

# Epsom and Ewell Times annual neutrality audit

21 November 2024



## Epsom and Ewell Times Neutrality Council Annual Report.

The unedited and full responses from members of the Neutrality Council together with our response can be read [HERE](#)

**Introduction:** The Epsom and Ewell Times (EET) established the Neutrality Council to provide an independent assessment of its political neutrality. The council consists of representatives from the main political affiliations. The following sections summarise the contributions of each member.

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### Contribution from Robert Leach - Residents Association

1. Overall neutrality rating: 10/10.
2. Fair representation of political viewpoints: Yes.
3. Instances of bias: None noted.
4. Fair representation of Residents' Associations: Yes.
5. Handling of controversial issues: "Well."
6. Reporting quality: Moderate, with a noted lack of council item coverage and human interest stories.
7. Separation of opinion and news: Yes.
8. Coverage of local community issues: Fair, with potential for increased diversity.
9. Suggestions: Expand reporting to include information from other organizations and businesses.

**Response from EET:** We thank Robert for his detailed feedback and positive remarks regarding neutrality and representation. We aim to address the need for more council coverage, human interest stories, and broader engagement with local organizations.

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### Contribution from Alison Kelly - Liberal Democrats

1. Neutrality rating: 9/10.
2. Fair representation of political viewpoints: Yes, with occasional gaps due to lack of comments from opposition.
3. Bias instances: None significant but noted balance could improve in regional coverage.
4. Handling of controversial issues: Factual and balanced.
5. Reporting quality: High, with engaging content like "Opinion Polls" and "The Strange Maths."
6. Community engagement: Effective, with suggestions to include faith groups and increase coverage in the North Borough.
7. Suggestions: Extend coverage to faith organizations like the Hook Road Islamic Centre.

**Response from EET:** We appreciate Alison's thoughtful analysis and actionable suggestions, particularly regarding faith groups and geographic coverage. These insights are invaluable as we expand our community engagement efforts.

## Contribution from Mark Todd - Labour

1. Neutrality rating: 9/10.
2. Fair representation: Yes, with balanced representation of political viewpoints.
3. Instances of bias: None observed.
4. Coverage of controversial issues: Well-handled.
5. Reporting quality: Exceptional, especially on elections and green belt issues.
6. Community engagement: Effective and inclusive.
7. Suggestions: None; praised as an “amazing community newspaper.”

**Response from EET:** Mark’s praise for our coverage of elections and green belt issues is encouraging. We remain committed to delivering high-quality reporting on critical community matters.

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## Contribution from Emma Ware - Conservative

Emma expressed dissatisfaction with the perceived bias toward the Liberal Democrats and anti-green belt campaigners. She cited specific articles as examples of bias:

1. **“Belted up on Green Belt” (15 January 2024):** Allegedly one-sided with minimal counterarguments.
2. **“Democracy at Work or Strange Mathematics” (July 2024):** Criticized for unsupported assertions.
3. **“Surrey Lib Dems Majority Tale on Thames Water” (July 2023):** Lacked context, appeared biased.
4. **“Local MP Comes to Our Defence” (September 2024):** Claimed biased language.
5. **“Epsom Pensioners Gather Less Winter Fuel Pay” (30 September 2024):** Inappropriate imagery and unsubstantiated quotes.
6. **“Surrey Schools Kids Country Walk” (November 2024):** Pejorative language. [Ed: This was a BBC report.]
7. **“Epsom Town as a Safe Place to Live”:** Exaggerated comparisons and unsupported assertions.

**Response from EET:** We regret Emma’s dissatisfaction and take her concerns seriously. While our intention is always to provide balanced reporting, we acknowledge where improvements can be made, such as ensuring better context and avoiding inappropriate imagery. We remain open to constructive input and encourage diverse contributions from all community members.

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**Conclusion:** The Neutrality Council has provided a diverse range of insights into the performance of the Epsom and Ewell Times over the past year. While the majority view reflects favourably on our efforts, we recognise that there is always room for growth. We thank each member for their time, dedication, and honest assessments.

As always, we welcome further feedback from our readers and the wider community. Transparency and accountability remain at the heart of everything we do.

The unedited and full responses from members of the Neutrality Council can be read [HERE](#)