

Banking on you and me in Epsom and Ewell

21 May 2023



The Epsom and Ewell Time Bank is launching soon and they're having a social gathering early June 2023. If you're interested in registering or have any questions, this is your chance to get involved.

As Benjamin Franklin once said, "time is money. But in truth, it's much more valuable that ... it's Productivity, Freedom, Enjoyment, Friends / Family and giving back to your neighbourhood and building a stronger community," so says **David West**, Founder of the **Epsom and Ewell Time Bank** who is launching the community project to benefit everyone saying, "It's free to join and use, giving it's members an opportunity to meetup and exchange their skills, experience and time."

For every hour you help someone, you earn an hours credit, which can be spent on someone helping you. It's a way to meet new people, make friends, and feel more involved in your community.

David told the Times "By sharing your time you are redefining the nature and connections within your community from the bottom up. Working together, building new relationships and creating new opportunities for the common good." He went on to explain "We are apart of the Time Bank UK charity, using their Internet Time Bank software to match people with the community projects and work."



The Epsom and Ewell Time Bank was at the weekend's **Festival of Ewell** and is organising a social gathering and Q&A in June 2023. If you're interested in registering for the Time Bank or have any questions, this is your chance to get involved.

The Time Bank community is free to join and all activities are managed by Time Banking UK's web-based software and overseen by a Epsom and Ewell Time Broker.

David West at The Festival of Ewell

To find out more about the social gathering and stay up-to-date, follow the Epsom and Ewell Time Bank on Facebook and Instagram. For more information on Time Banking, see Time Banking UK's website or email the Epsom resident and organiser, David at EpsomTB@gmail.com.

Epsom and Ewell Time Bank Registration - <https://tol2.timebanking.org/epsomandewell>

Epsom and Ewell Time Bank Facebook Group - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/831821940256246>

Epsom and Ewell Time Bank Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/epsomandewelltimebank/>

Time Banking UK - <https://timebanking.org/howitworks/>

How does Time Banking help? Time Bank claim:

- 85% meeting more people.
- 80% felt more part of the community than before.

- 74% made new friends.
- 74% experienced a lift in mood or reduced depression.
- 69% felt they could ask for or receive more help.
- 66% said they experienced reduced loneliness.
- 60% said their quality of life, health and wellbeing had improved.

Woking £490m write down sparks ‘worst fears’

21 May 2023



Epsom and Ewell Times has been following a nearby Surrey Borough’s debt woes. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, in contrast to Woking, has consistently balanced its budgets. The Woking towers in question are visible from Epsom Downs. Chris Caulfield reports.

“Worst fears” have been confirmed in newly published accounts that exposed a half billion pound “black hole” in Woking Borough Council’s finances and plunged the future of many services into doubt.

The figures, released this week on Companies House for 2021, show the council’s biggest investment, Victoria Square, has had £490,479,300 wiped off its value.

Construction on the development began in 2017 after the previous administration signed off on £750m of loans to cover the investment.

It was billed as one of “the most ambitious developments in the South East” and included 429 apartments, retail and leisure space, a performing arts academy, a four star hotel, and a medical centre. It means its fair market value is now hugely below its carrying book value but the scale of the figures, though predicted by councillors, still shocked.

Councillor **Adam Kirby** (Lib Dem, Horsell) told the LDRS: “We’ve been looking at this for a really long time. We’ve taken control of the council a year ago and can now get a better idea of the council’s financial position. This is our worst fears come true. We didn’t want to be right about this but in the last few days the Company’s House valuation has been eye catching. “We were told for many many years that these investments, if you could call them that, wouldn’t impact the budget for council services, but what is likely is it will.

“There are statutory functions we have to provide by law and we could be going into special measures to help us - we are in conversation with a government task force who are working with councillors and the CEO. We are trying to protect things people need. Meals on Wheels, the leisure centre, don’t have legal requirements to support them but we do not want to take them away. Stopping them won’t solve the problem.”

He added: “It would be irresponsible to speculate on what changes will be made at this stage, its people’s jobs and residents who rely on these services. People who were told these investments wouldn’t impact them.” He said there were two ways to look at the problem, cash flow or valuation, but that it was the same problem.

The council borrowed £750m for the project and, according to the latest valuation report, it is only worth £199m. Cllr Kirby added: “There is a black hole in the balance sheet.”

Furthermore the council’s total debt is expected to hit £2.5billion by 2024/25, up from its current level of £2.1bn. The council, he said, was firmly in “section 114 territory” where the government takes over the financial running of a local authority that is effectively bankrupt and unable to pay for even basic services.

Woking Borough Council is running on a budget deficit of about £10m on a budget of £45m. There is £11m collected in council tax with the rest coming from sources such as parking or rent rates.

The Companies House report on Victoria Square Woking Limited (VSWL) indicates the company incurred a net loss of £490,479,300 during the year ended December 31, 2021.

VSWL owns the new shopping centre, residential development, and hotel - backed by a longstanding agreement with Woking Council.

The report adds that its current liabilities exceeded its total assets by £501,988,671 indicating a “material uncertainty exists that may cast significant doubt on the company’s ability to continue as a going concern and, therefore, “that it may be unable to realise its assets and discharge its liabilities in the normal course of business”.

Cllr Kirby said: “We are going to find out the impact on the council soon and it’s not going to be good.”

The council has said the £490 million write down not only “confirms its worst fears” but casts “uncertainty on further funding for Victoria Square project beyond May with imminent reports into financial implications for the council itself.”

Cllr **Dale Roberts**, portfolio holder for finance and economic development at Woking Borough Council, said: “Even though we had fully anticipated massive losses and signalled them earlier in the year, this is still devastating news. He added: “As soon as we won last year’s elections, we took immediate action to limit the damage. First, we reduced the period for which we would commit working capital to VSWL from ten to five years. Then, we began to put in place the missing systems and processes to properly run a commercial operation – and to protect the long-term interests of all Woking residents.

“Now, these accounts will further inform ongoing work being carried out by public sector finance experts, who we commissioned earlier this year to better understand the sustainability of the council’s own annual budget. Looking ahead, it would be irresponsible to speculate on the details and timings of what happens next. However it is responsible to be transparent about the scale of this situation. Only complete transparency will enable our commitment to finding solutions as soon as possible.”

Related Reports

Waking to Woking’s woeful debt

Would you want to live in Woking?

Woking up to a very big debt problem

Blot on Epsom Downs horizon to grow no more?

It’s Walk to School Week in Surrey

21 May 2023



May is the month to talk about walking, more walking and even more walking. The weather is brighter, dryer and warmer and is the best time to get outdoors as a family.

We know how important walking to school is for children’s health and the environment. It reduces congestion, improves road safety at the school gates and instils lifelong healthy habits. It’s been proven that children who do some form of exercise, especially a walk before school, do better in class because they arrive refreshed, fit and ready to learn.

The school run alone is responsible for generating half a million tonnes of CO2 nationally per year

Not everyone is able to walk to school, but there might be part of the journey you could walk. This Walk to School Week (15 to 19 May), could you think about turning rides into strides which can really make a difference? Take a look on our active travel webpage for inspiration.

Making it safe for Surrey’s children

It’s important for parents to know that their children are safe when walking along a road. This is where our Feet First: Walking Training comes in – a programme that provides school children aged 7 to 8 years old (Year 3) with the road safety skills to enable them to safely walk to and from school with their parents and carers, whilst also preparing children to travel independently in the future. The training is done in the classroom as well as using online resources, at home activities and taking children outside on Surrey’s streets for them to practice what they’ve learned in a real-world environment. It includes teaching:

- The Green Cross Code and how to cross the road safely
- Road signs and pedestrian crossings
- Recognising safe and unsafe places to cross
- Dealing with distractions and rushing
- How to cross between parked cars
- Understanding vehicle lights and sounds
- Crossing driveways

- The benefits of active travel

Last term, our Feet First: Walking Training instructors taught 3,500 pupils across 65 schools the skills they need to stay safe on Surrey's roads. By the end of this academic year our instructors will have taught over 5,500 pupils at nearly 100 primary schools in the county.

For more information on the training visit the Walking training for schools webpage or speak to your school to see if they're signed up.

Walking citizens funding advice

21 May 2023



People from across the borough joined forces with **Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell** (CAEE) to raise vital funds for those at the forefront of the cost-of-living crisis.

Nearly 50 staff, volunteers and supporters went the extra mile on Sunday 14 May 2023 by walking a self-guided 5 mile route around Horton County Park or 10 mile route through the Epsom countryside to raise funds for the charity.

Image: Cllr Kieran Persand, Chris Grayling MP, Sue Grayling, Lisa Davis CEO CAEE, Louise Curd CAEE, volunteer Chris Bruce CAEE, Cllr Bernie Muir

Supporters who took part on Sunday included MP **Chris Grayling** and Horton councillors **Bernie Muir** and **Kieran Persand**. **Epsom and Ewell Rotaries** both fielded volunteers to help on the day plus some CAEE staff and volunteers who gave up their Sunday.

The event is expected to raise over £1,000. Anyone who would like to walk the route and donate or even just donate, can visit the CAEE Just Giving page. All funds raised during Sunday's event will go directly into supporting frontline services.

One of the people CAEE has helped is Tom (not his real name), a man in his 50s who lives alone in a rented property. He is typical of many of CAEE's clients and their multiple (and sometimes hidden) vulnerabilities. When Tom first came to CAEE he was defensive, lacked confidence dealing with people and his finances and had spiralling rent arrears, council tax liabilities, water arrears and other debts. His paperwork was chaotic and incomplete and Tom found appointments challenging.

Over a period of time, advisers at CAEE have been working regularly with Tom and he has taken giant leaps forward and is now in a much better situation. CAEE has empowered Tom to work at a pace that he can cope with to help him overcome some of his difficulties.

Lisa Davis, CEO of CAEE, said: "We're so grateful to everyone who rallied together this weekend. Every day our advisers hear from people who are stressed, isolated and frightened as they try to deal with the cost-of-living crisis. We're working flat out to help people find a way forward. But we're a charity and our services are stretched. All the funds raised by the people of Epsom and Ewell will help us get crisis support for those who need it."

Epsom & Ewell's Coronation Champion

21 May 2023



Brownie leader **Mary Zoeller** from **Epsom** has been recognised for her outstanding volunteer work by Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

Led by **Queen Camilla**, the **Royal Voluntary Service** has recognised 500 outstanding volunteers from across the UK with a **Coronation Champion Award**. The awards celebrate and recognise the tireless work of volunteers around the country, which formed a key part of the coronation celebrations for His Majesty the King.

Mary received the award for her work volunteering with Girlguiding and other local charities. Over the past thirteen years she has inspired girls to have exceptional experiences as leader of **1st Ewell Village (St Mary's)**, as well as being Epsom division and assistant county commissioner for Surrey East.

The Coronation Champion Volunteer Awards were judged by a panel consisting of specialists in the volunteering field and charity leaders. Mary is one of only 500 people in the UK to be awarded a Coronation Champion Volunteer Award.

Mary attended the Coronation concert at Windsor Castle on Sunday 7 May in recognition of her award.

Mary said: *"I'm very shocked but absolutely delighted to be named a Coronation Champion. In Girlguiding, we all work hard to make a difference to girls and young women's lives and it's wonderful when our volunteering efforts are recognised. Attending the concert on Sunday was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, one which I will always remember."*

Brownie in 1st Ewell Village (St Mary's) Libby, aged 9, said: *"All the brownies are so excited and happy that Brown Owl won this award. When she told us about the award, we clapped really hard. Brown Owl deserves this award for always making sure we have the best time at Brownies every week. Brownies is so much fun, Brown Owl always helps everybody with a big smile."*

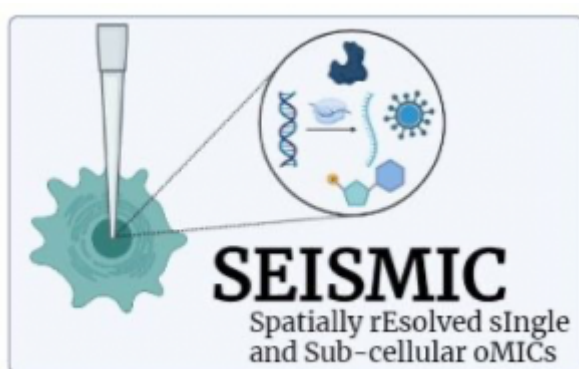
About Girlguiding

Girlguiding is the UK's largest youth organisation dedicated completely to girls, with around 370,000 members. Girls can do anything. We help them know that, whether they're 4 or 18 or in between. All girls have a home at Girlguiding - whoever they are, and wherever they are. We show them a world of possibilities, big and small. We help them think big and be bold in a space where they can be themselves, get creative, explore, and have fun. We're a powerful collective voice - with girls, led by girls - changing the world for the better.

We're 300,000 Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers, who come together to laugh, learn, explore and have adventures, in communities across the UK and virtually. We're 70,000 volunteers who make guiding happen by giving time, talent and enthusiasm. Registered Charity No 306016 girlguiding.org.uk

Seismic change at Surrey University

21 May 2023



A new national research facility could significantly improve our understanding of infectious diseases, ageing and cancers, leading to novel treatments and vaccines.

The University of Surrey's SEISMIC facility will offer scientists access to technology that enables them to pick up single cells or even parts of cells and measure the spatial position of biomarkers like proteins, metabolites and lipids.

Funded by £2.8 million from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and industry, SEISMIC uses an advanced type of microscope manufactured by Yokogawa Corporation.

Professor Melanie Bailey, Director of the SEISMIC facility at the University of Surrey, said:

"Thanks to SEISMIC, we've made a breakthrough in measuring lipids in individual mammalian cells. This new technology is a game changer because it allows scientists to measure important biomarkers while keeping track of where they are in the cell. This is important for understanding how healthy cells work and how infections or cancer can affect them."

“We’re really excited about this because it will help us better understand how cells communicate with each other, and this knowledge could lead to new ways to fight diseases.”

SEISMIC enables single-cell and sub-cellular analysis, which will help scientists understand what happens under defined conditions and how cells signal to each other.

Dr Dany Beste, Senior Lecturer in Microbial Metabolism at the University of Surrey, said:

“The new facility is free for academics working in BBSRC-funded areas and also available to scientists in industry. We are confident SEISMIC will enhance scientific training in single-cell work and overcome some of the challenges in this area.”

SEISMIC is the University of Surrey’s third national research facility with the Ion Beam Centre and the Environmental Flow Laboratory.

Prof Bailey said:

“The combination of SEISMIC, the proton beam facility and the Ion Beam Centre are a boon to Surrey’s scientific and business communities and could allow us to understand the interaction between cancer cells and radiation in more detail. This has enormous potential and we are excited to welcome researchers to use our new facility.”

Surrey University News.

Dutch scouts go English in Epsom & Ewell

21 May 2023



For over 35 years a close friendship has existed between the **1st Cuddington Sea Scouts in Epsom & Ewell District** and the Karel Doorman Zeeverkeners Groep of Bergen Op Zoom in the southern Netherlands. The roots of the relationship go back to the 2nd World War, Arnhem, disrupted schooling and a Royal Navy Admiral.

The relationship centres around reciprocal visits on a 3 or 4 yearly basis; and 2019 saw the last pre-pandemic visit. The Groups kept in touch over lockdown (and they had a brief joint paddle-boarding session with a motorcycling leader in 2020), but there was incredible excitement when at the end of April 2023, 74 Dutch Sea Scouts and leaders arrived in a double decker coach for their 12th visit.

Their journey had taken them via a day trip to Canterbury and they arrived to meet the **1st Cuddington** team who were cooking dinner. Over the course of the week they had a week with joint boating at the Warspite Water Activity Centre on the Thames; a hike down (and up) Box Hill with Warspite Scouts and Explorers, London Zoo, a day of boating at the Dockland Scout Project in central London, kipping on a ship in the West India Dock, exploring London, swimming in Guildford, widegames with Explorers, joint discos and much more.

Neighbours at 2nd Cuddington provided accommodation for the girls whilst the Dockland Scout Project supplied both accommodation and a day of boating in the shadow of Canary Wharf; there was also support from Scout partners at Ajax Sea Scouts

About Scouts

- Scouts, the world’s largest youth movement, was founded on 1 August 1907.
- In the UK, Scouts is supported by The Scout Association, enabling 7,000 Scout Groups across the country to provide opportunities to over 475,000 young people aged 6-25.
- There are now more than 638,000 individuals actively involved in Scouts in the UK.
- All genders, races and backgrounds are welcome at Scouts. Every week, it gives almost half a million people aged 4-25 the skills they need for school, college, university, the job interview, the important speech, the tricky challenge and the big dreams: the skills they need for life.
- Scouts helps members gain these skills by encouraging them to ask the big questions and listen with wide open minds. It helps them to take a deep breath and speak up, think on their feet, ignore the butterflies and go for it. With Scouts, young people don’t give up – they get back up and try again, often with the support of the friends they’ve made there.
- Over 200 activities are offered by Scouts around the UK, from canoeing and caving to coding and community projects, made possible by the efforts of over 163,000 adult volunteers.

- Worldwide, Scouts has over 50 million members, both male and female, and operates in nearly every country in the world.
- UK Scouts has over 250 Scout Activity Challenge badges. These require participants to achieve a level of understanding and skill realistic and appropriate to their age range.

Epsom and Ewell planning improving after Government threat?

21 May 2023



Three Surrey councils have been warned that their planning departments are “not good enough” and threatened with having their decision-making powers stripped.

Guildford, Waverley, and **Epsom and Ewell Borough Councils** have each been written to by the Housing Secretary Michael Gove over their “very poor” quality of service that fell “far below” expected thresholds.

Councils must determine at least 70 per cent of non-major planning applications within eight weeks – or agree to an extension. The three Surrey councils have fallen well below that figure, the department said.

Mr Gove was therefore “minded” to designate the councils, meaning developers could bypass them completely and submit planning applications directly to the Planning Inspectorate. The impact effectively strips a local authority’s say over planning matters.

The letter to all three councils, part of a group of 10 nationally to be given final warning, read:

“The Government is clear that having an efficient and effective planning service at local authority level is essential to delivering the homes, building and investment the country needs.

“The planning performance regime was introduced to ensure that all local planning authorities contribute to this objective. I have significant concerns about the performance of a handful of local authorities including your council.”

For Guildford, its performance of 50.1 per cent between October 2020 and September 2022 was far below the expected threshold of 70 per cent. In **Epsom and Ewell that level was 52.5 percent**, and in Waverley it was 61.7 per cent.

The letter continued: “That is indicative of a very poor quality service to local residents and a significant deterrent to investment in your local housing market and wider economy. That is not good enough, and despite some more encouraging recent data, I am therefore minded to designate [the council]. “

Mr Gove has now asked the Planning Inspectorate to prepare for designations over the summer period but said they had until June to make the required improvement to their planning service and “to exceed our performance thresholds and stay above it consistently”.

If levels were to drop again, he said, he would “not hesitate” to use his “powers to designate your council later this year”.

Waverley Conservatives have since called on the council’s ruling coalition to “get a grip” on planning.

Councillor Carole Cockburn, acting leader of Waverley Conservatives, said: “Communities and local businesses have had the threat of the planning department being taken into special measures hanging over them for months because of the Lib Dem-Labour-Green-Farnham Residents Party coalition administration’s inability to deal with the problem. They need to get a grip, and fast, to save our local voice in planning matters. Otherwise, people and businesses across Waverley will continue to suffer.”

A spokesperson for Waverley Borough Council said that planning performance suffered in 2021 and early 2022, was a result of the pandemic, “teething issues” with a new planning IT system, an increase in applications following lockdown and a nationwide shortage of planning officers.

Since then, they said there had been a “significant uplift in planning performance, and we are making headway in reducing the backlog of planning applications, but caseloads for our officers remain high”. Staffing remains a “significant challenge”.

They added: “Mr Gove has acknowledged the improvement in our performance and rather than moving to formally designate the council, has given us the opportunity to demonstrate this improvement over a longer period of time.”

Waverley Borough Council portfolio holder for planning and economic development, Councillor Liz Townsend, said: “We have been working closely with the Planning Advisory Service to improve our performance, and during the three most recent quarters 83 per cent, 92 per cent and 96 per cent of non-major applications respectively, were determined within

the allotted time – significantly above the Government’s 70 per cent target. Our view is that designation is not appropriate and would be counterproductive to sustaining and improving on the gains in planning performance we have achieved over the last year.”

A Guildford Borough Council spokesperson said that it have been working to reduce backlog since June but that caseloads remain high. They said: “To supplement our internal planning team and improve performance, we have employed external planning consultants and temporary planning officers.

“With housing and the cost of living so high in Surrey, recruiting and retaining talent in the South-East remains a significant challenge. However, we are actively recruiting new permanent planners to help build a resilient planning function. Our new executive head of planning development, Claire Upton-Brown, took up post on March 20, 2023. She has a strong history of turning services around and is well qualified to address the challenges we are facing, with the support of the senior management and councillor team.”

Jackie King, chief executive of **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** said the authority was hopeful the secretary of state would recognise the “significant” improvements it had made in recent months. She said: “The council has been fully aware of this historic issue relating to performance over that period, which was a result of Covid and capacity-related issues. “Having acknowledged the issues, the council took swift decisive action to address issues, resulting in the recruitment of a new management team in early 2022, the securing of additional staffing resourcing within the department as well as investing in IT and improved ways of working. Additional process reviews and follow on improvements were identified and implemented. All actions and process improvements have the full support of members. As a result of the council’s actions, performance on planning applications has improved rapidly and significantly. Since early 2022, the council has continued to determine well over 90 per cent of planning applications within the statutory timescale target.”

She added: “Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has demonstrated a sustained improvement in service and performance and have been in regular contact with officials at DLUHC over the past year to keep them up to date with the progress which the council has made. When the Minister reviews Epsom and Ewell’s performance again in June, the council will be able show five successive quarters of performance well above the 70 per cent target:

APR/MAY/JUN 2022 – 95 per cent
JUL/AUG/SEP 2022 – 92 per cent
OCT/NOV/DEC 2022 – 94 per cent
JAN/FEB/MAR 2023 – 96 per cent
APR/MAY/JUN 2023 – 97 per cent (to date)

“Once reviewed we are hopeful that the minister will acknowledge and recognise that the issues the council faced were historic and temporary in nature and this council has taken significant proactive steps to address and improve.”

The full list of councils written to by Michal Gove were:

Calderdale, Cotswold, **Epsom and Ewell**, Guildford, Hinckley and Bosworth, Pendle, Portsmouth, Vale of White Horse and Waverley councils, as well as the Peak District National Park Authority.

A Surrey Borough funds legal fight to stop oil drilling

21 May 2023



The June 8th judicial review against the Government’s decision to allow fossil fuel drilling near an **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** will go ahead. Waverley Borough Council held a special meeting of its executive committee to approve the £82,500 in funding to proceed – £32,500 for legal costs with a further £50,000 set aside in case it is liable for the oil driller’s costs.

According to the published papers, the executive considered “it a moral imperative to continue its legal challenge”. The money was approved on Thursday, May 11, as the council continues its four-year battle to stop UK Oil and Gas from drilling at Loxeley Well in Dunsfold – and means the judicial review into the exploratory drilling of £123 million of oil by UK Oil and Gas (UKOG) can proceed.

Addressing the meeting was Councillor Steve Williams, Green Party member and portfolio holder for environment and sustainability. He said: “In July 2019, we held a listening panel where we could listen to the views of residents on this proposal that was in the air to undertake on-shore drilling in Waverley, in Dunsfold. We listened and we listened to the concern after concern in terms of the local environment as well as to the planet and the people of Dunsfold. The impact

was absolutely clear and from that point on Waverley Borough Council saw it as its mission to do exactly that, to protect Dunsfold and to stop the drilling. It was consistent in terms of our position in declaring a climate emergency and committing ourselves to carbon neutrality.”

The original planning applications were rejected by Surrey County Council’s planning committee members in 2020. UKCOG then mounted an appeal which was eventually called in for review by the Secretary of State, Michael Gove. Mr Gove recused himself due to possible conflicts of interest, but former Housing Minister, Stuart Andrew ruled in favour of the plans.

Cllr Williams added: “Now is the opportunity for Waverley executive to follow this through. We would, if we did not do so, be inconsistent with our previous clear commitment on this issue. We would be neglecting our duty to the people of Dunsfold, we would be flying in the face of our climate emergency. It is imperative, for if we are to be successful in this, and I very much hope we shall be, but we should be putting our money where our mouth is, for the people of Dunsfold, for the natural environment, and for the planet.” He said the council must “take the next step and secure that judicial review in the anticipation of the outcome we’ve been working for four years”.

Cllr Liz Townsend, Lib Dem member and portfolio holder for planning and economic development, said the application had “wide implications”, not just for the borough, but the country as a whole. She said: “It’s difficult to believe that the UK already has 509 fossil fuel sites specifically in protected areas. More than any other country in the world. South Downs national park already holds nine oil and gas sites. If the Loxley well site is successful how many other sites will be allowed?”

She added, while some may view this as a David versus Goliath battle we “should remember who was the winner of that conflict”.

The committee heard that the cost to residents would work out to about 65p per person but had the potential to set a national precedent.

The committee also called on Dunsfold and Alfold Parish Councils to offer their “substantive” and vocal support.

Related Reports:

[The Hills Are Alive With the Sound of Drilling... ?](#)

[Oiling the wheels of justice on Surrey Hills](#)

[Surrey MPs oppose each other on drills in the hills](#)

[Fractious Court case anticipated](#)

Support your pop-up free local news service

21 May 2023



Even Al-Jazeera’s global reaching website is plagued by pop-ups. Your local quality news service, The Epsom and Ewell Times, is determined to resist its website being used to generate income. We say “No” to irritating advertisements, pop-ups and other uninvited interferences with your reading pleasure.

The Epsom and Ewell Times has been in full operational mode for one year and we have not charged readers a penny. We want our service to be available to everyone. The 2019 Report into the Press of Baroness Caithness sets out, with substantial evidence in support, the vital role quality local news services provide local communities: Improvements to participation in local affairs: Council business and politics, community events and volunteer activities.

Our efforts have been recognised by the BBC permitting us to print the reports of its local reporters. The BBC does not provide any financial support.

We still have a long way to go to extend and improve our service and with your support we can continue to build.

Today The Epsom and Ewell Times appeals to all our readers to make a modest donation for us to cover our running costs. All our contributors are unpaid volunteers. However, there are fees to pay for regulation, subscriptions for the use of images, website hosting fees and other unavoidable expenses.

For donors giving us £20 or more there is an option to be entered into a draw for two free passes for the upcoming Satisfied Eye International Film Festival. 26th to 28th May Bourne Hall, Ewell.

We would be very grateful for any donation you can kindly make.

[CLICK HERE TO GO TO OUR DONATE FORM](#) and help the Epsom and Ewell Times maintain its service for another year.

The Times to award film festival passes has come

21 May 2023



Epsom and Ewell's own international film festival is coming. The **Satisfied Eye International Film Festival**, now in its fourth season and consistently rated in the top film festivals in the world, is already acknowledged for its high quality programme. This year, due to Co-Vid delays, the Festival has two year's worth of submissions from over 50 countries; so the organisers could cherry pick even more for an extra high quality programme.

SUPPORT EPSOM AND EWELL TIMES AND WIN TWO FREE FILM FESTIVAL PASSES

To celebrate the first year of **Epsom and Ewell Times** donors supporting our advertisement free quality news service can choose to be entered into a draw for two full free film festival passes. Click [HERE](#) to donate.

The Festival takes place at Ewell's **Bourne Hall** in Spring Street between **Friday 26th and Sunday 28th May**.

There will be more Oscar nominees than ever before, with European and UK premieres and some of the best up and coming directors, producers and other talent from around the world.

The People's Choice screening this year (Friday 27th ... films chosen from the programme by local filmgoers) is probably the strongest they have ever had, with an Oscar nominee, an Oscar winner and a real battle to see who picks up the People's Choice award.

The Festival is part of the sci-fi rebranding of Bourne Hall this year so there will be some extra fun treats in store for film and TV fans.

Anyone who likes a good photo op can come and have their picture taken in the Game of Thrones' Iron Throne, get a selfie with the Back to the Future DeLorean and a whole lot more during the festival.

And there's scheduled to be a live performance after the screening of **Finding Her Beat**. The film is a joyous, uplifting documentary that follows the struggles to launch the first concert for women taiko drummers ... something reserved normally only for men.

There will be free screenings for children throughout the weekend at Bourne Hall, Spring Street.

This year sees the first ever **Emily Davison Award** for Best Female Director. The association with Epsom and Ewell being obvious with the statue to the famous suffragette in Epsom's Market Square.

Surrey's £12 million fund open for your home energy improvements

21 May 2023



Over £12m of grant funding is now available for Surrey residents whose homes are not heated by gas, to make their homes more energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

Residents living in hard to heat homes and on lower incomes could receive up to £38,000 to fund measures that; improve a range of insulation including wall, loft and underfloor; install solar PV, solar thermal and air source heat pumps and ensure ventilation meets the industry standards.

Eligible properties must have an EPC rating of D-G, the primary form of heating must not be mains gas and applicants will need to meet the financial eligibility criteria. Funding is limited and will be on a first-come, first-serve basis. Residents can

check if they are eligible by visiting contacting Action Surrey via the website - **www.actionsurrey.org** or calling 0800 783 2503.

Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Environment said: *"It is still a challenging time for many households who are struggling in this cost of living crisis which we are all facing, which is why it's so important we reach out and help those who need us the most."*

"I'm sure there are many residents who do not realise they are eligible for this funding, which is a great opportunity to reduce their energy bills whilst reducing their carbon footprint. I'd like to encourage all residents living in homes not heated by gas to check if they are eligible and help us achieve our goal to be a net zero county by 2050."

Lord Callanan, Minister for Energy Efficiency and Green Finance, said: *"This investment will help thousands of households to heat their homes for less, keep them warm for longer and could save hundreds on their annual energy bill."*

"The green energy sector is growing, and this funding will support green jobs and provide the training needed to deliver these vital upgrades to homes."

Surrey County Council has been awarded Government funding through a second phase of the Home Upgrade Grant. The project will be delivered by Action Surrey - an energy efficiency advice service set up in partnership with Surrey local authorities.

Sign up to the Greener Matters newsletter to keep up to date on Surrey County Council's progress towards its target of making Surrey net zero by 2050 and find out what you can do to help.

Surrey asbestos pay-out to Epsom caretaker's family

21 May 2023



The family of a former Epsom school caretaker has paid tribute to an 'amazing' husband and dad after lawyers recently secured them a settlement in connection with his asbestos-related cancer death.

Colin Bradley, was diagnosed with mesothelioma, a cancer of the lining of the lung associated with exposure to asbestos, often decades previously.

Following his diagnosis, Colin, from Epsom, instructed asbestos-related disease specialists at Irwin Mitchell to investigate his illness and help him access the specialist treatment and care he required. However, he died aged 75 before he could see his case concluded.

The case was continued by Colin's son Darren Bradley, 53, in his dad's memory. His legal team has now secured a significant settlement from Surrey County Council in connection with Colin's mesothelioma.

Colin was employed by the local authority as a caretaker at Cuddington County First School from 1976 to 2003. The school is now Cuddington Primary School, run by the Howard Partnership Trust, who were not involved in the case against Surrey County Council - the defendant in the claim.

Surrey County Council admitted that the exposure Colin had to asbestos dust should not have happened, and conceded liability in his claim.

For this year's Workers' Memorial Day of 28 April, Darren joined the legal team to warn people of the ongoing danger posed by asbestos and to pay tribute to an 'amazing' dad who was taken from his family due to exposure to the hazardous substance.

Paul Ramsay, the asbestos-related disease specialist supporting Darren and his family, said: "The past few years have been incredibly difficult for Darren and his family. To face the distress of Colin's diagnosis and declining health due to mesothelioma has taken its toll on all of them."

"Colin was determined to get at the truth of his asbestos exposure and while nothing can bring Colin back to his family, the conclusion of the case and settlement gives them some closure and the answers they were looking for."

"However, Colin's death is also a stark reminder of the dangers still posed by asbestos, including in public buildings. While many people associate the use of asbestos with heavy industry its use was much more widespread, including in schools, hospitals, leisure centres and offices."

"Our own research shows that the presence of asbestos in public buildings, including schools continues to be a real concern throughout the country. In speaking out, Colin's family hope to make others aware of the risks of this material."

This year's Workers' Memorial Day is an opportunity to remember workers like Colin and pause to reflect and remember all those who have been lost."

Before his death Colin believed he had been exposed to asbestos in the boiler room and various service areas whilst working at the school.

Colin had always been in good health and did not drink alcohol or smoke but began to feel unwell in August 2020, with a loss of energy and appetite.

After consulting his GP and being sent for tests, mesothelioma was diagnosed in December 2020. Colin began chemotherapy on 13 January, 2021, but his condition continued to deteriorate. He died six months after his diagnosis, on 22 June 2021.

Colin was married to Lorraine Bradley, 65, who is step-mum to Colin's sons, Darren, Mark and Simon Bradley.

Darren said: "All of our lives changed the day of dad's diagnosis. As he'd always led such an active and healthy lifestyle, it was hard to accept anything so serious could be wrong. The speed his illness progressed shocked us all.

"Dad was the central figure in our family, always there encouraging, supporting and looking after us all, even long into our own adult lives. His loss has left a huge void - and it is especially upsetting to see Lorraine left widowed and alone when they still had so much to look forward to in their retirement - but I take some comfort knowing that he would have been proud that we secured an admission of liability from his former employer.

"It's hard to imagine you could come across such a dangerous substance in a school environment and it's shocking to think it could still be there in other schools, posing a risk to others.

"I hope that by speaking about my amazing dad, we can reflect on how much we miss him every day, but also warn others of the dangers that still exist by coming into contact with asbestos. If we can help keep another family together or help make the argument for asbestos removal, dad's death won't have been in vain."

Workers' Memorial Day on 28 April remembers those who have died as a result of their employment, and campaigns to improve health and safety standards in the workplace and increase protection for employees.

Research undertaken by Irwin Mitchell suggests more than 4,500 public buildings across 20 of the UK's largest local authorities still contain asbestos, averaging at 225 buildings per authority.

A special Epsom school's future secured.

21 May 2023



The future of Kingswood House School on West Hill in Epsom has been secured after the planning brought by local developer Steve Curwen, was refused by Surrey County Council on 21 st March. The School's landlords have also confirmed in court proceedings pending with the School that they have no objection to the grant of a new lease to the School.

Kingswood House School has existed on its site for over 100 years and has within its 250 pupils, 172 with registered special educational needs (SEND) the highest number of any school in Surrey. The School has been awarded the status of "Asset of Community Value" in recognition of its contribution to the local community and has recently been graded "excellent" in an inspection undertaken by the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

The proposed planning application would have seen the 100 year old school replaced with a much smaller school of only 60 pupils for extreme special needs. The application was met with a very high level of local opposition culminating in 440 objections and a petition of 150 due in large part to a fear that it was a precursor to an application to build houses on the school playing field and indeed, across the whole site in the event that the proposed school did not proceed.

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The Cost of Surrey's Crime Commissioner: "It's criminal"?

21 May 2023



The Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey Police was elected in May 2021 on a turnout of Surrey voters of 38%. That was 5% higher than the national average but the election coincided with Surrey County Council's election in all the County's 81 single-member seats.

The Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner is Conservative **Lisa Townsend**. Her office explains her role: "Your Commissioner is responsible for overseeing the work of Surrey Police, holding the Chief Constable to account on your behalf, and funding key services that strengthen community safety and support victims."

The Liberal Democrats are calling for the abolition of this post after uncovering the cost of running the office. They state the post has cost £3.2 million since 2019. And claim: "Since 2021, the Surrey Commissioner, Lisa Townsend, has had three staff members to run her office social media feeds. The Commissioner has increased the office costs since being elected by £180,000 - the equivalent to seven community police officers. Since the Commissioner was elected, Surrey has also seen a fall in community officer numbers (39)."

This compares with an annual budget for Surrey Police of about £250 million and its employment of approximately 2153 officers.

Julie Morris Leader of the Liberal Democrat group on **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council** told The Times:

"I have never understood the purpose of Police Commissioners. Political appointees have no place in solving crime. My experience is that many crimes considered small and personal are unworthy of being given Police attention. These can cause a great deal of emotional distress and are simply neither followed up nor are they treated seriously. Putting resources back into those categories of crime will help grow confidence in the Police."

Top Image is a **mock up** by Epsom and Ewell Times of Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend holding two mobile phones.

Lisa Townsend responded to the **Epsom and Ewell Times** and said: "Surrey Police now has more frontline officers than ever before. It will be officially announced this week that the Force has not only met but exceeded its target for extra officers under the government's programme to increase numbers by 20,000 across the country. That means more than 300 extra police officers will have joined the ranks since 2019. This is great news for residents and I believe the new recruits will help to make the Force the strongest it has been in a generation.

"Last year, Surrey Police made an operational decision to temporarily halt the recruitment of Police Community Support Officers which was identified as one way of helping the Force meet its savings target. There were no 'drastic cuts' - these posts were replaced with new warranted officers and there were no redundancies or loss of numbers to Surrey Police's frontline teams. We expect PCSOs to be back to the current numbers within the next three years and I am pleased to say that recruitment for this important role has been reopened and the Force are actively seeking applications right now.

"As far as my office budget is concerned, it is important to stress that it accounts for just 0.5% of the total policing budget for which I am responsible.

"When I was elected as Commissioner in 2021, there were only three PCC teams in the entire country that were smaller than we had in Surrey. I would be failing in my elected duty if I did not make sure it is properly equipped to effectively carry out all the responsibilities and growing demands of the PCC role.

"There was a small increase in my budget last year that added posts where we were at our weakest or least resilient which included one extra post in our communications team. I do not employ three people to 'run our office social media feeds' - the communications team fulfil a number of crucial roles on our wider engagement with the Surrey public across the county.

"My office is also responsible for commissioning vital services across our county that provide life-changing support for a variety of people across Surrey including survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence. In addition to our existing funding streams, over the last two years our commissioning team have worked tirelessly in managing to secure more than £4m in government funding for a range of projects in Surrey. This money will help provide key services helping some of the most vulnerable in our society as well as local projects, such as the Safer Streets initiative, that are making a real difference to our communities."

Alex Coley - who has been chairing Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Community and Wellbeing Committee and was re-elected on 4th May for the RA in Ruxley Ward responded: "I attended the Police and Crime Panel on 18th April and was surprised to learn that the Surrey Police Group is showing both a capital underspend and a revenue underspend for this

financial year. Several million pounds of surplus funds. In February the PCC decided to increase the share of Council Tax by 5.07%. This is a percentage increase greater than all 11 districts and boroughs in Surrey, even greater than the increase from the county council. I have to wonder why, given the multi-million pound surplus. How will this money be used?

Perhaps funds are not being effectively committed to policing priorities? The PCC is now half way through a four year plan in which the flagship policy is the prevention of violence against women and girls. A crucial policy for policing nationwide. However, it was revealed in February that Surrey Police have the worst rape charge rate in England and Wales. Furthermore, the PEEL report in June last year, by HMICFRS the policing inspectorate, showed a grading of Requires Improvement for suspect and offender management, with specific issues discovered in the management of sex offenders."

"It's criminal" is a well known expression denoting waste and has not been used here to suggest any criminal act.

"Long-live" the Salts. Crowned with promotion.

21 May 2023



Epsom & Ewell FC 2-1 Wick FC. Southern Combination League – Division One Playoff Final. Saturday 6th May 2023.

Thirty years to the day after our final first team match at West Street, we made our final bow at Fetcham Grove but in much happier circumstances, as our 2-1 win over Wick ensured us of promotion back to Step Five for the first time since the dark days of our Centenary relegation season of 2017/18.

The pressure was on. Our second place finish and subsequent home advantage for the playoffs had made us favourites and we had come through a nervy encounter against Selsey just seven days previously. How would we fare against Wick? Well, it was never going to be a comfortable afternoon for an Epsom supporter (but then, did anyone expect any different!) and the match will only live long in the memory for three things. 1) Two wonderful strikes from Jaevon Dyer. 2) A horrible challenge on Dyer in the closing seconds. 3) The significance of what has been achieved with this result, with a return to the Combined Counties League appearing nailed on and the challenges that will bring, including another trip to face Jersey Bulls.

Of course playoff finals are rarely of high quality; they are all about the occasion and the performance means nothing whatsoever without the result, so our players deserve a lot of credit. After being hauled back to 1-1 and with momentum appearing to be slipping away, they turned the contest around and finished worthy winners in the end.

An attendance of 384; our largest at home since our final League match at West Street in April 1993 when Aldershot Town supplied a large number of the 1,087 present that day, gathered in the pouring rain to see whether we could clinch promotion. The visitors brought a group of people with them who certainly contributed to the atmosphere at the Leisure Centre end of the ground, and how Wick must wish that they followed them on a regular basis!

We took the field with just two changes from our win against Selsey with Kevin Moreno-Gomez coming in for Johnny "Sonic" Akoto and Lewis Pearch starting ahead of Jamie Byatt. The opening exchanges were fairly tame as both clubs settled into the occasion, with the Wick drummer setting a beat for the match which started to take on a carnival atmosphere as the rain began to relent.

The first chance of the match came our way in the 11th minute after a clever pass inside the defender to Pearch who bore down on goal, only to be denied by a fantastic save from Keelan Belcher who just got a leg to the low shot, diverting the ball a couple of feet wide of the goal. Belcher was then required to punch the ball away under pressure from Dylan Merchant seconds later, but the next real action came just after the twenty minute mark with a snap shot from Dave Crouch that Tom Theobald dealt with fairly comfortably.

The game was meandering a little if I'm honest until it all changed in the 31st minute when Athan Smith-Joseph got down the left wing. His cross went beyond everyone but was collected by Dyer, almost out on the touchline and he beat two men, before cutting onto his right foot and drilling the ball, via a faint deflection, low past Belcher at his near post. It was a superb strike and on a wet day, the ball skidded through at quite a pace before nestling in the net and justifying in one instant why I love standing behind the goal we attack, even if it was difficult to hear yourself speak at times, something that doesn't often happen at Epsom games!

Smith-Joseph tried his luck five minutes later with Gideon Acheampong, making his 100th appearance for the Salts, providing a great overlap, but the shot was weak and wide. The game then seemed to take on a strange pattern with our boys unsure of whether to push forward for a second goal, and Wick then began to hold a greater share of the possession for a while, although were rarely threatening with it until the final seconds of the half when Theobald palmed away a stinging drive from distance from Sam Connolly.

The rain started again as the players came out for the second half, but the pattern of passiveness continued. We didn't seem to know whether to stick or twist although Moreno-Gomez was notably getting forward more and his perfect centre was missed completely by the incoming Pearch just six yards out just five minutes into the second period! Theobald was out to clear a long ball shortly afterwards but as the half progressed, we seemed happy enough to allow the visitors to retain the ball more; a tactic that is obviously not without risk. Additionally, Acheampong began to see more and more of the ball on his side, but without any help as two players often appeared on his flank and from one of these attacks, we had a close escape when a deep cross was headed over at the far post.

Our Manager Matt Chapman clearly noticed this development and we made a substitution with the ageless Byatt coming on for Smith-Joseph and Pearch moving out to the right, presumably to help out on that flank where required, but before the new plan had really settled in the visitors were level as a harmless looking ball in from the Wick left wasn't claimed by anyone and Theobald had to come out for the ball and was adjudged to have clipped Aaron Tester in the penalty area. It certainly looked like a penalty to me, but people nearer the incident weren't convinced. Either way though Connolly stepped up and clinically beat Theobald from the spot in the 66th minute. It's hard to pin any blame onto any one individual here, especially from eighty yards away, so it's probably best to describe this one as a defensive miscommunication!

Of course, it is easy to make light of it now, but at the time, this was a concerning development. We had surrendered any momentum we had built up and would effectively have to go out and win the match once again. Dyer was a constant thorn in their sides though and was clumsily brought down on the edge of the area, but out wide, from where Gavin Quintyne's free kick went straight through the wall and struck the inside of Belcher's right hand post, flying across the six yard box and away. Dyer was continuing to receive some rough treatment and found himself on the deck in the area a few minutes later, but fortunately was able to continue after treatment.

Byatt then struck at Belcher from twenty yards as we began our push for the finish line before the key moment of our season occurred in the 82nd minute. For anyone who had missed the first goal, Dyer kindly produced a carbon copy for his second, collecting the ball out on the left wing, beating two men once again and then cutting onto his right foot before drilling the ball in at the near post. Belcher got a glove to the ball, but to be fair the shot was much too powerful and accurate and we were ahead again, this time to stay.

It was all down to game management now and we saw out the final minutes without any defensive worries, although there was still time for controversy as we caught Wick on the break and Dyer nicked the ball past Marshall Ball, only to find himself the victim of an assault on the touchline with a horrible knee high lunge. Fortunately for Dyer he saw it coming and wasn't bearing any weight at the time of the challenge, or it could have been really serious and I am happy to report that he is fine now. The referee had the red card out within seconds as our players then converged on the scene and the obligatory scuffles followed, during which Nick Wilson received a red card. Both will now receive a three game suspension at the start of the next season, but it does seem harsh that Wilson will receive the same punishment as Ball, because it was a horrible foul; a dark red card, if there was such a thing.

Fortunately, the final couple of minutes were played out without further incident and after nearly six minutes of injury time the final whistle confirmed our success. The players gathered together and blue flares were set off by the players on the pitch as the celebrations began. It was quite a sight!

It's been a tumultuous season with numerous changes to the Management and the squad for a number of reasons, some of which were unnecessary. However, the players pulled us through and Dyer in particular will deserve his own chapter in our club's history as we now get a chance to establish ourselves back at Step Five once again, which was extremely pivotal, maybe even to our entire existence as a club. The promotion means that we will now be entered back into the FA Cup and the Senior County Cup and will hopefully herald the start of brighter times. Many issues remain at our club, but these are all for another day.

Maybe the final word should go to our defender Steve Springett, who has suffered a broken ankle, a broken nose, a badly dislocated thumb and various other injury concerns over his two seasons here, and described this season as "unfinished business" after falling in the playoffs last season. Now at least he can say it is mission accomplished! Well done chaps!

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Nick Wilson, Steve Springett, Dylan Merchant, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Lewis Pearch, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Jamie Byatt for Pearch (64), Rory Edwards for Pearch (84), Thompson Adeyemi for Stanley (84)

Article here about the 30 years since Epsom and Ewell played at the West Street ground.