## New Bus Route for S2 through the Borough

The transport landscape in East Ewell has seen a significant improvement with the inauguration of Bus Route S2. Commencing operations on 2nd March 2024, the S2 service now runs seven days a week, including Sundays, providing a crucial link between Epsom and St Helier Station. The new route serves several key areas, including Ewell East, Cheam, and Sutton, enhancing connectivity for residents in these regions.

The introduction of Route S2 marks a strategic change in the local bus network, as it replaces the 470 service from Colliers Wood to Epsom, which now terminates at Sutton. This adjustment was made following consultation by Transport for London (TFL) on bus routes in the Sutton and Croydon areas.

Route S2 operates via a series of primary locations, including St Helier Station, Sutton Station, Cheam Station, Ewell High Street, and Epsom Clock Tower, offering a convenient and efficient mode of transport for commuters in the region. The route is operated by London General from their Sutton (A) garage, utilizing brand new Enviro200 MMC EV bodied BYD D8URs, with temporary use of an existing vehicle of the same type.

The introduction of Route S2 represents a positive step towards improving public transport accessibility and connectivity in East Ewell, benefitting residents and commuters alike.

### Local Government monopoly board at play?

Surrey County Council has added another building to its property portfolio after buying the Victoria Gate site from Woking Borough Council in a deal that will net the bankrupt authority more than £30 million.

The county has said it will not disclose how much it paid for the former Mclaren site in Victoria Way, Woking, but the Epsom and Ewell Times understands the overall package will bring in about £32,250,000 - although the split between McLaren's early surrender of the premises and how much the county paid remains unclear.

It comes two months after Surrey County Council said it expected to add a further billion pounds of debt to its books as part of its capital programme, from £1.3 billion to £2.4bn by 2028/29.

Announcing the deal, the Surrey County Council said the purchase "underpins" its commitment to "efficiency, sustainability, and improved services" with the new site serving as its corporate office hub in north-west Surrey.

It now plans to put its old Quadrant Court site in Guildford Road up for sale in an effort to recoup some of its costs.

The deal is being seen as good news for Woking Borough Council as it nets more than £30m from the site, hopes to bring more people into the heart of the town centre, and potentially allow it to sell off its civic centre as it tries to pay back part of its own multibillion pound debt.

The county council expects staff to relocate to its latest acquisition later this year.

Councillor Natalie Bramhall, cabinet member for property, waste and infrastructure said, "This strategic move reaffirms Surrey County Council's commitment to creating a conducive work environment while aligning with our broader objectives of sustainability and improved service delivery."

Surrey said the decision is part of its overall vision to "provide services from a contemporary, agile environment that caters to the needs of both residents and employees" and that the Woking town centre location was optimal for both staff and residents due to its excellent access to public transport and car parking facilities.

Surrey County Council moved its headquarters from Kingston to Woodhatch Place in Reigate after acquiring the site for £50m. Other hubs across include Dakota in Brooklands Weybridge, and Fairmount House in Leatherhead.

The Leader of Woking Borough Council, Cllr Ann-Marie Barker, said: "Asset rationalisation is a key part of the Council's Improvement and Recovery Plan agreed with Government.

"The sale of Victoria Gate delivers best value both in terms of return to the public purse and benefit to the community."

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#### Salts rescue a point from the Kiln

Redhill 1-1 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 9th March 2024

An 85th minute equaliser from Zach Ingham-Wright earned us a well-deserved point from a 1-1 draw at Kiln Brow after the hosts had taken the lead early in the second half. Although they put us under pressure after an even first half, I felt we were worth a draw for our display in the final fifteen minutes, during which time we equalised and very nearly pinched all three points!

Following the confirmation that Warren Burton was now permanent Manager, we made just one change from our important 6-2 win over Sandhurst Town as Shay Honey was replaced between the posts by Faebian Witter. Our Captain Nick Wilson completed his two match ban here and so Ethan Nelson-Roberts kept the Captain's armband for this contest. We knew our opponents fairly well with a pair of our former Assistant Managers, Jordan Clark and Matt Chapman in charge and there were four former Salts in their line up in Adam Grant, Gavin Quintyne, Ben Dyson and Tommy Smith. Redhill were of course looking for a League "double" following their 3-1 win in August at the Madgwick.

We opened up in confident mood against a team who were also in decent form, if you excluded their surprise 2-0 defeat at Camberley Town in midweek. Tijani Eshilokun had a go from around twenty yards with his curling shot missing the far post by a couple of feet, before Carl Oblitey headed an Adam Green corner just over the crossbar inside the opening ten minutes.

Oblitey then set up Luke Miller for a shot, only to find it blocked by Smith, before a long throw was knocked on by Thompson Adeyemi for Oblitey to try his luck with an overhead kick, but it went straight at Isaac Ogunseri in the Redhill goal and he made the easy catch. This would prove to be the only save made by either keeper in the first half, although the home side sent a header wide at full stretch, before a string of injuries to our players led to an extended appearance on the field by Physio Alfie Wyld and an additional five minutes at the end of the period, during which time Redhill headed towards goal, only to see the effort headed away by Reece Tierney from near the goal line just before the half time whistle.

We were obviously familiar with many of their players, but of course, the reverse applied too, and the two teams were cancelling each other out a bit, with our tricky wingers, Miller and Jaevon Dyer being kept very quiet. With Redhill's lofty League position, I expected them to try and change things up in the second half and they came out with more intent, pushing us back quite a lot. However, we weren't totally out of it either and in the 50th minute Eshilokun sent the ball across to Dyer, only to see it deflected for a corner. From the Green delivery Oblitey rose highest and was really unfortunate to see his header hit the full face of the bar and rebound directly to the keeper, even though he was by that time standing about eight yards away from his goal. It could have gone anywhere!

This scare clearly woke Redhill up and they forced four successive corners. From the last of these, a deep delivery was met at the far post by the unmarked Smith, who met the dropping ball with a textbook low side footed volley that gave Witter no chance from about eight yards in the 57th minute. One nearly became two just four minutes later as a header was blocked on the line by Green with Ouintyne sending the loose ball over the closing defenders, but also over the bar from close range.

The hosts had another chance soon after with Witter forced into a good low save, with the ball parried out wide. It was then sent back in for a header that just missed our far post. We made a couple of substitutions with Matt McGillivray on for Ayran Kugathas and Sirak Negassi on for Dyer and the newly introduced Negassi had a chance to score with his first touch as the ball crept under a defender's foot, but his shot from twenty yards went beyond the far post.

Ingham-Wright came on for the injured Eshilokun who had taken a bit of a battering in this match and had been on the field for about a minute before he scored our equaliser in the 85th minute. An unnecessary foul out wide gave us a free kick and Green's delivery was flicked on by Tierney to Adeyemi at the far post, who headed the ball across goal for our substitute to nod in from close range. If I'm honest, a few of us behind the goal all looked across at the Assistant, just in case there was an offside, but he was happy and we were then able to celebrate.

But could we hold on? Late goals had given us trouble all season, so we needed to be careful, but in reality, it became more a matter of whether we would score again as we took the match to a suddenly wobbly Redhill team and started to attack them on the flanks. We should have had a second goal when we cut them apart with a good move involving Oblitey and Ingham-Wright

who fed Negassi on the right, but his perfect cross was somehow headed back across the vacant goal by Miller from just two yards out! The ball was retrieved by Oblitey, but he was at a very narrow angle by then and he clipped the post before the home side were able to scramble the ball to safety!

I'm still not too sure how we didn't take the lead at this point, but an away win would have been harsh on Redhill and they were probably frustrated enough with the draw. We saw out a rather inflated seven minutes of injury time with only a couple of nervy moments before we were able to celebrate a point that in all honesty, I didn't expect us to get before the match, but that's football! With both teams below us picking up points, it's a little tighter at the foot of the table than anyone involved with our team would like it to be, but with six matches remaining, survival is still most definitely in our own hands!

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Ayran Kugathas, Ethan Nelson-Roberts (c), Adam Green, Reece Tierney, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Carl Oblitey, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Matt McGillivray for Kugathas (74), Sirak Negassi for Dyer (78), Zach Ingham-Wright for Eshilokun (84), Jerry Antwi for Oblitey (92).

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

# Boats on the canal "your time is up"?

Basingstoke Canal could stop leisure activities like boat hire and camping because they're not financially viable.

The 32-mile-long Basingstoke Canal was jointly acquired by Hampshire and **Surrey County Councils** in the 1970s to manage risks, protect the canal, and provide public recreation.

It is a site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and due to its hydrological biodiversity and effective management of its ecosystem, it is home to numerous nationally scarce species of flora and fauna.

The Basingstoke Canal Partnership was established to fund the canal operation following restoration in the late 1980s. The partnership includes a number of "riparian" partners like district, borough and town councils that contribute financially to the running of the canal.

In 1990, county councils for Hampshire and Surrey, as landowning authorities, created the Basingstoke Canal Authority. Under the arrangement, Hampshire employs the staff, provides IT and finance support to the authority, and Surrey manages the visitor centre at Mytchett.

However, according to the report, the current arrangement is not financially sustainable. In 2023/24, the cost of the canal required a draw of £192,000 on existing reserves to cover a shortfall in income.

The canal is funded by the landowning authorities and the riparian funding partners; however, some have indicated the reduction or withdrawal of their contributions, like Woking and Rushmoor Borough Council, which confirmed it was pulling all funding in 2023/24.

Due to the withdrawal of some funding, the two landowner authorities commissioned an external company to review management and recommend a sustainable operating model.

From the five alternatives, the chosen one indicated that the Basingstoke Canal Authority will continue to deliver statutory requirements and leisure navigation.

However, under this option, the authority will no longer deliver activities such as boat hire, camping, running the visitor centre, and events.

The proposal will be debated at the universal select committee (March 11), and the executive member for countryside and regulatory services, Cllr Russell Oppenheimer, will take a decision later that day.

Natalia Forero

Image credit: Basingstoke Canal Authority

### Surrey "relay" car thieves sent down

Four members of an organised crime group (OCG) responsible for the theft of 53 high value vehicles in **Surrey** and the South-East have been sentenced to a total of 12.5 years behind bars at **Guildford Crown Court** on Friday 8th March.

All four men pleaded guilty to conspiracy to steal and conspiracy to acquire criminal property and were sentenced to;

- Perry Lovejoy, 29, born 01/11/1994, of Reigate Road in Horley, was sentenced to 3 years in prison
- Luke Jackson, 28, born 25/07/1995, of Shoreham Close in Croydon, was sentenced to 3.5 years in prison
- Billy Harrison, 30, born 29/10/1993, of Tollers Lane in Coulsdon, was sentenced to 3 years behind bars
- Harry Sales, 28, born 20/09/1995, of Cornwall Road in Croydon, was sentenced to 3 years in prison

The conviction of the four men was the result of a thorough and complex investigation by the Serious and Organised Crime Unit into the thefts of the 53 vehicles, with a combined value of over £3.7 million pounds.

Jackson also had additional offences taken into consideration when sentenced after admitting his guilt in stealing a further 42 cars, with a combined value of 2.1 million pounds.

The thefts took place over 12 months and across Surrey and the South-East of England. Officers arrested the suspects on the 26 April 2023, after successfully building a clear picture of their illegal activities through intelligence, forensics, ANPR, call data, witness testimony and CCTV enquiries.

During the investigation, officers discovered how the gang used the 'relay attack' technique to target keyless vehicles including Rolls Royce, Bentley, Land Rover, Range Rover and Alfa Romeo. This method involves using a master device to copy the signal of the vehicle key and transmit it to a second smaller device, which replicates the key and unlocks the car.

Tellingly a manual for a relay device was also found saved on a mobile phone seized from Lovejoy's possession.

Jackson was also sentenced for two offences of burglary committed whilst stealing two of the cars after pleading guilty. He received 18 months in prison to be served concurrently.

Lovejoy was also sentenced to being concerned in the supply of class b drugs (cannabis) after pleading guilty to this offence when officers found messages on his phone showing supply activity. He received 9 months in prison to be served consecutively.

Investigating Officer DC **Matt Earl**, said; "This was a large-scale investigation that was made possible by the hard-work and dedication of the Serious and Organised Crime Unit, as well as the support and collaboration of other neighbouring police forces.

In Court lawyers for the four said they were the "foot soldiers" in the operation and the maximum sentence for theft being 7 years, the sentences for the defendants should be less than the masterminds "at the top of the chain", should they ever face justice.

His Honour Judge **Banarjee** said the conspiracy was sophisticated and involved extensive planning. He took into account the guilty pleas of the defendants and the conditions they had endured in HMP Wandsworth since their arrests in April 2023.

Image credit: Which.co.uk

# Chinn up for women

On International Women's Day (Friday 8th March) and Epsom and Ewell's association with the struggle for equal rights for women through the actions and death of Emily Davison, local Labour Councillor **Kate Chinn** (Court Ward) shares her thoughts on the special day:

Today is **International Women's Day** and this year's theme is to inspire inclusion.

It means breaking down barriers, challenging stereotypes, and creating environments where all women are valued and respected. I've heard repeated the old idea that women don't really understand figures. Tell that to the three women at NASA

who did the maths that were instrumental in one of history's greatest operations – the launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit celebrated in the book and film **Hidden Figures**. A great read and watch

World renowned feminist, journalist Gloria Steinem reported:- "the story of women's struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist nor to any one organisation but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights"

We can all do what we can to support and advance women.

As the IWD website states:- "When women aren't present, we must ask: "if not why not." When women are discriminated against, we must call out poor practice. When the treatment of women is not equitable we must take action"

Local politics is a way that women can get involved with their local communities and work with the community, other councillors and partner agencies to make a difference in their local community.

I became active as I believe local politics matter. People need a decent home, to feel safe in their communities, access to the services they need and the opportunity to enjoy the good things in life. We need "bread and roses too", a phrase attributed to a strike in Massachusetts in 1912 now often referred to as the "Bread and Roses strike". The slogan pairing bread and roses, appealing for both fair wages and dignified conditions. Now a poem by **James Oppenheim**.

It's only good governance that can enable both and why local and national politics are so important to all of us.

If anyone is interested in getting involved in politics then please do get involved and there is plenty of available help and support. Talk to your local councillors and the local political parties. Both the political parties and Epsom and Ewell Council run sessions on being a councillor; some in person and some on line

I believe it is important to mark International Women's Days. One of the many reasons is to celebrate the inspirational women we have both past and present. **Emily Wilding Davison**, Mary Seacole, Rosa Parks and Malala Yousafzai, to name just a few of so many women who have made the world a better place.

**Cllr Kate Chinn** 

### Mixed reaction to Hunt's budget in Surrey

In a significant development outlined in today's Spring Budget, Surrey MP and Chancellor **Jeremy Hunt** confirmed the **Surrey County** Deal agreement, heralding a new era of devolution for Surrey County Council. This agreement, initially hinted at during last year's Autumn Statement, has been the focus of collaborative efforts between Surrey County Council officials and the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Outlined within this agreement are several key provisions aimed at empowering local governance within Surrey:

- Devolution of the Adult Education Budget and funding for Free Courses for Jobs.
- Integration of Local Enterprise Partnership functions.
- Transfer of new land assembly and compulsory purchase power to the Council.
- Strategic oversight for the delivery of future rounds of UKSPF.

Furthermore, the agreement signifies an intent for further devolution from central government to Surrey, allowing for the deepening of devolution arrangements over time, subject to Government agreement. Notably, this agreement does not mandate any structural reform of local government or unitarisation, preserving the sovereignty of the 12 Councils, including 11 District and Borough Councils alongside the County Council.

"Local government and our local communities are best placed to deliver what Surrey needs. I'm pleased that the government is recognising that, with hopefully further devolved powers to local government in due course," said **Tim Oliver**, (Conservative) Leader of Surrey County Council, expressing optimism regarding the devolution deal.

"This is a positive step to enable ambitious plans for Surrey's residents by devolving control to Local government and our local communities, that are best placed to deliver what Surrey needs. Working with our Partners we can maximise opportunities across a wide spectrum of residents' priorities," said Surrey County and Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillor **Bernie Muir** (Conservative - Horton)).

Dr. **Jonathan Carr-West**, Chief Executive of the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU), offered insights into the broader context of today's Budget announcements. "Our latest research found half of councils believe they could face bankruptcy within the next parliament. Council taxpayers are paying ever higher rates for fewer services...The Chancellor recognised market failures in children's residential care and SEND support but councils will not feel that this is enough to counteract the cost increases they have faced in those areas," Dr. Carr-West remarked, urging for a productive debate on potential solutions to the funding crisis.

**Paul Lavercombe**, tax partner at BDO in the South East, provided a business perspective on the Budget, noting the limited measures for businesses but highlighting certain provisions that may benefit taxpayers and stimulate investment, particularly in regional growth businesses. He said ""The Chancellor was under pressure to deliver tax cuts and while this wasn't forthcoming for businesses with some hoping there would be a reduction to corporation tax signposted, taxpayers will welcome the national insurance cuts announced. Despite being pitched as a Budget for long-term growth, there was very little for business. The only obvious winner being the creative industries."

Related reports:

Surrey County chief talks to the BBC

Epsom's leader welcomes more power for Surrey County Council

### Water company blind to Mole pollution?

A single **Surrey river** and its tributaries have had more than 4,500 hours of raw untreated sewage dumped into it by **Thames Water** already this year, according to a campaign group.

The **River Mole River Watch** (RMRW), which is calling for clean water for the health of wildlife and people, tracks sewage outflows and storm discharges by the utility giant and said that February "saw the highest recorded duration of storm overflows of any month we have been testing so far".

The group said the February figures topped the 2115 hours from January with the majority of the damage coming from the nine big sewage treatment plants.

Both Thames Water, which maintains over 68,000 miles of sewers, and manages 354 sewage treatment works, and RMRW said the pollution was more diluted than normal due to the heavy rain. Thames Water has also said it is carrying out improvement work across its network.

Campaigners though said the sheer volume of untreated waste meant the "absolute load" of phosphates would be "much larger during wet months".

Posting to their website, RMRW said: "Some sewage works were discovered to be failing so badly that storm tanks overflowed outside the treatment works in a cascade of raw sewage that flooded footpaths and recreational fields. Despite the long duration of sewage overflows and perhaps contrary to expectations, our February pollution tests recorded some of the lowest phosphate levels in the 10 months of testing so far.

"While lower concentrations of phosphate are measured by our Hanna low range meters, the absolute load of phosphate entering our rivers will nevertheless be much larger during wet months. This is due to the long duration of untreated sewage outfalls added to the other pollution sources such as misconnections, road and farm runoff."

Thames Water is the only firm to give live updates to its sewage overflows, or storm discharges. The data received from its monitors isn't always accurate and only indicates rather than confirms discharges. The company says in makes the information immediately available to open to allow customers to make more informed decisions. Verified data is published annually.

A spokesperson for Thames Water said: "Storm overflows are designed to operate automatically when the sewer network is about to be overwhelmed which then releases diluted wastewater into rivers, rather than letting it back up into people's homes. We regard any untreated discharges as unacceptable, and we're committed to stopping them from being necessary, with the assistance of our regulators.

"We're currently spending £34milion upgrading Crawley sewage works, as well as spending £23million improving our site in Burstow. These upgrades are due to complete in 2024. We've also started a £14million upgrade to Dorking sewage works and we have plans to upgrade our Earlswood, Esher, Holmwood, Horley, Leatherhead and Merstham sites.

"Taking action to improve the health of our rivers is a key focus for us and we are leading the way with our transparent approach to data. We remain the only company to provide live alerts for all untreated discharges and this 'near real-time' data is available to customers as a map on our website and is also available through an open data platform for third parties, such as swimming and environmental groups to use. We have published plans to upgrade over 250 of our sewage treatment works and sewers to treat the high volumes of incoming sewage and reduce the need for overflows during wet weather."

Image: River Mole at Leatherhead. Jim Linwood. License details

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Thames Water left human waste to fester

Thames Water rebate

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### Woking's whopping bail out and tax rise

**Woking Borough Council** has raised its share of tax by 10 per cent. It comes as the bankrupt council was offered an "exceptional" £785 million Government bail out

The major bailout package aims to offset its debt and was signed off last night during a full council meeting. The offer was dependent on the council increasing its share of council tax by 10 per cent and comes on top of the previously agreed £8.4m in spending cuts.

Deputy leader of the council **Will Forster** said the total package of £785m was "the largest ever set of measures required for a council in intervention" He added: "Just let that sink in. Not the largest ever in Surrey, the largest ever in the country, not this year, ever."

Coupled with the rises announced by **Surrey County Council** and the police, B and D Council Tax homes will now pay £2,371.60 a year, up from £2,248.77. Had councillors failed to agree on the package, the local authority would "grind to a halt and be acting unlawfully" the meeting heard. Staff would go unpaid and services stop.

Leader of the council, Councillor **Ann-Marie Barker**, said a vote against the tax rise was to vote against the government's offer. She said: "A vote against the tax rise is to turn down the offer. I wanted a better offer but it's the offer we've got."

The council also announced that there would be £100,000 in hardship money to help ease some of the pain caused by the massive spending cuts, price hikes and tax rises.

Groups such as the bustler transport service, Citizens Advice Woking and the Lightbox have been forced to find new funding if they wish to continue. Some have approached the national lottery.

Woking Council has said the money would be for those most impacted by the added cost or loss of so many services. It includes £25k for a Council Tax hardship fund, £50k for Citizen Advice Woking and £25k for grants that replicate the Government's Household Support Fund.

Speaking after the meeting, Cllr Barker said: "Despite the council's complex financial situation, I am pleased that we have overcome this important hurdle and set a robust budget for the forthcoming financial year. I welcome the significant and unprecedented support package offered by Government which gives us flexibility to deal with money that should have been put aside for borrowing and allows us to capitalise our debt over the long-term.

"The conditions set out by Government align with work already being undertaken on asset rationalisation, debt reduction and improved commercial governance as part of our Improvement and recovery plan. I know residents will find any increase in council tax difficult which is why we are putting in place support for those who find it hard to meet the cost of rising bills.

"These critical decisions are ones I did not want to make. However, they are necessary if we are to continue to provide essential services, set a balanced budget in future years and begin to return Woking to long-term financial sustainability. The future remains difficult and challenging. I am determined that Woking will recover to become a better council focused on delivering essential services to local people."

### False schizo claim rapist gets 8 years

Following a three week trial an **Epsom** man who claimed schizophrenia goes down 8 years for rapes. **Joseph Head**, 25, of Chase Road, Epsom, was found guilty of three counts of rape and one count of sexual assault by penetration. Head received an eight-year prison sentence at Winchester Crown Court on Tuesday, February 27.

During the three-week trial, the prosecution unveiled a troubling sequence of events characterized by manipulation and coercion. Head, in an attempt to evade accountability, feigned dissociative identity disorder, alleging that one of his personas, 'J', posed a violent threat, thereby pressuring his victim into compliance.

The survivor, displaying remarkable courage, shared her ordeal spanning three months, marked by fear and intimidation at the hands of Head. His peculiar fixation on the film 'Split', featuring a character with dissociative identity disorder, only served to underscore the calculated nature of his deception.

However, Head's elaborate facade unraveled under scrutiny. Expert testimony debunked his false claims, revealing the stark reality behind his manipulative tactics. A meticulous investigation, incorporating victim testimony, forensic analysis, and digital scrutiny, exposed the truth.

Investigating officer Andy Price of Surrey Police characterized Head as a "dangerous predator" who exploited and instilled fear in his victim. He added: ""The unique circumstances of this case posed a challenge to the team but with the unwavering support from the survivor, a thorough investigation and dedication by the team to bring Head to justice, a conviction was secured.

"I would like to acknowledge the bravery of the survivor was in coming forward to us, supporting the investigation and helping keep other women safe. Although the trauma of what happened cannot be erased, I hope this outcome can give at least some measure of closure."

If you have been sexually assaulted and need further help and advice, please click here https://www.surrey.police.uk/ro/report/rsa/alpha-v1/advice/rape-sexual-assault-and-other-sexual-offences/