of Epsom Hospital and community based healthcare
- In education I would advocate for more places for special needs (SEND) children in Surrey and encourage funding for "earn while you learn" apprenticeships
- Support public ownership of water and energy companies
- Secure better integrated public transport with enhanced service delivery, lower fares and a scrappage scheme in Surrey to support transitioning to ULEZ compliant vehicles

- Support the national programme of retro fitting homes to deliver energy efficient homes and lower energy bills
- Epsom and Ewell has no Council housing and I would require all Councils to produce an annual target for provision of Council/social housing -
- Support our High Streets - such as grants to increase live-work places on upper floors above shops, enhanced broadband in centres to support small businesses find space, providing help to park with charging points for electric vehicles, environmental and other improvements - of course business rates should also be scaled back to help compete with online offers.
- Help our farmers to grow quality food for the home market with a large expansion of the horticulture sector and nature friendly farming,
- Create green manufacturing jobs in renewables, green technologies and related sectors.

Finally I urge you to ignore the opinion polls. In this election, more than any other in my lifetime, there is no scope for tactical voting. In Epsom and Ewell, for so long a safe Tory seat, a surprise result is definitely on the cards and cannot be predicted. The Green Party is the only party offering a decent and deliverable vision for the future backed up by realistic spending plans.

Therefore I ask you to vote with your heart and your head for a better fairer country, vote Green on 4th July!

The other candidates:

Conservative who promises to serve "with integrity"

Lib Dems' Helen Maguire - "Getting Things Done"

A True and Fair view of the world

Reform candidate for Epsom and Ewell

Mark my words for Labour candidate

A True and Fair view of the world

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Epsom and Ewell Times is publishing the appeals of the Parliamentary Candidates standing in the General Election for the constituency of Epsom and Ewell. This is the appeal from **The True and Fair Party** candidate **Gina Miller**.

My name is Gina Miller and as an activist for fairness and justice for 34 years, a successful businesswoman over 28 years, mother fighting for my now adult disabled daughter, and a survivor of domestic violence I feel compelled to step into the political arena.

Many think of me as being “that bloody difficult woman” who took two Conservative Prime Ministers to the Supreme Court and won – securing historic constitutional victories and stopping these PMs from putting themselves above the law. But my motivation has always been the same – to speak out when things are blatantly wrong, dishonest, and hurting people.

My years of campaigning has led to successful changes in the areas of special education provision, modern-day slavery legislation, campaign for laws to tackle online abuse, and bringing about changes to stop rip-offs in financial services. My work in the charity sector over the years has also helped improve governance, sustainability, and safeguarding.

The FT called me a wrecking ball – but unfairness, our broken institutions and systems need to be called out. Without integrity, morality, and common decency from leaders we all suffer.

My vision is for a thriving, healthy, happy community. So how do I plan to achieve that?

Health and Wellbeing:

Faced with debilitating pressures on our health and social care services, bringing early intervention, alternative therapies and services, medical MOTs, and mobile services onto our high streets is key. Services to tackle the growing demands on our mental health services, elderly in the community, long term sick, special needs and respite services, people unable to feed or house themselves. Collective community actions that translate into kinder communities.

Enhancing the Local Economy:

As a successful businesswoman, I’m passionate about supporting small businesses, entrepreneurs, and responsible businesses. Creating a vibrant, partnership-led local economy that attracts investment, creates jobs and local supply chains and boost prosperity and community cohesion. For example, encourage our Local Authority Pension Fund to invest into local businesses, infrastructure, and projects. Petitioning the next government for a Local Business Development Fund which would offer grants and low-interest loans. Replacing business rates with a fairer transaction tax for online and bricks and mortar businesses.

Environmental Protection:

Urgent action is needed to protect our environment which is why I am calling for ecocide to be put law, making it a criminal offence for organisations not to take steps to mitigate their environmental damage. Robust challenges to building on greenbelt, protecting our waterways and biodiversity. The Hogsmill River is a place of local pride, however, it has been subject to repeated sewer spills by Thames Water, who continue to make inflated profits whilst local people bear the brunt of these actions.

Under my proposed ecocide law, polluters would be held legally responsible and face fines or prison.

I would also legally challenge the planned development on the Green Belt via a ‘People vs. Planner & Property Developers’ action. The Green Belt is essential in protecting against urban sprawl out of London, air quality and the wellbeing of local people.

Tackling the Housing and Homelessness Crisis:

Contrary to conventional wisdom, increasing housing supply alone won’t solve the housing crisis. I am committed to addressing the housing and homelessness crisis with a human rights-based approach. In my local manifesto I set out a coordinated set of policies to tackle our housing and homelessness crisis. Making homeownership a reality instead of just an aspiration via mortgage reforms, stamp duty and building on brownfield sites.

Our proposed ‘Housing First’ model would give unhoused people the security of a home, providing them with the support necessary to reintegrate back into society, work, and accommodation.

Education:

I am a fervent believer in the power of education as the key to success, compassion, and aspiration. To unlocking social mobility and innovation. But our education system is also broken and is unfit to meet the demands of our rapidly changing world.

We are committed to inspiring students, supporting teachers, and creating a fairer, more effective education system by developing a more flexible curriculum which emphasises confidence, critical thinking, and creativity.

I understand the range of challenges facing children and parents and propose standardising the length of terms, and creating a short summer term that focuses on the arts, sports, wellbeing and building resilience. This would also alleviate costly childcare over the summer, minimise negative influences over children and ensure they are ‘school ready’ when they enter the September term. Creating new T-levels from 13 years old, and a Loan Write-Off Scheme for graduates working in crucial public services such as the NHS, education, civil service, and police.

Crime:

Seek to reestablish a local police station and have more community police out in the community. Introduce more street lighting so women and girls feel safer. Tackle the plague of young people on motorbikes at night, and the growing drugs and alcohol problem – provide places, activities, and clubs for young people to go.

Safer Roads and Pavements:

The state of local road and pavements is abominable, with the UK having the worst road quality in the world – indeed we experience this every day. I want to work with the councils to ensure higher standards or repair and inspections, and on closing legal loopholes that allow them to get way with the shoddy standards that exist.

A vote for me, is a vote for an independently minded, woman of action as your MP – not afraid to fight for you. To be represented by a determined, principled, experienced person with the national profile and experience to heighten awareness and support of this wonderful constituency of Epsom, Ewell, Ashted, and Leatherhead.

I have never been known to stay silent in the face of wrongdoing, injustice, and unfairness. I won’t stay silent when things need to be done to protect you, your family and community. I would work to champion this constituency and make it a place you are proud to call home.

To be YOUR strong voice in Parliament – nationally and locally, would be my honour and privilege.

The other candidates:

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Lib Dems’ Helen Maguire – “Getting Things Done”

The Green promises

Reform candidate for Epsom and Ewell

Mark my words for Labour candidate

Epsom and Ewell General Election Public Hustings

22 June 2024



Epsom and Ewell Times, in collaboration with NESCOL, will host a public hustings for local voters. Your opportunity to question Parliamentary Candidates on Wednesday 26th June at 7pm. The hustings will be held in the Adrian Mann Theatre, NESCOL, Reigate Road, Ewell, Epsom.

Reform candidate for Epsom and Ewell

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Epsom and Ewell Times is publishing the appeals of the Parliamentary Candidates standing in the General Election for the constituency of Epsom and Ewell. This is the first from **Reform** candidate **Mayuran Senthilnathan**.

An overwhelming Labour majority is set to be announced on July 4th. If Sunak's promises of a quadruple lock on pensions and more tax cuts sound enticing, rest assured none of us will be experiencing them. As I write this, average polling suggests Reform UK is neck and neck with the Conservatives, with Reform about to overtake any day now. The pressing question is not who we want in power, but rather who is going to be an effective opposition?

While Reform UK's success can be largely attributed to the 'Farage effect' it is rooted in the abject failure of the Tories. When my parents came to this country from Sri Lanka in the early 1980s, net immigration was in the tens of thousands. They invested heavily in my education which led to me study dentistry at King's College. I went on to get my own practice, working within the NHS for almost twenty years. No doubt my success is due to the hard work of my parents, but it was also due to the systems which were in place in this great country. I am a product of the British dream. A dream which I believe no longer exists for the people of this country. In short nothing works anymore.

From police turning a blind eye to petty crime, to record waiting lists on the NHS. From the highest tax burden since the 1940s, to soaring rents and house prices, Britain is definitively broken. This is without addressing the elephant in the room which all other parties refuse to properly acknowledge.

Net immigration by December 2022 was three quarters of a million, 2023 saw a figure of 685,000 (likely to be revised up). We are effectively importing a city larger than Manchester every year, all under successive Conservative governments which promised to slash numbers to the tens of thousands. People are now starting to draw a link between the strain on public services, roads, schools, GPs, hospitals and the amount of people in this country. Yes, birth rates are falling, everybody understands workers are needed in the NHS and social care as well as other sectors, but these numbers are simply breathtaking. While GDP figures go up as a whole, GDP per capita is declining. In other words the economy is growing but we are getting poorer. Within the British psyche is the deeper issue of culture. George Galloway has aptly highlighted obvious sectarian divides, by successively campaigning exclusively on the Gaza conflict. There is a growing sense that we no longer live in a cohesive society. This is hardly surprising. The influx of this many people in such a short time makes the prospect of integration an impossibility. It is well worth noting - it takes centuries to build a culture but it takes just a couple of decades to destroy it.

In addition under the management of both Labour and Tories we have increasingly seen the ideological capture of politics. Nowhere is this best illustrated than in the pursuit of net zero carbon emissions. While China churns out two new coal power stations per week and pumps out nearly 30% of the world's emissions, the UK is responsible for just 1%. Which means even if the UK reaches its net zero target, it would have almost no impact on the planet. In the pursuit of this ideological goal we are forcing the nation to pay more for its energy. Renewables are unreliable which is why fossil fuelled energy is imported to meet our country's needs. Industries which would have flourished on our shores have been forced abroad. But absurdly we end up buying back the products they make at higher prices- all so our government can wear the net zero badge of honour.

All this and I still have not mentioned the 'boats'.

What is the Answer?

Reform UK's manifesto sounds revolutionary but is actually a set of sane policies amidst an

insane political landscape.

The national debt is eye-watering (£2.7 trillion). To raise funds we would action things like stopping the Bank of England paying voluntary interest payments on quantitative easing reserves (£35 billion), scrap net zero subsidies (£30 billion), cut government waste and quangos (£50 billion) and introduce the employer’s immigration tax (£4 billion). This would allow us to raise the tax threshold to £20,000, making work pay. It would also grant space to further cut corporation tax and VAT. The approach would permit the implementation of a French-style health service that slashes waiting times and delivers better outcomes for all. A net-zero immigration model would be introduced that weans the economy off the addiction to cheap unskilled labour from abroad, to a high-skilled, high wage work force. This would bring the numbers down to an acceptable level tailored to the needs of the country. Finally we have a targeted six point plan to stop the boats which includes leaving the ECHR.

Once again we can become a serious country.

If you agree with the case, a vote for the Conservatives or Liberal Democrats is a wasted one. Let me explain. Labour have won, which will leave a decimated Tory party. Once Nigel Farage gets a seat into Parliament, he will naturally become the voice against Labour. The country is behind him and the party (just see what he has achieved in a week). The more Reform UK seats we win or indeed the more we rise in the polls, the quicker centre-right politics will realign. Over the next parliament, more and more of the remaining Conservative MPs will be compelled to defect to Reform UK. By 2029 our party will be the opposition ready to govern the nation. This is the 6-year master plan.

This is how we break the Tory-Labour deadlock. This is how we rally against a failed establishment. This is how we can get our country back. Join the people’s revolt.

Vote Reform UK.

The other candidates:

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Mark my words for Labour candidate

Surrey seats to watch in the election

22 June 2024



The BBC’s Local Democracy reporter Emily Dalton analyses prospects for Conservative candidates in some Surrey constituencies:

There is a chance of a seismic shift in the Surrey political landscape at the upcoming General Election. Multiple long-standing MPs are standing down, and there have been reports looking into alleged severe misconduct all with the backdrop of heavy Local Election losses for the Conservatives in the county in May.

With a General Election on the cards for July 4, Rishi Sunak will be hoping to remain Prime Minister to show ‘the plan is working’ for economic growth. With many of these hoped for economic benefits not yet reaching people’s pockets, it’s too soon to say if the public will be persuaded.

Epsom and Ewell Times will be staging a local HUSTINGS for the Epsom and Ewell Parliamentary Candidates at the Adrian Mann Theatre, NESCOL, Reigate Road in Ewell at 7pm on Wednesday 26th June. All welcome.

Will Labour leader Keir Starmer (born and raised in Surrey’s Oxshott) be able to break into the traditional Conservative Surrey heartlands and turn some blue seats red? Ed Davey’s Liberal Democrats have been eying up Surrey seats for years and hope to play their part in removing the Conservatives from office.

Surrey has been a Tory stronghold for decades, at borough, county and parliamentary level. But recent local election results showed all parties benefiting from a fall in Conservative support. The results meant that none of Surrey’s 11 boroughs and districts now has a Tory majority. Although there is a narrow Conservative majority on the county council

Six Surrey MPs have announced they won’t be standing for reelection, Conservative MPs Michael Gove (Surrey Heath), Dominic Raab (Esher and Walton), Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne), **Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell)**, and Sir Paul Beresford (Mole Valley) are not seeking reelection alongside Reigate MP Crispin Blunt, who was elected as a Conservative but now sits as an independent.

With familiar faces gone and a raft of boundary changes meaning new constituencies in the county there is much uncertainty. Below are five seats to keep an eye on in the upcoming election.

1: Godalming and Ash

Contesting MP: **Jeremy Hunt** – Conservative (53.3% votes in 2019).

While many of his cabinet colleagues have fallen away, the Chancellor of the Exchequer is clearly not ready to leave his position or constituents. An MP since 2010, Mr Hunt won an 8,827 majority in the 2019 elections. A prominent figure in the cabinet, Mr Hunt has held numerous positions and is well-known.

Due to constituency boundary changes, Mr Hunt’s West Surrey constituency no longer exists with the seats of Godalming and Ash and Farnham and Borden being created to replace it.

Running as the Lib Dem candidate in Godalming and Ash is Cllr Paul Follows. He is leader of Waverley Borough Council, leader of Godalming Town Council and a Surrey County councillor. Safe to say Mr Follows knows the depths of local government, can he make it to the national level?

Polls from The New Statesman and on Election Maps UK predict a Lib Dem victory, with between 36%-41% of the vote, and Conservatives at 30-33% – perhaps depending on how many votes Reform UK secures. This looks like a close race and surely one to watch- the Chancellor of the Exchequer could be about to have his own Portillo moment.

2: Guildford

Contesting MP: **Angela Richardson** – Conservative (44.9% votes in 2019).

Deputy chair of the Conservative Party, Angela Richardson won a narrow victory last election with only a 3,000 vote majority. She voted against PM Boris Johnson in the 2022 no confidence vote, arguing he had lost the public’s trust.

Hot on her heels is Zoe Franklin, for the Liberal Democrats, who came second in 2019 with 39.2% of the vote. Hoping for third time lucky, Ms Franklin’s votes have jumped from around 13,000 in 2017, to nearly 23,000 in 2019.

The Lib Dems have controlled the council since May 2019, with just 10 Conservative councillors

Water is likely to be a main talking point, with the Lib Dems’ national campaign to stop sewage dumping and tackle water reform. Meanwhile, Ms Richardson is campaigning to reduce flooding in Guildford and the surrounds.

3: Esher and Walton

Previous MP: **Dominic Raab** – Conservative (49.4% of votes in 2019).

Dominic Raab has been the MP for Esher and Walton since 2010, but after bullying allegations emerged and a subsequent report found him “unreasonably aggressive” in 2022 he decided to step down at the next election. Mr Raab denied all wrongdoing.

Campaigning in a ‘Remain’ constituency, Brexiteer Mr Raab secured a narrow 3,000 majority ahead of his Lib Dem opponent, Monica Harding in the 2019 election. Tactical voting may have played a heavy hand as locals sent a message to the Conservatives. With Brexit less of a core issue this time round will the vote be as close again?

Opposition leader for Elmbridge Council, Cllr John Cope is running as the Conservative candidate. He narrowly kept his ward seat in the May council elections with just 129 votes more than his Lib Dem rival. Will this be replicated in the wider constituency?

Contesting the seat for the second time, Ms Harding is hoping to make it. Running her campaign in 2019 based on no political experience, Ms Harding decided to stop ‘shouting at the tv’ and went on to achieve 28,389 votes.

4: Runnymede and Weybridge

Contesting MP: **Ben Spencer** – Conservative (54.9% of votes in 2019).

Securing a strong majority of 18,270 votes in the 2019 elections, Dr Ben Spencer achieved a similar percentage to his predecessor Philip Hammond. Dr Spencer might not be so lucky this time. Recent polling from The New Statesman and Election Maps UK show a close race forecast between the Conservatives and Labour, taking around 30% of the vote each.

After being a Conservative stronghold seat since its creation in 1997, Runnymede and Weybridge could be the first brick of the Surrey wall to turn red for Labour. The Reform Party, although unlikely to win a seat here, could take important votes away from the Conservatives as it is predicted to absorb 11.7% of the vote.

Giving it a second chance, Robert King (Labour) is running again. Leader of the Labour Party in the Runnymede council, he had a successful May local elections as his party won four seats. The Conservatives lost seven seats, including the deputy council leader.

5: Reigate

Previous MP: **Crispin Blunt** – Independent (53.9% of votes in 2019 as a Conservative).

After over 25 years of public service as an MP (1997), Mr Blunt announced he would step down at the next election in May 2022. In October 2023, he was arrested on suspicion of rape and possession of controlled substances, and had the Conservative Party whip removed. Mr Blunt was released under investigation in April 2024 and denies any wrongdoing.

After Mr Blunt won a massive majority of 18,310 in 2019, can the Conservatives inherit his popularity? Labour and Lib Dems came neck and neck at the 2019 election with around 10,000 votes each, showing a strong sense of feeling between the two. Current polling suggests either a close run between Conservatives and Lib Dems (New Statesman) or Conservatives and Labour (Election Maps UK).

With new candidates standing from the three main parties, it could be a toss up between them. Rebecca Paul (Conservative), Mark Johnston (Lib Dem) and Stuart Brady (Labour) all seem to stick to the representative party policies, rather than designing a unique promise to Reigate.

May local elections saw all other parties gain from Conservative losses, with Labour gaining another councillor in Redhill.

Image: Scout outside a polling station Molesey (image: Chris Caulfield)

BBC Question Time Came to Epsom

22 June 2024



Last night, **Epsom College** played host to BBC’s **Question Time**, with **Fiona Bruce** at the helm. She opened the programme by highlighting Epsom’s famed salts and rich horse racing heritage.

Epsom and Ewell Times will be staging a local “Question Time” for the Epsom and Ewell Parliamentary Candidates at the Adrian Mann Theatre, NESCOL, Reigate Road in Ewell at 7pm on Wednesday 26th June. All welcome.

The Panel included **Damian Hinds** MP the Conservative School Minister, **Wes Streeting** MP, Labour’s Shadow Health Secretary, **Nigel Farage**, Reform UK President, **Rose Hudson-Wilkin**, Bishop of Dover and **Piers Morgan**, TV Presenter and Former Newspaper Editor.

Here is a summary of some of the questions and responses:

Question: “Is the idea of bringing back national service anything more than a political stunt?”

Damian Hinds: Defended the idea, suggesting it would broaden opportunities and foster a cohesive society, though Bruce noted criticism from senior military figures.

Wes Streeting: Highlighted existing opportunities like local cadets and questioned the government’s track record over the past 14 years.

Rose Hudson-Wilkin: Cautioned against backdoor conscription, referencing existing youth programs.

Piers Morgan: Supported the idea for its potential to instill responsibility, but emphasized the need to address broader issues affecting young people.

Nigel Farage: Dismissed the policy as a focus groupdriven stunt, pointing out its limited scope.

Question: “Labour claims to reduce (NHS) waiting lists by extending working hours and asking doctors to work on weekends. Where will you find the staff?”

Wes Streeting: Explained plans for voluntary extra shifts, while acknowledging current pay and working condition issues.

Damian Hinds: Agreed on the need for more doctors and better technology, but noted industrial action worsened the backlog.

Piers Morgan: Criticized the system’s inability to cope with population growth and increased life expectancy.

Nigel Farage: Called for a rethink of NHS funding.

Rose Hudson-Wilkin: Highlighted the delay in developing a workforce plan.

Question: “Regardless of people coming over on small boats, legal immigration is out of control. What is the solution?”

Nigel Farage: Blamed Labour for opening the door to high migration and called for using Brexit powers to control it.

Rose Hudson-Wilkin: Advocated for addressing global issues causing migration and warned against political scapegoating.

Damian Hinds: Emphasized the need to welcome contributing migrants but acknowledged current numbers were too high.

Piers Morgan: Warned about the rhetoric used in discussing migrants and criticized the lack of control postBrexit.

Question: “Is it morally right to impose a tax on parents’ aspirations for their children?”

Wes Streeting: Defended Labour’s plan to remove tax exemptions for private schools, arguing for better funding for state schools.

Piers Morgan: Condemned the policy as envy driven and harmful to aspirations.

Damian Hinds: Questioned the impact and minimal revenue from the tax.

Rose Hudson-Wilkin: Called for equitable resourcing of all schools.

Nigel Farage: Suggested more scholarships for working class children instead of taxing private schools.

The heated debate at Epsom College will be a night to remember for those lucky to get in and everyone at Epsom College who watched it.

Maraam Nusair

6 out of 11 Conservative MPs leaving Surrey

22 June 2024



Michael Gove MP for Surrey Heath has brought the total Conservative MP retirees in Surrey to **SIX** out of the **ELEVEN** all present Conservative held **Surrey** constituencies.

On 5th February **Kwasi Kwarteng** the Conservative MP for Spelthorne announced he will not stand at the upcoming General Election.

With Paul Beresford MP for Mole Valley, Dominic Raab MP for Esher and Walton, Crispin Blunt MP for Reigate and Banstead and our own **Chris Grayling** MP for **Epsom and Ewell**, all having confirmed they are not going to run, this leaves 5 Surrey Conservative MPs still standing.

One can expect Jeremy Hunt MP for South-West Surrey, who serves in the Cabinet, to seek re-election. Jonathan Lord MP for Woking, Ben Spencer MP for Runnymede and Weybridge, Angela Richardson MP for Guildford and Claire Coutinho MP for East Surrey are assumed to be still up for the fight.

Epsom and Ewell Conservatives have already put in place their new prospective Parliamentary Candidate, **Mhairi Fraser**, an anti-corruption lawyer.

She will be challenged by **Helen Maguire** of the Liberal Democrats, **Gina Miller** of the True and Fair Party and **Steve Mckenna** of the Green Party and **Mark Todd** for Labour. It is understood a Reform Party candidate will stand but despite asking one of the Party’s street canvassers to get in touch with Epsom and Ewell Times, we have heard nothing to confirm.

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With the date of the General Election confirmed to be the 4th of July 2024 Epsom and Ewell’s Member of Parliament since 7th June 2001, **Chris Grayling**, who is not standing for Parliament this time, writes to his constituents.

Dear constituent

As you will know, the Prime Minister has called a general election for 4th July. All Parliamentary activity is now ceasing and there will be no new debates or Parliamentary motions before the election.

I am not standing for re-election and so cease to be an MP when Parliament is dissolved on 29th May. I will, though, remain responsible for urgent constituency case work in Epsom and Ewell until polling day and until my successor is elected.

As the campaign has now started, I will no longer be responding to emails about party or policy issues. However if you have an urgent personal problem which requires my help during the campaign period, please feel free to raise it with me at chris.grayling.mp@parliament.uk, which will remain operational until polling day.

Once Parliament has been dissolved my constituency data records will be destroyed, as is required legally. If you contact me for help with an urgent matter please let me know at the same time if you are happy for your issue and data to be passed on to my successor if the your case is still outstanding at the time of the election.

It has been a great honour to represent this constituency, and I send my good wishes to everyone locally for the future.

With best wishes

Chris Grayling

Out of the starting gates in Epsom and Ewell’s political Derby

22 June 2024



Today British Prime Minister **Rishi Sunak** announced a General Election will take place on July 4th.

Epsom and Ewell Times asked all the known candidates for their reaction to the news:

Mhairi Fraser, standing for the **Conservative Party** responded: “Epsom has been my family home for almost twenty years. The day after the election, it still will be. I have lived here, I have worked here, I have commuted from here; I have a personal interest in the success of Epsom, Ewell, Ashted and Leatherhead, and I know what it takes to deliver that success.

From protecting the Green Belt, to tackling crime by securing a more visible police presence, to regenerating our high streets, to improving our transport links – I have a plan, and I have the commitment to deliver on it. And throughout it all, I promise to run a clean campaign, as I have from day one. I have built my career over the last decade as an anti-corruption lawyer, and I will bring the same integrity to our politics. That is the first of many promises I will make to you, but not the last I will deliver on.”

Helen Maguire PPC for the **Liberal Democrats** said: “Hard-working families in Epsom, Ewell, Ashted, and Leatherhead are sick of the same old unfair and divisive two-party politics which is currently tearing our nation apart. They are looking for real change and a positive future, which I am committed to working to bring. Our community have had enough of this Conservative government refusing to help them through the cost-of-living crisis, whilst also allowing our local NHS hospital and local schools to crumble, and sewage to be poured into our rivers.

This Conservative government is out of touch and out of time, and this announcement is long overdue. I am honoured to be fighting on behalf of my local community to rid Epsom, Ewell, Ashted and Leatherhead of the Conservatives, who have taken us for granted for years. In Epsom & Ewell, it’s a clear choice between a fair deal with the Liberal Democrats or more chaos with the conservatives. Enough is enough, this community needs change now.”

Gina Miller, leader of the **True & Fair Party**, said: “The decision to call a general election on 4th July is a concession to the inevitable, acknowledging that the time has come to face the electorate’s scrutiny. This summer, we are casting our votes to end this dismal chapter of our nation’s history and begin a new era with leaders who truly represent us. As I stand for election in Epsom and Ewell, I am ready to bring the voices of our community to the forefront and demanding a government that prioritises the wellbeing of its people above all else.”

Mark Todd, Chair of the **Labour Party** (a Labour candidate is yet to be confirmed) said: “At last, the country has got what it wants. Now it’s time to choose between more decline under the Tories or a greener, brighter future with Labour. Your local Labour party is here to serve you and we promise that if our candidate is elected they will serve the community with all their heart. They’ll be open, accessible and always try to help.”

Stephen McKenna of the **Green Party** said: “Like the vast majority of the population I am delighted that the official end date of this Conservative Government has been announced!

Greens everywhere are hoping for a transformation of national politics in this election, a turning point which will resolve the cost of living crisis, introduce innovative new policies for the environment, for a new greener economy, for net zero retrofitting of our homes and a programme of new social housing as well as better public services. This is a time for real change in our society.”

In the run up to the election the Epsom and Ewell Times will be interviewing the candidates and staging hustings.