English music for Lent in Epsom

Stainer's The Crucifixion is a classic of the Victorian era which is still loved by church choirs and choral societies. It tells the story of Christ's Passion with compelling arias and dramatic choruses, as well as moments of reflection, such as the anthem, "God So Loved the World."

The work features in Epsom Choral Society's spring concert at St Martin's Church Epsom on Saturday 9th March. The programme showcases some of the most celebrated English anthems of the twentieth century. In Elgar's "The Spirit of the Lord" the Apostles tell of their calling to preach the Gospel, while Ireland's transcendent "Greater Love Hath No Man" and Howells' haunting "Like as the Hart Desireth" offer evocative interpretations of biblical texts. Finzi's "Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice" is a poignant reflection on the communion gifts of bread and wine, in the words of the 17th-century mystic poet Richard Crashaw.

Isobel Squire, Chair of Epsom Choral Society, expresses her excitement for the event, stating, "We are thrilled to offer balm for the soul with an evening of glorious English choral music. Whether or not you are a believer, the soaring melodies and gorgeous harmonies of these wonderful settings of sacred texts are guaranteed to uplift your spirit."

Epsom Choral Society is delighted to welcome back esteemed international soloists John Findon (tenor) and Jon Stainsby (bass), alongside organist Peter Jaekel, for what promises to be an unforgettable evening of musical inspiration. Music Director, Julian Collings, said: "The five works chosen for this concert revolve around the Lenten themes of preparation, waiting and penitence. From John Stainer's gloriously Victorian depiction of the events leading up to the Crucifixion to the emotional intensity and heartfelt intimacy of the music of Herbert Howells and Gerald Finzi, this concert presents some of the best and most moving music from the English Choral tradition."

Tickets for "English Music for Lent" are available online at https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/epsom-choral-society/t-moaqzdo or by phone at 01372 727078.

Tickets are priced at £20 in advance or £22 on the door. Admission is free for attendees under 18 years of age. Each ticket includes a complimentary programme and a glass of wine.

New housing around Surrey's cathedral in contention

A developer is arguing the benefits of 124 new homes next to **Guildford Cathedral** outweigh the potential harms to the heritage and green space.

Vivid Homes is appealing for a public inquiry to consider its planning application which was unanimously rejected by the council in March 2023.

The Cathedral, along with developer Vivid Homes, proposed to demolish the existing staff housing and create 124 homes in a mix of flats and housing – 54 of which would be affordable properties – on undeveloped woodland.

Officers at the Council in March 2023 recommended refusing the plans for a host of reasons including its harm to the heritage setting including the "visual prominence of the apartment blocks", the impact on the "green collar" and the effect on the "silhouette" of the landmark.

Councillors decided it was ultimately not the right location for the development, even if the scheme offered affordable homes. Vivid Homes' appeal contends that any harm identified has been minimised and should be balanced against the benefits.

The main appeals argue the visual prominence of the development will blend with the heritage asset. Apartment blocks and roofscapes will "sit within the landscape". Reducing building heights, landscaping and tree planting were also cited as ways to keep the green collar and "longer-distant views" towards and around the Cathedral.

A council report noted that the submitted design proposals would "harm the landscape character and the visual experience of the site to the east", but would "benefit" the approach to the cathedral from the west.

The council concluded that the proposals would "still result in moderate adverse landscape and visual effects" concerning Surrey Hills as an area of natural beauty.

The proposed development as submitted would "continue to harm 'important views'" in relation to the character and heritage assets of Guildford Town Centre, the council added.

The Guildford Society, a civic group promoting high standards in planning and architecture, said it was "disappointed" at hearing the news that the developers had appeal the decision, in late October 2023.

The urban planning organisation said it had two major concerns: the visual impact of the development on Guildford's iconic skyline and the infrastructure supporting the development.

A spokesperson said: "The classic view of Guildford Cathedral from the south with its grass area is not really replicated in any of the planning documents."- There is "very little information" on how the development will look when viewed from afar.

Starting 5 March, the public inquiry will be conducted by a planning inspectorate and last ten days.

Vivid homes is footing the bill for the appeal, despite the application also made on behalf of Guildford Cathedral.

The acting dean, **Stuart Beake**, said when the appeal was announced: "[The] decision is crucial for us financially - if planning permission is granted it will mean that our reserves will receive some much needed funds as we can recoup all the money we have spent on fees. An endowment will be established which will provide funds for the routine maintenance and upkeep of the cathedral and that in turn means that our annual budget will start to break even or be in surplus."

Guildford Cathedral has been operating with a financial deficit for several years which has exacerbated with the coronavirus pandemic and the refusal of planning developments. The cathedral said it was selling land surrounding its Grade II listed site to create an endowment fund to pay for maintenance costs.

A spokesperson from The Guildford Society said: "Planning applications should be viewed without prejudice of its financial background. Whether the cathedral is making money out of it or making a thundering loss is not a matter for the review."

The application would have raised a £10m endowment for the cathedral, which it said would help fund the future of the cathedral.

However, it was highlighted during a public presentation that cash from this sale would only last five years. When combined with a separate sale, planners said, this would only raise 23 per cent of the budgeted maintenance costs.

According to Vivid Homes documents, the cathedral's deficit at the end of 2022 was £116,000. It was predicted to reduce the deficit slightly to £100,000 in 2023 by looking at ways to increase income and reduce expenditure. Details of repairing costs provided by a Quinquennial Inspection have identified repairs costing a total of £3,585,000.

Guildford Cathedral and Vivid homes were invited to comment.

Related report:

Surrey County's Cathedral citadel conserved...

Image: Grahame Larter

The fellowship of NESCOT

Nescot (North East Surrey College of Technology) Reigate Road, **Ewell**, celebrated student success at the annual Higher Education (HE) Awards graduation ceremony at **Epsom Downs Racecourse** earlier this month (7th February). 110 graduands along with 300 family members and friends came together to mark the culmination of their hard work.

Degrees, diplomas and professional awards were conferred in over 15 subjects ranging from teaching to osteopathy. Colleagues from Nescot partners including University of Greenwich, Kingston University, Open University were on hand to assist **Julie Kapsalis**, Principal and CEO, with conferring the degrees.

Guests of honour for the ceremony included Councillor **Robert Geleit**, Mayor of Epsom & Ewell (Labour Court Ward), a former HND student of Nescot and **Brian Finch**, Chair of Epsom Downs Racecourse who kindly brought along the amazing Derby trophy. Brian who was the guest speaker, congratulated the graduates on their achievement and spoke about key lessons from his career journey in his inspirational speech.

At the ceremony, annual awards for outstanding endeavours and achievements were also presented by our guests of honour to six nominated students from the Nescot Class of 2023. The prizes included awards sponsored by the College and by the **Rotary Clubs of Epsom and Ewell**.

To mark Nescot's 70th anniversary, Principal and CEO, Julie Kapsalis was proud to award the college's first **Honorary Fellowships** at this year's graduation ceremony. "2024 sees Nescot celebrate its 70th anniversary, to recognise this incredible milestone and achievement, the college is introducing a new Honorary Fellowship award, the highest accolade the college can

bestow. It recognises exceptional achievement and excellence by individuals associated with the college," said Julie.

The first Honorary Fellowship was awarded to **Dee Mathieson**, Senior Vice President and Managing Director of Elekta. A former student of Nescot, Dee has had an exceptional career in the science and medical sector. Sharing her journey, she said, "I am very grateful to Nescot for helping me on my way to what has been a fantastic and varied career in cancer care."

The second Honorary Fellowship on the day was awarded to Nescot staff member, **Daniel Addo** from our Security Team. Presenting the award, Julie said, "With his kindness and positivity he is a wonderful role model and encourages students to make the most of their opportunities both in the college and life."

The student vote of thanks was given by **Craig Clout**, who graduated with an Integrated Masters in Osteopathic Medicine. Craig spoke about the supportive and collaborative nature of the college community that contributes to everyone's success.

HE degrees and awards were conferred for the following subjects: osteopathy, animal management, sports therapy, counselling, early years, animal management, healthcare play specialist, food premises inspection, business, creative media (moving image), performing arts, computing, public services, sport and exercise science.

Image: Honorary Fellowship award winners, Dee Mathieson Senior Vice President and Managing Director of Elekta (left) and Daniel Addo, Nescot staff member (right), with Principal and CEO of Nescot, Julie Kapsalis (centre).

Coroner catalogues care failures in diabetic death

Surrey County Council (SCC) has been accused of not taking its responsibilities seriously after an eighteen-year-old tragically died from diabetes.

Jake Baker, an 18-year-old with a learning disability and type 1 diabetes, died at home following Diabetic Ketoacidosis. He required residential care since the age of eight, under the guardianship of the council. An inquest concluded a catalogue of failures by Surrey County Council and other bodies contributed to Jake's death.

The coroner found Surrey Care Leavers team and Children Services had failed to obtain information about Jake's cognitive ability and his capability of managing his diabetes independently, a Prevention of Future Deaths report published this month reads.

Coroner **Caroline Topping** said: "I am not satisfied that Surrey County Council have undertaken a rigorous review of the circumstances of the death, nor that the risk of future deaths has been averted. The issues surrounding the inadequacy of Jake's pathway plan have not been addressed comprehensively in the last 4 years. Training for personal advisers is not mandatory and is only now being rolled out."

The court was not provided with copies of the training or any protocol to be assured of the adequacy of the training and its implementation.

The coroner said that Jake's death was "avoidable" and was "contributed to by neglect". In September 2018 Jake (then 17) was placed in a full-time residential placement at **Ruskin Mill College**.

At the time of his death, Jake was staying with family for a few days when he became seriously ill from uncontrolled diabetes. Jake's mother and stepfather found him unresponsive. His family previously said "there is nothing that can take away the pain" of losing their son.

The days before his death were the first time he had stayed away from his care facilities for more than two nights in a row, since being placed in the care of Surrey County Council when eight years old, his family's lawyers said.

He was entitled to a personal adviser who had a statutory duty to write a pathway plan for Jake, including consideration of how his health needs were to be met. However, when away from home, no advice was sought from specialist diabetes services to inform the pathway plan and no risk assessment was made for Jake having unsupported contact with his family and managing his diabetes, the coroner's report concludes.

Meetings discussing Jake staying over at his family's house without support were unminuted. The emails which refer to meeting decisions made no reference to any of the dangers inherent in Jake's diabetic condition nor his ability to manage it unsupported. The family were also not given any advice or training on how to keep Jake safe if he became unwell nor any emergency contact numbers.

The coroner added: "The local authority employees held the mistaken belief that if Jake wanted to go home unsupervised once he turned 18 there was nothing they could do to stop him. No capacity assessment was undertaken in relation to Jake's ability to make a decision to go home unsupported. In my opinion there is a risk that future deaths could occur unless action is taken"

Four years on from Jake's death, the coroner found the process of obtaining learning disabilities diagnoses remains opaque and difficult as there is no protocol in relation to this. Vulnerable care leavers are at risk of being denied necessary support due to the confusion and delay teams accessing adult social care assessments.

Jake was assessed not to meet the threshold for SCC Transitions Team because a report containing his original disability diagnosis was lost. Children's Services were unable to obtain an up to date diagnosis. He did not have the support of an adult social work team and this outcome was being challenged when he died.

Overnight from the 28 to the 29 December 2019, Jake developed diabetic ketoacidosis as a result of being hyperglycaemic in the preceding days. He began to vomit and required immediate hospitalisation. On 30 December 2019 the college was notified by his family that he was too ill to travel. The staff who were travelling to collect him were told to return to the college. His family was not told to take him to hospital.

He was last seen alive at 11pm and found dead at 3am on 31 December 2019. If Jake had been admitted to hospital at any time prior to 5pm on the 30 December 2019 he would have been successfully treated."

The family claim that Jake's death was avoidable if he had been admitted to hospital any time before 5pm on December 29. In a statement, the family said: "Losing Jake has been incredibly difficult for our family, especially as he died in our home at what should have been a happy time. We trusted Ruskin Mill Trust with Jake's care, and we have been let down by them in the worst possible way.

"Jake was an enthusiastic and determined young man who always put his mind to things. As a family we did all we could to make sure that Jake was looking after himself and was well taken care of, but those that were put in charge of his care didn't give us the information necessary to ensure Jake's safety"

Clare Curran, SCC Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, said: "Our deepest sympathies remain with Jake's family and friends. The services provided to Jake fell short of what he and his family needed to keep him safe, and we are very sorry for our part in that. We have taken a number of actions over the past four years to improve our support for young adults leaving care and we will be responding to the Coroner outlining our action plan to prevent future deaths. While we have already made changes, we know there is still further to go and we will carefully consider the Coroner's concerns as we take our next steps."

Published on 14 February 2024, SCC have up to 56 days to formally respond to the coroner's report and outline the service's action plan.

Outwitted by Sidcup's set pieces

Sidcup 45 Sutton & Epsom RFC 22. Saturday 17th February.

Sutton & Epsom RFC first played at Crescent Farm in February 1898 and it is a delight to record that modern times have not hindered this historic rivalry as the clubs met for the 21st time in the league era on Saturday afternoon. Earlier in the campaign the teams met at Rugby Lane with both clubs apologetically at the bottom of the table with a solitary success each. Sutton & Epsom came from behind to take the honours on that day. Since that November day the season has improved considerably for both clubs with the hosts arriving on the back of five straight wins. Sidcup's successful streak continued as they comprehensively and deservedly defeated S&E 45-22.

Sutton & Epsom were forced into four changes from the side that beat Gravesend with the back division incurring most of the disruption with three absentees but with the advantage of hindsight the loss of the Black & Whites' hooker probably had greater significance on the events that were to unfold. Captain Bunting started proceedings as the sides sparred in search of any early defensive frailties. The teams recycled the ball quickly, defences closed rapidly and kickers looked for open spaces and the status quo was maintained. A looping run from Sutton 10 Tom Lennard initiated the first genuine chance in the 22 but solid defensive tackling saw the ball go forward a few phases later. In contrast from a scrum on halfway Sidcup scored from their first sortie. The ball went wide and an overlap was created on the flank and Louis Keeley finished with aplomb despite a valiant effort from the diving Matt Symonds. The conversion fell short but the hosts led 5-0.

Sutton & Epsom's next chance to score was manufactured by a magnificent touchline clearance from

Gareth O'Brien, being a yard or two from touch he magically threaded the ball 50 metres down the line. Though denied a stunning 50/22 the slavering chasers forced a penalty and Freddy Bunting happily accepted the points on offer for S&E to trail 3-5. As ever restarts are crucial and scrappy play saw the Black & Whites suddenly 5 metres from their own line with a scrum. Matt Whitaker carried well from a retreating pack giving Tom Lennard time to clear. Relief was temporary and punishment severe. Moments later Louis Keeley was collecting his and Sidcup's second try. On this occasion the winger left a less challenging conversion that was gratefully accepted by Tom Shea. The Crescent Farm fans warmly applauded the 12-3 lead with the first guarter nearly complete. It had become apparent that the excellent Sidcup pack had the upper hand in the set scrum. In addition Sutton were struggling with their lineout ball. Additionally and unexpectedly Freddy Bunting missed a chance to narrow the deficit as he slipped slightly on the muddy surface attempting another penalty. Then the visitors were further hampered as fullback Gareth O'Brien departed with an injured knee to be replaced by Ciaran Mohr. Once more it was a marvellous kick, this time a 50/22 by Tom Lennard that put the visitors in the opposition 22. S&E pressed for a score and were brought back for a penalty. Declining the easy three points they took the tap and Matt Whitaker celebrated his birthday with a try on the ground where he had previously recorded his 100th league try. Freddy Bunting added the extras and Sutton trailed 10-12 on the half hour.

Sutton & Epsom won a penalty at the restart as optimism rose amongst the ranks of the travelling support. Seconds later they were relieved that play was brought back for a knock on as Sidcup had intercepted and a certain try from 70 metres was denied. With half-time approaching Alex Mount received a yellow card. Not only was the Sutton scrum under pressure their front row had incurred the wrath of the referee over the technical issue of the scrums engaging. The result was a tenminute breather for Mount for the accumulated offences. Reduced to 14 Sidcup had a wonderful opportunity to make the scoreboard reflect their pack's dominance. The 14 men from Rugby Lane appeared to have navigated the choppy seas to the safe waters of half-time harbour but the Kent men scored with the final play of the half. Taking the ball blind from deep the ball-carrier stepped out of a low tackle and an overlap opportunity developed from halfway. With clinical efficiency fullback Dan Masters strode home and Tom Shea's conversion was met by the whistle that concluded the first period. The 19-10 interval lead was a fair reflection of superiority that Sidcup enjoyed in the key areas of the lineout and scrum that had provided the vital possession.

The second half began with the Black & Whites still numerically hampered and before anyone could debate if they could survive without further addition to the scoreboard Sidcup had their third try. Outside centre George Bird breezing through the defence to notch up their bonus point try which was effortlessly converted by Tom Shea for 26-10. Sutton showed their defiance a minute later. From a ruck on the 22 Matt Whitaker opted for the most direct route and found clear water before he evaded the last couple of defenders to score his second try. Freddy Bunting added the conversion and with that kick recorded his 200th point of the league campaign. Sutton & Epsom trailed 17-26 and hope lingered on.

It was Sidcup's turn to pin Sutton & Epsom back with a 50/22. Though S&E were now back to their full compliment the hosts immediately created a chance and how on earth they did not score will remain a mystery to all who were present. The Black & Whites cleared their lines from a 5-metre scrum but it was a temporary stay of execution. In contrast to the recently butchered offering Connor McDonald excelled with a wonderful solo effort weaving his way to the line. Though the conversion faltered with the score at 31-17 it was threatening to become a long afternoon for the visitors. That threat became a reality five minutes later. Forced back into their 22 the visitors conceded a penalty. The hosts opted for a scrum then ran wide and Connor McDonald had the ball again, with the defence desperately trying to cover men outside, he ghosted in for his second score. Tom Shea added to his account and Sidcup extended their lead to 38-17.

With 15 minutes remaining Sutton needed to carry the game to Sidcup and attempt to get something from the fixture. A fine kick return by Angus Findlay ably supported by replacements Callum Gibson and Dan Jones got S&E into the 22. There followed a Sutton try that owed more to Heath Robinson than Christopher Wren. From a central position Tom Lennard chipped ahead and the ball was not secured by the defence in the ensuing chaos the ball ended up in the right hand corner where Freddy Bunting was on hand for his first try of the season. Sutton & Epsom now had

a very attainable target, the fourth try and a valuable bonus point, despite trailing 22-38.

Sutton suffered the immediate handicap of Callum Gibson becoming the second member of the front row union to get a yellow card through accumulated indiscretions. Sidcup went for the jugular only to be denied by Alex Mount's tackle under the posts forcing a spillage. The award of a 5-metre scrummage under their own posts was a mixed blessing for the Surrey men. The pack was shunted back, the posts were waving dramatically and Number 8 Nick Jansen touched down for a magnificent seventh Sidcup try. Tom Shea added the easiest of conversions for his tenth point of the afternoon as his side led 45-22.

The contest was over but there began the game within the game as Sutton went in search of their bonus point. First of all Matt Whitaker stormed to the halfway but to no avail. Then a wonderful run down the wing by Angus Findlay ended as he failed to get his pass to Ellis Rudder who was in support. The veteran Whitaker again went on the rampage and threw in a kick ahead for good measure. A penalty was kicked into the corner and the 5-metre lineout was lost. Then on the final play of the game Ellis Rudder broke clear in the 22 and passed to Matt Symonds. The rapturous cheers of the Sutton supporters turned to groans as the referee whistled for a forward pass. The game ended with Sidcup the clear winner by 45-22.

If there was a Man of the Match Award it should have gone to the Sidcup pack as they were magnificent to a man. The domination of the scrum, lineout and giving their backs front-foot ball was the telling factor in this game. Sutton & Epsom will regroup with a weekend off from the cut and thrust of league action before the visit of London Cornish on 2 nd March to Rugby Lane. For those wishing to attend please note that it will be a 3pm kick off.

Sutton & Epsom: Gareth O'Brien, Angus Findlay, Ellis Rudder, Freddy Bunting ©, Matt Symonds, Tom Lennard, Joe Lovatt, Tariq Al Khaldi, Alex Mount, Tom Boaden, Josh Glanville, Ewan McTaggart, George London, Rob Hegarty & Matt Whitaker.
Replacements: Callum Gibson, Dan Jones & Ciaran Mohr.

Sidcup: Dan Masters; Connor McDonald, George Bird, Sam Leek, Louis Keeley, Tom Shea, Simon Vincent, Teddy Gibbons, Jonathan Fordham, Sam Carmen, Ben Stock, Steven Evans, Fred Ruff, Billy Williams & Nicholas Jansen.

Replacements: Harry Large, Tom Epps & Alex Ure.

First win of the year for Epsom & Ewell FC

Camberley Town 1-2 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 17th February 2024

After seven successive defeats we finally opened our account for 2024 with an extremely important 2-1 victory at Krooner Park over our old friends Camberley Town. It was our first win over our opponents in ten matches and our first in Camberley since a 2-0 win there back in 2013. Over the ninety minutes we deserved it too, with Ethan Nelson-Roberts claiming the highlights with both goals, although several players produced great performances.

In the absence of Warren Burton, Gwynne Berry took charge in the dugout and we made three changes from our defeat against Farnham Town with the injured Carl Oblitey and the unwell Toby Colwell both being unable to take part with Mekhi Savage dropping to the bench. In their places came Thompson Adeyemi and Sirak Negassi, while in goal we had Faebian Witter who had joined us from Carshalton Athletic. This meant that we were starting our fourth different goal keeper in our last four matches. For those who like their stats, this has only happened five times previously, although it did happen recently, when in January 2023 we had five different keepers in a four game span, due to a harsh sending off that left Nick Wilson between the posts at Hailsham Town!

It wasn't that long ago that we met Camberley Town at the Madgwick, where we started brightly but fell away badly to lose 5-0. While the margin of victory in this match was nowhere near as emphatic, the story was a similar one, except it was our opponents that started better with our boys that finishing the stronger of the teams this time.

Witter found himself having to tip over an early strike from Kingsley Anokye and he also made another good low block at the near post on the quarter hour mark. In response Negassi was causing a bit of trouble on the right wing originally, but switched wings

with Nelson-Roberts around the 22 minute mark. He was unfortunate to see the ball bobble on him just as he was shooting, and also put another chance wide from an angle when he probably should have delivered the ball into the box and. It was easy to wonder if this would cost us when the home side took the lead shortly afterwards. With the clock showing the 35th minute we were caught out by an enormous throw from Tom Wensley that was headed past Witter from close range by Regan Hitch. It was a colossal throw in and I'm not sure if I have seen a larger throw, but he had delivered an earlier one on a similar scale, so we probably should have been aware and better prepared for this.

The fightback began almost immediately. Rory Edwards sent a shot just beyond the far post from twenty yards only moments after the goal before we started to build some good pressure. In the 44th minute Tijani Eshilokun was taken out over on the far touchline by Cavan Atkinson and whilst I was surprised that a yellow card was not awarded, we got our revenge in a different way. Adam Green's deep free kick was contested for by two Camberley players who both got a touch to the ball. Reece Tierney and Ethan Nelson-Roberts were on the end of the ball with the ball brushing the latter's right leg as it crossed the line for our 45th minute equaliser. Some people felt there was a foul on the keeper, but having seen the video back, my original view that there wasn't enough contact to cancel it out remained unchanged. More importantly, the referee agreed!

Going up the hill in the second half is often difficult against Camberley, who it should be remembered, had the better of a goalless draw with Knaphill just four days previously and had a fairly decent home record. However, we had wrestled away the momentum and the second half would prove to be a really good one to watch if you were an Epsom supporter.

Edwards was on target from twenty yards in the opening minute and whilst it was a fairly easy save for Owen Crawford, it had come from a good move and was a good start. Next to feature was our full back Jerry Antwi who beat the offside trap on the left after good work from Eshilokun and Negassi before slotting the ball back to Adeyemi who teed it up for Negassi to strike, forcing Crawford into a good low save from twelve yards in the 54th minute. However, we weren't to be denied and a minute later we had our lead. Negassi controlled a crossfield pass with a killer touch on the left, before continuing to run at goal before pulling the ball back for Eshilokun to strike from 15 yards. His shot wasn't the greatest, but it would end up counting as an assist as the ball was scuffed almost sideways and straight into the path of Nelson-Roberts who forced the loose ball in just ahead of a defender from about three yards.

For a few minutes the pattern of the game changed as we had our first lead. We either chose to sit back a little, or were pushed back as the hosts suddenly realised that they needed to "up" things a little. We had to clear the ball away from under the bar before Witter was alert to make a decent save on the hour. We also had a scare when Witter chose to clear a back pass first time and clubbed the ball straight at a home forward, but fortunately the player was unable to control it and we escaped.

We had another great chance in the 74th minute when a Green corner was met by the head of an unmarked Tierney, but the delivery required a solid thumping header and his contact wasn't the greatest and the ball went across goal. Tierney was soon in action at the other end as Macauley Martin ran at him, cutting back onto his right, but he went for power from about 18 yards and was well off target, dragging the shot wide of the near post.

Gradually the home side began to run out of ideas against a defence that was holding up well. Our game management was much better and even the Wensley howitzers were being dealt with by our defenders with Tierney in particular heading a few away during the second half. The game concluded in a fairly comfortable win by the end, albeit with one final funny incident just outside the Camberley penalty area, where Brad Passfield and Cavan Atkinson got involved in a spot of handbags with Eshilokun, only for the referee to bring all three players together and tell them to "grow up"!

Following the match I heard some people refer to the fact that one of our reasons for winning was that we were fitter than we had been. We certainly looked the stronger of the two teams today, particularly in the second period, but must remember it is not that long since we lost three games in a row in the closing moments, so I think there was another reason that was more relevant. I know it is a bit of a cliché, but I felt we simply wanted it more than our opponents, who had won so easily in January and thought this would be a comfortable win, particularly after conceding the opening goal. This time though, we fought back and it was good to see that for the first time in a while. Tougher challenges await us, but for now this is one of those occasions where you just have to focus on enjoying the win, as it's been a while!

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Ethan Brazier, Jerry Antwi, Adam Green, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson (c), Sirak Negassi, Rory Edwards, Thompson Adeyemi, Tijani Eshilokun, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Luke Miller for Negassi (82), Mekhi Savage for Nelson-Roberts

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

New Family Centre grows out of Nursery

For nearly 25 years **Epsom Methodist Nursery** has been providing early years childcare in the heart of Epsom – just two minutes from the town centre. Now the Nursery is entering an exciting new chapter in its history. As well as continuing to offer early years education for two to five year-olds the Nursery will become a **Family Centre**.

Following consultation with parents the Family Centre is planning to offer a broad range of activities and support including:

A bumps and babies group for new parents providing ante-natal and post-natal support.

Support groups for parents and carers of toddlers and young children.

Courses and classes covering areas such as potty training, coping with challenging behaviours and family budgeting.

Support for speech and language development.

An affordable after-school club.

A summer lunch club.

Already the Family Centre is running two stay-and-play groups for parents and young children and in April it is offering a free 'Ready Steady Cook on a Budget' course. With the cost of living rising, the FREE four-week course aims to support parents to provide easy, wholesome and healthy meals for the whole family whilst sticking to a budget.

The course will cover menu planning on a budget, planning the weekly shopping list, hands on experiences of creating easy recipes and top tips for saving money and time. The move to becoming a Family Centre has been made possible by a grant award from the Community Foundation for Surrey (CFS). CFS has arranged for the Netherby Trust and the Epsom and Ewell Community Fund to provide £12,450 which will match a contribution from Epsom Methodist Church. This money will help fund both the employment of a Family Centre Manager for the next year alongside the various activities that are planned.

Commenting on the grant award Cara Golding, the manager of Epsom Methodist Church Nursery, said:

"We are delighted to have secured this funding from the Community Foundation for Surrey. Our work with families at Epsom Methodist Nursery has shown us how committed parents are to their children and families and how keen they are to pick up ideas that will help them with the everyday and sometimes complex challenges that parenting can bring. Local agencies and public services are under pressure and services have been cut back. So the more we can do to provide practical help to parents and give children the best start in life the better. That is our mission."

For further details on the 'Ready Steady Cooking on a Budget' course see

https://www.instagram.com/emcfamilies?igsh=bnNpYnFzNzhzaHp4&utm source=qr

Business that connects by insulating

The **Wickes Community Programme** has donated insulation products to the value of £1000 to help struggling families in the local community. This initiative is run by the Epsom based charity, **Good Company**, which also operates a network of local food banks. Since launching the Epsom & Ewell Energy Support Scheme in October 2022, Good Company has helped more than 300 families and over a thousand people in the local area.

The primary aim of the programme is to offer support to families struggling to pay energy bills by helping them make their homes more energy efficient and offering advice on how to reduce their energy use in other ways.

Tom Sefton, the Poverty Lead at Good Company, said: "The products donated by Wickes included secondary glazing film, various draught excluders and heat reflective radiator foil. These were handed out at group workshops that we have been running in Epsom, Leatherhead, and Tadworth for food bank clients and other local families most affected by the cost-of-living crisis. We wanted to show people that making small changes like this can significantly reduce your energy usage."

Feedback from participants has been extremely positive, including one client who said: "I found the workshop very helpful and really enjoyed talking to the other participants, sharing tips on how to save energy. The takeaway tips are also very informative. Thank you so much for your kindness and for giving me really useful information about the cost of energy and how to reduce usage and keep warm and safe this winter – which, like many people, has been scaring the life out of me."

Tom went on to say: "Other clients have told us they are wearing the hooded blankets we provided to stay warm and are using an air fryer instead of their oven to save energy, as well as fitting draught excluders and radiator foil to heat their homes more

efficiently."

Chris Grayling MP Epsom and Ewell said: "Last year we ran an appeal in conjunction with Citizens Advice Epsom and Good Company and raised over £40,000 to support our local community. These funds were used to provide short-term help with energy bills and to offer energy-saving advice. We were delighted when Wickes agreed to support us with these products through the Wickes Community Programme. It's at times like these we need to work together with businesses like Wickes to make a difference."

Wickes Store Manager in Epsom, **Ben O'Leary** said: "Supporting our local community is really important to Wickes, especially during the current cost of living crisis. For any families interested in how they too can make their homes more energy efficient there's some great advice on the Wickes website."

The Wickes Community Programme is open to all local community groups and charities seeking help for improvement projects.

A boozy blow to Epsom's "gentrification"?

Epsom's new B&M bargains store, formerly Wilko, can sell booze from 7am-11pm despite a resident's concerns it could "attract the wrong crowd". After entering administration last summer, the former Wilko branch was purchased by B&M in September 2023 in a re-brand.

Epsom and Ewell's licensing committee unanimously granted an alcohol licence for the new B&M store, due to open 1 March, at a meeting held 12 February.

One resident, Neil Gandhi had objected stating: "[It] goes against the local plan to gentrify Epsom. A B&M bargain will attract more crime, shoplifting, litter and the wrong crowds to our beautiful town Epsom."

Another resident from Hudson House, a nearby apartment building, said they already experience problems from people who buy alcohol late at night from Tesco and Co-op. They added people proceed to drink under their car park and walkway.

A statement from Keystone Law on behalf of B&M said: "The concept of gentrification and what is 'the wrong crowd' is somewhat subjective and, in any event, is not strictly relevant to the Licensing Objectives."

The national discount retailer sells a range of products including food, electricals, homeware, furniture, DIY and a limited range of alcohol.

The committee heard the main risk of crime out of B&M is shoplifting, according to the B&M representative. This danger is mitigated by a one-way system and the alcohol aisle placed at the centre of the premises, preventing potential shoplifters from rushing in and out of the store.

The application was granted despite Cllr **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington) raising concerns on the effect of the "early" licensing hours on "teenagers and the school run at that time in the morning".

Although the licensing hours expand between 7am-11pm seven days a week, the applicant stated the store would "generally" operate from 8am-7pm Monday to Saturday and 10:30am to 4:30pm on Sundays.

During peak trading periods, such as Christmas celebrations in December, the applicant's trading hours are extended to 11pm closing time subject to customer demand.

While he was content with the 11pm cut-off, Cllr Neale said: "I would rather see the early hour one made a little bit tighter than 7am."

The B&M representative explained the 7am start catered towards customers who shop earlier due to shift work patterns. He added that the sale of alcohol is an important part of the store's offer because it "wants to ensure B&M is a one-stop shop."

Related report:

Another news in store for Epsom!

 $Image: Credit: Google \ street \ view. \ Former \ Wilko \ store \ to \ open \ as \ B\&M \ bargains \ applies \ for \ alcohol \ licence$

No budging on Council budget

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council met for two hours Tuesday 13th February to debate the proposed budget and Council tax increase for 2024/2025. Councillors received a 288 page report containing all the facts and figures. All the recommendations were approved.

It boils down to this:

- A. Epsom and Ewell's share of Council Tax goes up the equivalent of 2.99% the maximum the law allows. (£6.57 for a Band D property the most populous in the Borough).
- B. Councillors' basic allowance goes up 50%, from £4031.70 to £6081.11. Chairs and Vice-chairs of committees get additional allowances ranging from 30% to 100% of the basic members' allowance.
- C. Council staff salaries will increase 6%.

Reacting to the budget, leader of the Labour Group Cllr. **Kate Chinn** (Court Ward) said: "I'm sure the residents of Epsom and Ewell will have noted the residents' association are putting up council tax, part of which will pay for the huge pay rise they voted through for themselves last night. However, the cost of the pay rise is relatively small when compared to the huge amounts spent on temporary housing for homeless people due to this council's abject failure to build social housing."

During the debate she said: "When we look at the staff for the council getting a 6% pay rise and having had raises very much less than inflation over the last five, six, seven, maybe even longer more years, I feel very uncomfortable awarding myself this large pay rise. It doesn't seem right. It doesn't sit comfortably with my values."

Cllr **John Beckett** (RA Auriol) said: "Our staff get an annual pay review. Reading through this report, councillors have not taken an increase in their allowance for the past 10 years. So whereas our staff have been getting a regular review, it may well not hit the rate of inflation, they have been getting an increase. We as councillors have not. So unfortunately, whether Councillor Chinn accepts the point, the reason for such a large increase is to catch up with the choices that this Council has made not to accept that remuneration in the past."

Cllr **Neil Dallen** (RA Town Ward) proposed the 2.99% increase in EEBC's Council Tax and said in a wide ranging speech: "The current government has been less than helpful in creating stability and allowing good financial forecasting". After noting several changes of top Council officers he said: "It's not often you see so much change in a senior management team in such a short time. Everyone is going to need time and space to readjust, learn to work effectively and efficiently together to bring both stability to the council and its workforce, and to have the confidence to introduce changes and take the best advantage of opportunities that arise."

On the budget he remarked: "Government has also capped for many years the increase in council tax, which traditionally had been the way to meet increased costs. We have had to use reserves to balance the budget over the last few years, and reserves don't last forever. We still have a small budget gap and are forecasting the use of reserves to fill that gap, but we're also taking steps to increase revenue as well as making savings."

On homelessness he said: "Without adequate funding, we cannot achieve what we set out to do, and homelessness will continue to rise. A particularly worrying trend is the increase in young people who find themselves homeless. If the government is serious about reducing homelessness, they need to fund local authorities to enable them to achieve this."

For the LibDems Cllr **Alison Kelly** (Stamford) touched on a wide variety of topics: "Why has a rewrite of the rules for spending the community infrastructure levy funds money meant that we've had to cancel a 12-month period for spending any of it? Sadly, to an outside observer, the answer seems to be that we can't spend any money as we need the interest to fund the general services. This is not sustainable in avoiding the filing of notice of bankruptcy as has happened elsewhere." She added: "Many councils are in danger of bankruptcy, and recent league tables show that we are mid-table with nearly £800 of debt per person. The Resident Association plan to resolve this seems to be the anticipated £500,000 increase in revenue from car parks, aspiration at best and a fantasy at worst, as this comes even though we expect to be nearly £200,000 down on last year's budgeted income."

She used the opportunity once more to have a go at Council secrecy: "Our Council group feels there are some unfathomable instances of resorting to allegedly legally privileged information which is then weaponized to keep an entire topic secret. There is no secret about needing to review the sites available to developers as part of the local plan, and there would be almost nil cost in keeping the public abreast of how the in-house meetings on this topic are progressing."

For Labour Cllr **Chris Ames** (Court Ward) said: "I understand it's regularly alleged at these times that Labour doesn't understand the need to find more money to meet the needs of residents. We absolutely do, but we don't think it should be done by

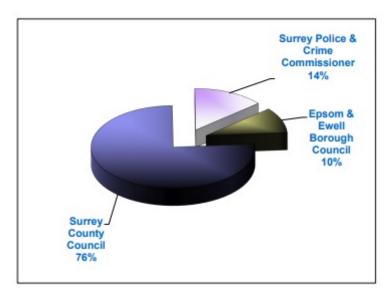
transferring budget pressures to the people we are elected to serve. The cost of living crisis hasn't gone away just because the current inflation figures have fallen. Not only is the current 4 or 5% still far too high, it means that over the last year, prices rose over and above where they were after a period of double-digit inflation.

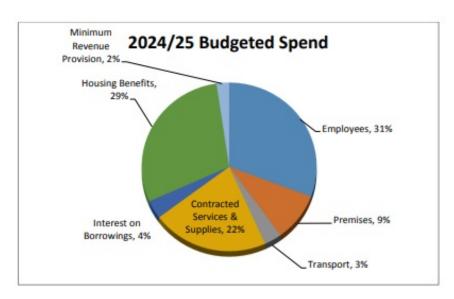
We still have large numbers of residents unable to feed their families or relying on food banks to do so. We still have residents who lie awake at night wondering how they're going to pay their bills, their rents, or mortgages."

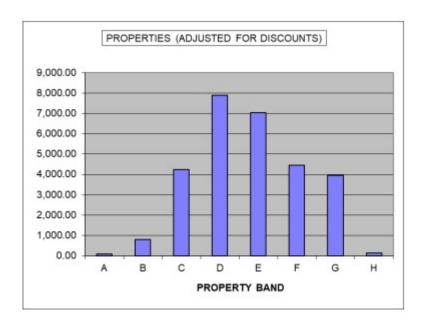
Cllr **Kieran Persand** (Conservative Horton) said: "Financial mismanagement has serious consequences, which we have witnessed on multiple occasions in recent times. However, we should err on the side of caution. We're introducing measures which may prove to be counterproductive.

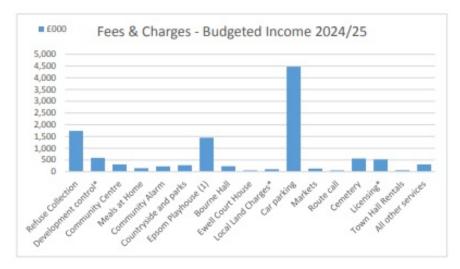
As stated in the report, the major challenge is the delivery of the £1.4 million of additional income and savings and finding a further 0.5 million reduction in council's net exponential by 2027/28. However, the council has acquired a number of commercial properties both within and outside the borough through borrowing. As of the end of 2022/23, the council's external debt totalled £64.4 million, and the interest paid to service this debt was £1.6 million last year. We're still facing economic uncertainty. Should we really be taking or amassing more borrowing debts in this current climate?"

Here are some graphics from the report that may put some matters in perspective:









The Council continues to benefit from its property investments and car parking income to maintain its finances in relative good order compared with other Boroughs in Surrey. Several of which face serious financial challenges: E.g., : Woking, Guildford and Spelthorne.

For 2023/2024 Epsom and Ewell's share of Council tax was third lowest in the County.

2023-2024 COUNCIL TAX (average per dwelling and Band D for 2 adults)						
SURREY DISTRICT	£					
	Surrey County Council	Surrey Police	District Council Charge (Band D)	Average Parish Precept (Band D)	Local Average (Band D)	Average Council Tax (Band D)
Runnymede	1,675.08	310.57	184.92	0.00	184.92	2,170.57
Spelthorne	1,675.08	310.57	216.04	0.00	216.04	2,201.69
Epsom & Ewell	1,675.08	310.57	219.60	0.00	219.60	2,205.25
Mole Valley	1,675.08	310.57	199.19	40.44	239.63	2,225.28
Guildford	1,675.08	310.57	192.41	60.90	253.31	2,238.96
Elmbridge	1,675.08	310.57	243.35	14.15	257.50	2,243.15
Surrey Heath	1,675.08	310.57	240.65	21.54	262.19	2,247.84
Woking	1,675.08	310.57	263.12	0.00	263.12	2,248.77
Tandridge	1,675.08	310.57	237.88	28.95	266.83	2,252.48
Waverley	1,675.08	310.57	201.64	75.49	277.13	2,262.78
Reigate & Banstead	1,675.08	310.57	249.71	38.74	288.45	2,274.10

Related reports:

"Audit and Scrutiny" under scrutiny

A question of pay for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Surrey's debts match Woking's but its position is secure?

Relative relief about Epsom and Ewell's debt?

Surrey Borough running up big debts

Tory leader pleads with Tory Government