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Cleanliness is next to Godliness in Epsom

18 May 2025



On Sunday, 4th May, the sun was shining — and so were the smiles of Councillors Steven McCormick (RA Woodcote and Langley) and James Lawrence (LibDem College). While Steven knew what to expect having joined the group several times before, James was astonished to be greeted by a 110-strong team of volunteers, all equipped with litter pickers, high-vis jackets, and green and grey litter bags (more on those later), gathered and ready in Rosebery Park.

The volunteers, from ASEZ WAO and the World Mission Society Church of God, had travelled from Surrey, London, and as far afield as Manchester, Guildford, and Birmingham. Their mission: to clean up the parks and streets of Epsom as part of a “Reduce Plastic” campaign — an initiative backed not just by words, but by real action.

The event began with inspiring words from the councillors. Councillor James expressed his surprise at the turnout, admitting he had expected a group of around 11 but was delighted to see 10 times that number. “This is wonderful — amazing,” he said. “It’s so pleasing to see so many young faces in the crowd… so many people think activism is just shouting something online, but it’s fantastic to see people actually doing something.”

Councillor Steven added: “Hopefully people will just put litter in the bin — I know it’s a big ask — but what you’re doing is great and sets a really good example. You don’t just explain it, you actually do it. Really good job.”

Although Councillor Neil Dallen (RA Town) was unable to attend in person, he sent a message of encouragement via email, which was read out by a representative: “Best wishes to you all. This country depends on volunteers in many ways. A clean and tidy town encourages others to keep it clean and discourages littering and graffiti.”

The mostly young adult volunteers were uplifted by the councillors’ support, giving them a resounding cheer and calling out, “We love you!” Following the speeches, a short presentation was given on plastic pollution, highlighting the dangers of microplastics and encouraging people to think about how they can reduce plastic in their daily lives — something we can all take part in.

Afterwards, the councillors and volunteers set to work along three key routes in Epsom, including the town centre, the car park near Lidl, Epsom Square, Rosebery Park, and Mount Hill Gardens — all areas where litter had been reported. Recyclable and non-recyclable waste were carefully separated, with recyclable items placed in green bags and non-recyclable in grey ones.

Members of the local community praised the volunteers, and several even signed up for future events. Other environmental groups also offered words of encouragement, recognising the volunteers’ hard work. By the end of the day, about 40 bags of rubbish had been collected and left at an agreed pick-up point, where they were retrieved by a ranger from Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) and taken to the recycling depot. The EEBC depot had kindly supported the volunteers by providing around 30 litter-picking kits, which proved invaluable.

The day stood as a shining example of successful collaboration between community volunteers, councillors, and council staff. More activities are already being planned by ASEZ WAO, based at the World Mission Society Church of God on East Street, in partnership with Councillors Steven and James. These include further plastic awareness events, potential upcycling initiatives, and of course, more litter picks.

Epsom was recently ranked the second-best place to live in England, and the volunteers are hopeful that, with continued community effort, it will claim the top spot next year. They are committed to working alongside the community and the council to inspire civic pride, keep our streets clean, and make our local area a pleasant place for everyone. As Councillor Neil noted, by setting a good example, we hope others will be inspired to keep Epsom clean and discourage littering and graffiti.

Olivia from ASEZ WAO summed up the spirit of the day, saying, “The event was brilliant — I loved it. I really hope it makes a difference, and if you have the time, I’d definitely recommend getting involved in something like this.”

Joe Adams

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