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False schizo claim rapist gets 8 years

4 March 2024



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/

Cornish Collect Crucial Win on Heartbreak Hill

4 March 2024



Sutton & Epsom 22 – London Cornish RFC 31 . Saturday 2nd March.

The fixture at the Richard Evans Memorial Playing Fields in November was notable for the debut of Willem Ratu who scored a hat trick that helped Sutton & Epsom to a healthy 53-24 triumph. In the absence of the injured Taranaki Terror all those in the Cornish camp were hoping that this would create a more level playing field as they continued their efforts to climb out of the relegation abyss and get some traction from their victory over fellow strugglers Cobham in the last round of fixtures. The Exiles made it two in a row as they gave their supporters another injection of belief with a priceless bonus point win by 31-22 over Sutton.

The downpours in the week and more torrential rain led to a change in location for this fixture. The teams relocated from the serene surroundings of Rugby Lane to the windswept wastelands of Priest Hill. The hosts kicked off the match playing against the gusting wind and the significant slope. At this stage of the campaign the coaches are unlikely to be paid the ultimate divine compliment of selecting their full complement but London Cornish were delighted to field their first choice back three who were to be significant contributors. At once the visitors had the chance to open the scoring with a penalty. Michael Edworthy's effort was blown off course and it remained 0-0. Their dismay was short-lived, from the 22 drop out they secured possession and spread it wide. Left wing Matt Hakes powerful touchline run was assisted by some weak tackling as his determination saw him touch down in the corner. The challenging conversion drifted wide as

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the Exiles led 5-0 within five minutes.

London Cornish sought to exploit the conditions with thoughtful kicking to keep Sutton & Epsom on the defensive and penned in their 22. In their efforts to escape the hosts conceded another penalty in front of the posts. The wind again came to Sutton's rescue as it was becoming increasingly evident that place-kicking was going to be an arduous task. On the quarter hour S&E made their first significant contribution to proceedings. Running the ball with a penalty advantage they knocked on with an overlap in the 22. They had a second chance as they kicked the penalty to the corner but the Cornish won the line out. They were gifted a third chance as the ball was touched down in goal for a Sutton scrum. It was third time extremely unlucky as they sauntered blind for a definite score only to be halted by the whistle as they had offended at the scrummage. The Sutton profligacy was instantly punished. The ball was chipped over the Black & White defence in their 22. Covering fullback Tom Lennard lost his footing and was enveloped by the Cornish who drove him over the line. From the 5-metre scrum the visitors shunted the Sutton pack into reverse and Number 8 Conor Pearce applied the finishing touch and 10-0 to the Exiles. Five minutes later there was a repeat performance. The kick into space saw the retreating Kyren Ghumra struggling to gather the ball and it was only a last gasp dive that prevented a try. Another 5-metre scrum to the visitors but this time near the posts and the Sutton pack held the drive. Variety is the spice of life and Ciaran Johnston released his backs and centre Peter Brogden waltz in untouched. Simon Edworthy, grateful for a simpler conversion, added the extras for 17-0 after thirty minutes.

A possible lifeline dangled tantalisingly before Sutton eyes as Mr Simon Matthews was left prostrate on the pitch. After treatment from the physios the referee gingerly returned to the vertical and was able to continue with the game. As much as the visitors were intelligently exploiting the elements the hosts were being naïve as they kicked poorly to the back three and attempted long passes on the wind. With the interval approaching London Cornish secured a bonus point with their fourth try of the afternoon. Fly-half Michael Edworthy drifted across creating space for inside centre Peter Brogden who presented his centre partner, captain George Kimmins, with an easy run in under the posts. The conversion made it 24-0 to the visitors.

In the dying moments of the first half London Cornish had a wonderful opportunity to add a fifth try but scrambling defence denied them as they dropped the ball with the line at their mercy. The referee ended the half with the Exiles 24-0 up. All concerned were wondering just how many points the slope and wind were worth. Would the missed kicks prove to be costly and could Sutton & Epsom transform a lamentable first period performance into a rousing comeback? Conditions temporarily deteriorated at the start of the second half as teeming rain was added to the difficulties to be endured by the players. It was essential for the Black & Whites to score early. Within five minutes Matt Whitaker was driving his way over the line. Mr Matthews ruled that he had been held up over the line. The S&E disappointment was helped by the fact that London Cornish were reduced to 14 as Number 8 Conor Pearce was carded for a high tackle. The hosts took advantage of their numerical superiority and drove the Cornish pack off their own ball and Matt Whitaker scored. Freddy Bunting added an impressive conversion from the flank and S&E were up and running at 7-24. Mercifully the rain abated and moments later ceased. Sutton had now emptied their bench with Messrs Mount, Pulvirenti and Rudder being replaced by the triumvirate of Boaden, Jones and Elliott as they looked to reinvigorate their efforts.

At the end of the third quarter Sutton were in prime position to reduce the deficit but an errant throw to the 5-metre lineout gifted Cornish a relieving scrum. It was the visitors' turn to have their clearance returned with meaning. Tom Lennard countered and combined with Ghumra and Elliott to get to the corner. Sterling cover by Robert Mackay denied the score but the home team pressed on. White line fever descended on the Black & White ranks and they were grateful to be awarded a penalty. Finally, the pack forced its way over and Callum Gibson emerged as the scorer. It was a fine reward for the prop on an afternoon when he had carried tirelessly and with great effect. The kick from the extremities missed as Sutton trailed 12-24.

With the match entering the final 10 minutes the crucial moment came. London Cornish had made a rare visit to the Sutton 22. The hosts looked to counter and exploit a generous blindside. Cornish winger Matt Hakes gambled and won the lottery as he intercepted and strolled in for the fifth try. Simon Edworthy bisected the uprights and suddenly the gap that had so recently appeared bridgeable now seemed to be a gaping chasm as London Cornish led 31-12. Though visibly deflated by the score it was not long before the Rugby Lane men roused themselves for a grandstand finish. Firstly, Kyren Ghumra scored in the corner and anxious visitors asked Sir how long remained. 31-17 with two minutes of regulation time to play. The drama intensified as Rob Hegarty scored Sutton's fourth try in time added on. Perhaps it was the lack of a scoreboard at Priest Hill but the hosts' arithmetic let them down. With the score 22-31 and a conversion under the posts to come a successful kick would have secured a second bonus point. However, a rapidly taken drop kick missed. But the Gods seemed to be favouring Sutton as they were awarded a penalty on the final play of the game. Captain Bunting lined up his kick but it drifted agonisingly wide.

The 31-22 win provided London Cornish with a significant boost in their bid for survival. They will be hoping that Sutton can do them a favour by beating relegation rivals Cobham on 16 th March when the campaign resumes. The Exiles deservedly won the match, they exploited the first

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half advantage superbly and despite some anxious moments at the death it would have been harsh if they had been denied a vital victory. For Sutton & Epsom there were far too many errors that undermined their performance and it was only in the late rally that they demonstrated their true worth. With three matches left for the Black & Whites they still have work to do to retain their status in Level 6 and they will be hoping that the extremes of the weather will not see them relocated to Priest Hill in their two remaining home matches.

Sutton & Epsom
Lennard, Findlay, Rudder, Bunting ©, Ghumra, Bennion, Munford, Mount, Farrell, Gibson, Glanville, McTaggart, Pulvirenti, Hegarty & Whitaker.
Replacements: Boaden, Jones & Elliott.

London Cornish
Mackay, Hakes, Kimmins ©, Brogden, Bromage, Edworthy, Johnston, Pellow, Cruz, Theobald, Carr, McEwen, Fink, Webb, & Pearce.
Replacements: New, Sorgo-Mirosevic & Phoenix.

Photo credit: Robin Kennedy

March puts spring in Salt’s steps

4 March 2024

Epsom & Ewell FC 6-2 Sandhurst Town. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 2nd March 2024.

Cast your mind back just four days to our heaviest defeat of the season, when we fell away badly to lose 6-1 at Knaphill. This weekend Sandhurst Town were the visitors and we registered our heaviest win of the season with a 6-2 score line. This was also our first home win of 2024 and for those who like their stats, it was our first home win on this date since 1957 when Uxbridge were defeated 2-0 in a Corinthian League fixture!

In case you were wondering, this sort of thing has happened before. In October 2018 we lost a Vase match 6-1 at Lingfield, only to bounce back in our next match with a 6-0 win at AC London, but it could be argued this was a far more important win.

Having played some very difficult matches recently, I had written previously about how the fixture list was a little kinder to us in March and April, but that doesn’t guarantee us anything; we still had to go and get the points, and although we had a very friendly helping hand (or foot!) to see us on our way in this contest, we were good value for the win against a Sandhurst team that never really recovered from their awful start.

With Nick Wilson suspended after an accumulation of yellow cards, Ethan Nelson-Roberts was handed the Captain’s armband and Wilson was replaced by Carl Oblitey. The return of the big man up front certainly gave us some added balance, particularly up front, but the star of the show this time was the little man, Luke Miller who had a fine game, although a few others also deserve mentions. We also appeared to learn a lesson from the Knaphill defeat as we pressed more and made it much more difficult for our opponents to play throughout the ninety minutes.

This match was a pivotal one for us and arguably for our Management team, who went into this game with one win and nine defeats from their ten matches in charge, well aware that our Committee have been extremely trigger-happy in the last three seasons. We all needed a change of fortune and in the fourth minute we got some. A harmless looking back pass went straight under the visiting keeper Harry White’s foot and he was unable to reach the ball before it crossed the line and nestled in the back of the net to give us a rather fortuitous lead!

Sandhurst were clearly rattled by this and White then had to make a good save to his right to deny Miller before our tricky winger got the ball back after we intercepted it in midfield. He drew White out, only to put his shot wide from the edge of the area. A second goal would really have been a great start, but as it turned out, it was just around the corner anyway. In the tenth minute Thompson Adeyemi set up Miller on the right with a nice pass and he simply squared the ball over for Jaevon Dyer to tap it into the net from three yards. However, it didn’t quite work out like that as despite the artificial surface, Dyer somehow got under the ball and spooned it up onto the crossbar! The ball bounced down and then up onto the bar a second time before he was finally able to nod the ball over the line from about an inch, getting bundled into the net with the ball by a defender for his troubles!

From this point the match became more even, with the visitors holding the balance of possession for a while, but not really being allowed to do much with it. A long shot gave Shay Honey some trouble and he parried the ball wide, where he then had to make a second save from an angle from a low shot. Next to feature was Tijani Eshilokun who appeared to be knocked over in an off the ball challenge. The referee had a few words with Callum Wright for Sandhurst, but felt that no card was required, or maybe he felt sorry for Wright who was already being given a proper run around by Miller!

Unfortunately in the 34th minute Sandhurst found a way back into the match with a long shot that appeared to bounce just in front of Honey and although he kept the shot out, he couldn’t hold onto the ball and it was knocked back past him

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from close range to make the score 2-1.

Ayran Kugathas picked up a yellow for us as the visitors threatened to level the scores, but we were still dangerous on the attack and Oblitey set up Miller on the right to strike powerfully at goal, where White made a good block for a corner. Moments later we thought we had a third goal after Eshilokun sent the ball across into the danger area where Oblitey clipped the ball into the net. However, on its way into the net, the ball went close to Dyer who was standing in an offside position according to the Assistant and although he didn't touch the ball, I could understand why the official would think he might have been in the keeper's line of sight, even if I could see from my position that he wasn't! Either way, the referee took his time, consulted with his Assistant and then explained the matter fully to Nelson-Roberts as he disallowed the goal.

Regrettably this wasn't good enough for Eshilokun who remarked about having been cheated before and maybe understandably the referee took this comment to heart, ensuring that our man then had to make his fourth visit of the season to the sin-bin as a result. This was our team's eleventh dissent offence of the season and remains a concern. I should also point out at this stage that I felt the referee had a really good game and even if this was probably the wrong decision, he communicated with our Captain and explained his reasoning. Quick word to our Committee. The referee will not change his mind, just because one of you shouts out from the sidelines that "we've got it on video". He really won't, so why do we keep using this line that I've heard three or four times over the last two seasons now. It's an embarrassing look for our club!

The half time whistle blew shortly afterwards, but the second half started with a bang! There were just 19 ticks on the clock when a great pass out to Miller was taken in stride and as he left Wright for dead he then sent the ball across the face of goal where Oblitey was waiting to tap the ball in from close range to make it 3-1 to the ten men. Clearly this was unacceptable to the visiting Manager who then made a triple substitution and followed it up with a fourth moments later. This sparked a response and a long shot was cleared off the line by an Epsom defender, but once our "sin-binner" was back on the field we started to get back on top and it was Eshilokun that then applied the tap in finish on the hour after a corner had been half cleared to Oblitey who delivered the ball in from the right.

At 4-1 up you could be forgiven for thinking it might be comfortable from this point, but it had to be remembered that we had been 4-1 up in the return fixture after an hour, only to draw 4-4. This time there would be no such concerns as Oblitey got away on the left and pulled the ball back for Dyer to strike into the far top corner from the edge of the area to make it 5-1 in the 67th minute, grazing White's glove on the way.

The visitors showed a bit of life for a while after this and a long ball was chested down by a striker only for the ball to get away from him and run through to Honey. Then our keeper did well to parry away a free kick that was aiming for the far post. However, they reduced the arrears in the 83rd minute after a long range effort came back off our post and was knocked in by Amari Fushanu from a few yards out, but we produced another excellent goal in the second minute of injury time when both substitute Nick Inwugwu and Eshilokun produced some skilful interplay, including a clever back heel from the former to the latter who then drilled the ball in to the net from six yards, via a defender.

It was a fantastic way to finish the match and whilst these three points were important, the four goal boost to our goal difference could also prove relevant at the end of the season. For what it's worth though, a couple more performances and results like this in our remaining seven matches and we'll be fine anyway!

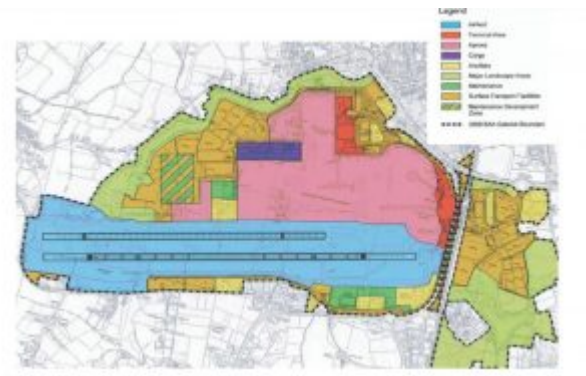
Epsom & Ewell: Shay Honey, Ayran Kugathas, Ethan Nelson-Roberts (c), Adam Green, Reece Tierney, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Carl Oblitey, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Zach Wright for Oblitey (74), Nick Inwugwu for Kugathas (75), Matt McGillivray for Wilson (80), Sirak Negassi for Miller (83)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Gatwick Airport Expansion

4 March 2024



The six-month inquiry into Gatwick Airport's plan to double capacity is underway.

Airport chiefs at the country's second busiest airport want to modify its northern runway so that it can increase passenger numbers to about 75 million a year on 386,000 flights.

It says this will help minimise delays, bring in about £1billion into the region's economy every year, and create 14,000 jobs – all while staying within agreed noise levels.

It also has a carbon action plan for how the airport will be net zero for its own emissions by 2030.

Opponents, who staged a protest outside the Crawley hearing ahead of its February 27 opening, said the expansion will

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“have a devastating impact on both people’s lives and the environment.”

Also opposing the current plan is a coalition of 10 councils in Surrey, Kent, East Sussex that surround Gatwick.

Sally Pavey, chairs the Campaign Against Gatwick Noise Emissions (CAGNE) an umbrella aviation community and environment group for Sussex, Surrey, and Kent.

She said: “If this application to build a new runway is permitted, it will have a devastating impact on both people’s lives and the environment.

“That is why it is so important that CAGNE are here – not just today, but every day of the hearing, with our qualified team of Kings Council, plus surface transport, aviation noise and air quality expert team, as well as supporting non-government organisations tackling the subject of jet zero and the environmental destruction of our planet.

“This fight is not over until the Secretary of State for Transport makes his decision.

“Whatever political party will be in power then, come elections, local or general, we hope that residents here today will reflect their feelings when it comes to the ballot box and the impact that aviation is having on our planet.

“We could not have put together such a strong team, acting for communities and the planet, if residents had not put their hands deep in their pockets and donated to CAGNE.”

Crawley Borough Council, East Sussex County Council, Horsham District Council, Kent County Council, Mid Sussex District Council, Mole Valley District Council, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, Surrey County Council, Tandridge District Council, and West Sussex County Council make up the consortium of councils opposing the plan.

They are concerned the proposals, as they stand, fail to provide sufficient controls to noise and air quality levels are not exceeded.

The councils are also worried about how a doubling of passenger numbers would impact the transport network – and over the impact the huge surge would have on meeting sustainability needs.

The statement read: “We have been working together to ensure that if the proposal were to be approved, the required controls, mitigations and where appropriate, compensations are put in place to limit the environmental impacts and to maximise the economic and community benefits that should be sought from such development.”

Gatwick Airport said it was not taking part in any interviews.

Related Reports:

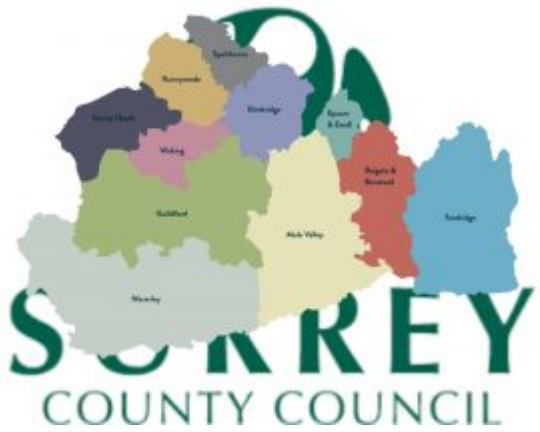
Gatwick 2nd runway sneaking in?

Gatwick expansion plans revealed

Gatwick to get 2nd runway?

Surrey takes over enterprise partnerships

4 March 2024



Businesses will be at the heart of Surrey’s economic growth as they are set to benefit from a single strategic vision and leadership for the Surrey economy as part of the transfer of formal powers to Surrey County Council.

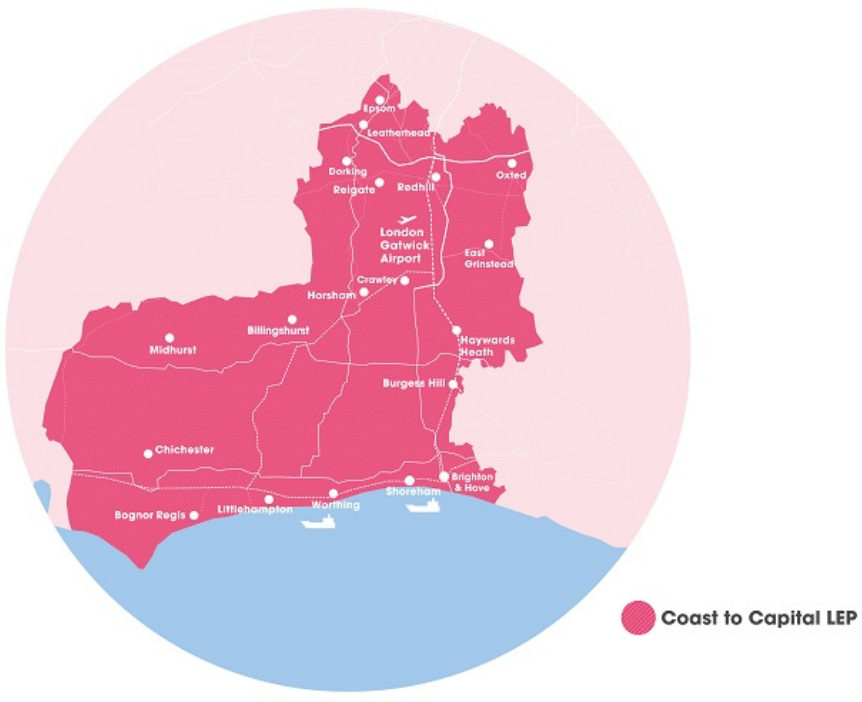
From April, the Council will take up the key functions currently held by the county’s two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Enterprise M3 and Coast to Capital.

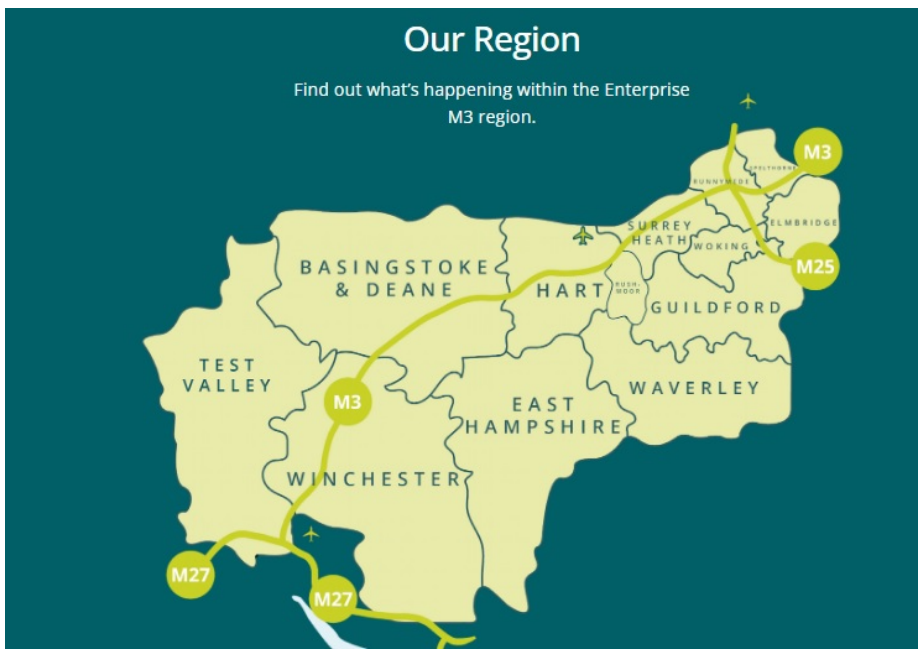
The change will see the council lead on an enhanced oversight and delivery role in driving sustainable economic growth across the county. It will absorb formal responsibilities to deliver business support through the new Surrey-wide Growth Hub and deliver government funded programmes focused on skills.

The areas covered by Coast to Capital on the left and Enterprise M3 on the right:

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Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Growth at Surrey County Council said: *"Surrey has a great economic story to tell. We're the UK's leading regional economy, with more than 100,000 businesses which generate more than £50 billion a year to the UK economy.*

"We know there is huge potential to grow this further – through targeted support to key sectors, and through working with employers, training providers and local residents to create a high-quality skilled workforce for the future.

"I very much welcome the transfer of these powers into Surrey County Council.

"It will mean for the first time we will have one organisation who, together with a strong independent business voice, will provide a clear, coherent and comprehensive approach to developing a strong sustainable economy. This is positive for business and for residents.

"I want to thank the government for hearing our case and also to our partners in the LEPs for working with us to ensure there is a seamless transfer of service at the start of April."

Surrey has historically been divided across two LEP boundaries – Enterprise M3 operating in the west of the county and Coast to Capital in the east – which has presented challenges in terms of strategic coherence and created confusion for local businesses.

In March 2023, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement announced the intention to integrate LEP functions into upper tier local authorities.

Aware of the positive impacts that could have for Surrey, the County Council took steps to engage early with partners to ensure it was ready to absorb and deliver these functions from the point of transfer.

A report discussed and agreed by the Council's Cabinet on 27th February acknowledged the move could have a range of positive benefits for local businesses and residents including:

- Setting a single economic vision for the county, ensuring Surrey-wide solutions are developed to support local economic growth.
- The development of a new Surrey business brand and website to make it easier for businesses to know where to access the right information, advice and guidance.
- The creation of a Surrey Growth Hub service to provide universal signposting support for business, as well as targeted interventions to help eligible local businesses in their journey to becoming high-growth.
- The creation of a Surrey Careers Hub (launched in September 2023), which delivers a range of activities focused on ensuring schools and colleges can help young people take their next best step.

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- Improved join-up and efficiencies with existing council services and teams.
- Greater democratic accountability for decision-making related to local economic growth, that will be informed by a strong, independent, and diverse private sector voice.
- Future government funding to support local growth will now be focused on the whole of Surrey, instead of it being spread across larger regional areas.

Further announcements will be made in the coming months regarding the launch of the new Surrey business brand, website, and Surrey Growth Hub.

IoT Launch: Nescot Welcomes Industry Leaders

4 March 2024



The Sussex and Surrey Institute of Technology (IoT) at **North East Surrey College of Technology** (Nescot) in **Ewell** welcomed over 60 guests at its opening event on Wednesday 28 February. Visitors had the opportunity to explore the state-of-the-art facilities, participate in hands-on activities and discover the wide range of resources and training opportunities available at the newly opened IoT.

The IoT at Nescot is the first new space to open as part of the Sussex and Surrey IoT and specialises in digital technologies with courses and apprenticeships from software development, cyber security, AI (Artificial Intelligence) and networking to cloud computing, data handling, 'internet of things' and IT support.

Visitors included partners and employers from varied industry sectors who were able to find out the many ways in which they can support the future of skills development in the IT sector. Anchor employers including NatWest, Roche Diagnostics, Southern Water, Pearson and Gatwick Airport pledged their ongoing support to work with the Sussex and Surrey IoT in various ways, from recruiting apprentices and upskilling existing staff to working with curriculum experts to help shape study programmes and providing mentoring.

Nescot staff and students also had the chance to explore the newly opened IoT. Computing staff, and students on our computing courses were on hand to showcase the specialist technology facilities and share their excitement with visitors about the courses available.

Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO at Nescot said, "We were delighted to welcome our first guests to the IoT at Nescot which was buzzing with activity the whole day. It's been wonderful to showcase our specialist digital technology facilities, resources and training. We are looking forward to working with businesses and partners to address current skills gaps and prepare for future skills needs."

Demonstrating some of the technology, Joseph, a student on our Level 3 Computing course said, "The focus on specialist digital technologies is a great opportunity to enhance my knowledge. Nescot is the perfect choice for the Institute of Technology with great access and networking opportunities."

Another student, Jeremy added, "I'm really excited about the Institute of Technology which is a great addition to Nescot. The technology and devices being installed here are amazing!"

Peter Goodenough, Computing tutor at Nescot, said, "With the Institute of Technology we can offer progress. Computers are in every walk of life and every industry. The IoT at Nescot is offering courses to enhance future skills and aid long term sustainability. You can choose from a wide range of courses on offer, from learning how to design, create and program smart devices, industrial and home robotics to making you mindful of your digital footprint."

For more information on the IoT at Nescot please visit their website

Sussex and Surrey IoT

The Sussex and Surrey IoT includes Nescot, Chichester College Group (CCG) and the Universities of Sussex and Brighton. The IoT will enhance higher level skills training, with a new state-of-the-art hub and specialist satellites for delivery at locations across the region. The investment will create new cutting-edge facilities for higher level technical training with a focus on digital, sustainable technologies, engineering and construction.

Find out more about the Sussex and Surrey IoT here

Image: A guest trying some of the VR (Virtual Reality) kit in the VR room at the IoT. Credit NESCOT

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Computer lets down County Council workers

4 March 2024



Surrey County Council's new £30 million payroll system has left staff "wiping tears of frustration and helplessness" over missed payments, it its claimed.

It is claimed that the payroll system is paying employees the wrong wages, with reports that some are missing mortgage and rent payments, almost a year after it was introduced, unions have said. Workers on payroll and experiencing issues include teachers and firefighters.

The council brought in a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system last June and said it had "experienced some issues relating to payroll".

The council has said it was working continuously to improve the system but given its complexity, needed an ongoing programme of software upgrades and fixes to address issues that have arisen.

A permanent fix is not expected until early summer, Surrey County Council Trade Unions (SCCTU) has said.

The ERP was introduced last summer after the council was notified its previous payroll system, which was close to 20 years old, would no longer be supported with updates.

According to SCCTU, which is made up of 12 recognised bodies including Unison, NEU and Nasuwt: "All the trade unions in Surrey County Council have been helping distraught staff deal with pay errors month-on-month since June 2023.

"These errors include large overpayments and underpayments, which have had dire reverberations for the staff in question.

"This includes employees being unable to make payments on their mortgage, rent, cars, and utilities.

"For single parents, lower paid staff, and staff who have their wages topped up by Universal Credit, the fallout from these mistakes have had a catastrophic effect on the mental health of staff and their families."

They said in one extreme case a staff member confessed she and her children had to stay with her mother because they didn't have money to buy electricity or food.

The council said it does not have figures available for how many have been affected but say that the vast majority of cases have had minimal impact.

To make up the shortfall, the council has been making emergency payments with staff pleading the cases to their line managers, the union said.

Surrey UNISON estimates at least £100,000 has been paid in fees alone for emergency payments.

Overpayments can be equally problematic for low-paid staff who receive in-work benefits as they find themselves with too much money in their accounts and their top ups switched off – only to be out of pocket with the overpayment is clawed back, the unions said.

As such, the unions are now in dispute with the council over its implementation and said they have no confidence in this new payroll system.

A spokesperson for Surrey County Council said: "Following the installation of a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system last summer, we have experienced some issues relating to payroll.

"We have put in place a number of workarounds and extra resource to try to minimise the impact on staff and schools, and a dedicated technical team is working to resolve underlying issues.

"The recovery plan is making good progress, with the number of errors reducing significantly over time including updating leavers' processes and the school financial reporting system, and a programme of engagement clinics has also been coordinated to provide individual schools/settings with focused support.

"We are still working through some of the issues and we are grateful to our staff and schools for both their efforts and patience as we continue to do this.

"Some level of disruption was expected throughout such a fundamental transition to a new system, but we are sorry for any inconvenience to employees and schools adversely affected; our primary focus has always been the welfare of our staff as we resolve any errors, and we will continue to work with them throughout this process."

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EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

26th November 2026

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Money advice and more for free in Epsom and Ewell

4 March 2024



A report published in October of 2023 by the UK mental health charity Mind found 2.7m people had considered suicide due to financial pressures and over the last couple years NHS England has seen a rise in inpatient and outpatient referrals connected with the cost of living crisis.

Also in the month of October a service was created in response to this problem for the people who live and work in Epsom and Ewell by the Leatherhead-based charity the Mary Frances Trust, which recently celebrated 30 years since its founding and supports around 2,300 Surrey residents every month.

Set up from scratch in partnership with Citizens Advice Epsom and Ewell after a meeting between Mary Frances Trust CEO Patrick Wolter and the CEO of the Guildford based charity Catalyst who run the same service in neighbouring Surrey Heath, the two charities resolved it would be beneficial to create a mental health service that addressed people's experiences with financial difficulty.

"We thought it would be… easier for people who are facing difficulties in both areas to have a service that caters for both sides" said Connie Ridout Communications Lead for the Mary Frances Trust.

Ridout says the two CEOs were struck by how many people already receiving support were discussing problems caused by the cost of living crisis and the issue was considered to be one of the biggest issues facing service users affecting how people meet mortgage payments, homelessness, rent, and council tax.

With backing from the National Community Fund for a three project, the service aims to increase financial resilience, improve overall mental and/or emotional wellbeing, reduce stress and anxiety by having users engage in one on one appointments with a caseworker to help people manage the impact of the cost of living on their wellbeing.

With the launch of the service Mary Frances CEO Patrick Wolter said: "With CAEE and MFT working so closely together, the client only has one point of contact to help them get the full support they need. We are thrilled to offer this free service to the residents of Epsom and Ewell."

When the service was first being devised it was considered a priority that the service should be as accessible as possible with users having to register only once with either Citizens Advice Epsom and Ewell or Mary Frances Trust and currently the service has no waiting list which the MFT hope to maintain for as long as possible.

New service users need to live or work in Epsom and Ewell and experience problems with wellbeing as a result of financial difficulty whether that be finances causing stress, depression, anxiety, or a mental illness that is exacerbated by financial difficulty. During an initial assessment users will be assessed for how financial difficulties affect their lives and set goals.

Citizens Advice Epsom and Ewell handled around 8,000 issues last from 2,500 clients with 60% of clients needing advice around money, such as benefits, fuel costs, debt and crisis funding, though there are concerns that the most vulnerable are not being reached.

This points to another issue when it comes to boosting the number of people using the service, as Ridout says, which is about reaching people who may find making this step too overwhelming due to their mental health problems. Even though it may be a difficult step people are not ready for, "We do need to remind people [to reach out] endlessly because of the nature of what they are facing," Ridout says.

Now with around 30 people using the service the project has one caseworker offering one to one support every six weeks to give users financial independence and manage the stress and anxiety associated with personal finances, the MFT aims to broaden its reach.

It is estimated that one in three people in the UK are living with poor mental health and a poll from the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute found 39% of people with mental wellbeing issues stated that financial problems were the main reason their mental health had worsened

The free money advice and wellbeing support service is available to people living and working in Epsom & Ewell. The Financial and Wellbeing Support Service (FWSS) is delivered by Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell (CAEE) for expert benefits and money advice and mental health charity Mary Frances Trust (MFT) for specialist wellbeing support.

If managing your finances is causing stress and anxiety or mental health challenges are impacting your ability to manage your finances, the three-year project funded by The National Lottery Community Fund will provide a range of free services and resources to help residents to get help

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during this difficult time.

The aim of the project is to empower the client, and:

• Increase financial resilience and independence
• Improve overall mental and/or emotional wellbeing
• Reduce stress and anxiety
• Increase engagement with local community and reduce social isolation
• Be more informed about how to manage finances and wellbeing going forward.

How to access the service:
 If you need support to tackle both financial and emotional/mental wellbeing difficulties;
and
 live in or around the Epsom & Ewell Borough and are 18+ years

then please get in touch with either organisation (no need to contact both). No third party referral is required. Case Workers from CAEE and MFT will support you to improve your situation and emotional wellbeing via face-to-face, telephone or online appointments.

Mary Frances Trust:
Email: fwss@maryfrancestrust.org.uk
Telephone / SMS: 07380 567708

Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell
Email: fwss@caee.org.uk
Tel: 01372 300421
www.caee.org.uk

More Surrey children in care to be cared for in Surrey

4 March 2024



In a move to bolster support for children in care, **Surrey County Council** has announced the inauguration of three state-of-the-art children's homes, marking a significant stride in their commitment to enhancing residential capacity within the county. Situated in **Epsom** and Walton-on-Thames, these purpose-built facilities aim to provide a nurturing environment for Surrey children in need.

The council's investment of £34 million in improving sufficiency for children in care, coupled with £2.4 million allocated for workforce development, underscores their dedication to addressing the pressing needs of vulnerable children within the county. This comprehensive capital programme encompasses the creation of new facilities as well as the renovation and expansion of existing ones, resulting in the addition of over 30 individual bedrooms, thus affording more children the opportunity to remain within their communities.

Presently, approximately 70% of Surrey children in residential care are placed outside the county due to a scarcity of available homes. The council's strategic investment aims to reverse this trend by bolstering in-county provision. The newly inaugurated homes in Epsom and Walton-on-Thames, accommodating a total of ten children each, prioritize the placement of children currently residing outside the county, fostering a sense of belonging and stability.

The completion of these homes has been met with enthusiasm by **Clare Curran**, Cabinet Member for Children, Families, and Lifelong Learning, who expressed her delight at the prospect of offering more Surrey children a supportive home environment. Similarly, **Natalie Bramhall**, Cabinet Member for Property, Waste, and Infrastructure, commended the meticulous planning and design considerations that have gone into creating these homes, emphasizing their accessibility, homeliness, and integration with local amenities.

The construction of these homes has paved the way for new career opportunities in residential care, aligning with the council's commitment to workforce development. As the council moves closer to its sufficiency targets, with an additional home currently underway in Dorking, Surrey may emerge as a leading provider of children's home places nationwide by 2027.

Two Surrey children's homes have already receiving 'Good' and 'Outstanding' ratings from Ofsted this year. As Surrey County Council continues to expand its residential care capacity, the welfare of vulnerable children within the county is set to receive a substantial boost.

For more information, visit Surrey County Council's website and YouTube channel for insights into their Sufficiency Strategies and a video tour of one of the newly inaugurated children's homes, featuring commentary from key council

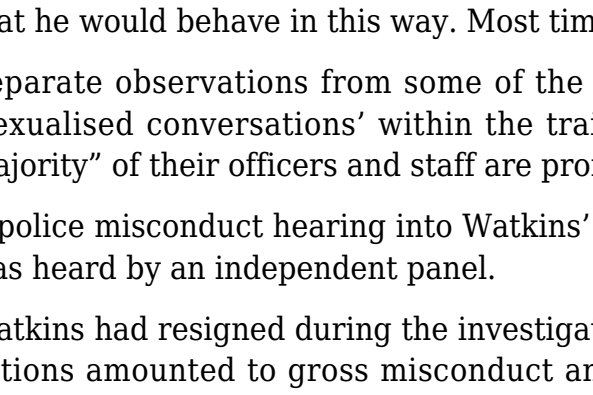
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members. Additionally, individuals interested in pursuing a career in residential care in Surrey are encouraged to explore current opportunities on the Surrey County Council job pages.

Surrey Police roots out non-PC conduct

4 March 2024



There is a culture of “sexualised conversations” within a Surrey Police training group, an officer’s gross misconduct hearing panel heard.

PC Adam Watkins was found culpable of making sexually inappropriate comments and gestures to a female colleague and then also during the ‘end of training’ celebration evening on 7 October 2022.

Inappropriate comments included PC Watkins asking his colleague, anonymised as ‘Officer A’, if she had ‘christened’ her new house with her boyfriend (i.e whether they had had sex in it yet).

Watkins also asked Officer A how big her boyfriend’s penis is, gesturing with his hands and asking her to stop when he gestured the correct size, then commenting that Officer A would need crutches because of the size.

CCTV footage from a pub also showed Watkins approaching Officer A holding his drink to her face and that she had backed away. He then approached her from behind and pressed his groin against her buttock.

Watkins accepted that he had been drinking throughout the evening and noted that he was unsteady on his feet.

Officer A said, in a written statement on 9 October 2022, that “she turned around and saw [the former officer] right behind [her] swaying his pelvis from side to side. [Her] heart started racing when [she] noticed it was him and [she] felt a bit afraid.”

Officer A’s statement after the event said: “It was an extremely creepy and uncomfortable experience and it shocked me that he would behave in this way. Most times I talk about this experience, I start crying.”

Separate observations from some of the witness statements led the panel to note there “appeared to be a culture of ‘sexualised conversations’ within the training group” at large. Surrey Police have since said that the “overwhelming majority” of their officers and staff are professional .

A police misconduct hearing into Watkins’ conduct was held at Surrey Police Headquarters on 29th and 30th January and was heard by an independent panel.

Watkins had resigned during the investigation and prior to the hearing on 12 May 2023. The panel found that the officer’s actions amounted to gross misconduct and he would have been dismissed if he had not ceased to be a member of the police force.

Watkins argued his comments were made within the context of the culture of the team. Both Watkins and Officer A had instigated conversations of a sexual nature on occasions, the report read.

The misconduct report advised that Surrey Police Force may wish to review the training provided to new officers with the standards of professional conduct, as well as respect to equality and diversity to ensure the content is adequate.

It added training provided to the Police and Crime training team leaders should be revised to ensure unacceptable standards of conduct are quickly identified and resolved.

Head of Surrey Police’s Professional Standards Department, Superintendent Andy Rundle, said: “We have invested in a comprehensive programme of cultural change towards challenging, reporting and tackling unethical or unprofessional behaviour. This included every officer and staff member under-taking mandatory training and plenary sessions in abuse of position for a sexual purpose, gender, and racial bias.”

Noting Officer A’s presentation at the hearing, the panel felt she remained “significantly affected” by the former officer’s actions.

The panel found Watkins “displayed a lack of awareness about his actions”. The former officer claimed “he was just being a bit silly”.

Watkins relied on Officer A to point out that his conduct was unacceptable instead of taking responsibility for his own conduct, the panel observed.

According to the misconduct panel, Watkins “attempted to minimise his involvement by maintaining that he was only joking” when he made the comments to Officer A.

The report said: “We found the former officer’s view – that it was Officer A’s responsibility to tell him that his conduct was unacceptable – to be concerning.”

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It added: “The public rightly expects a police officer to maintain the highest standards of behaviour.”

Watkins disputed the allegation that, whilst [Officer A] was discussing what she was going to wear on the ‘end of training’ celebration with her colleague, he said “are you going to get your tits out?”.

Instead, he believed that he said “Are you going to get the girls out” and clarified that by “girls” he meant breasts. Accordingly, the panel considered that whether the words “girls” or “tits” were said by Watkins, the difference was not significantly material.

Accepting his behaviour amounted to misconduct, Watkins denied that it reached the Gross Misconduct threshold as he had not intended to cause harm or distress to Officer A.

The panel concluded it had “no doubt” that the former officer’s actions is likely to cause “reputational harm” to the police service and undermine public confidence in policing, This is particularly the case given the increasing societal concerns regarding acts of violence against women and girls, the hearing heard.

Superintendent Rundle added: “This is a very concerning case where PC Watkins displayed completely inappropriate behaviour towards a fellow colleague and displayed a total lack of respect for her.

“This is simply not acceptable, and we are very sorry that she was subjected to this in the workplace; a place where she should feel safe and respected by all colleagues.

“We recognise the impact this case will have both on the Surrey public and our own officers and staff, particularly with the current focus on standards. Fortunately, the overwhelming majority of our officers and staff are professional and a credit to the force, however, it is essential that we continue to root out those colleagues who do not meet our demanding standards and ethics.”

Image is illustration only and is not nor intended to represent any individual referred to in this report.

Primary school blighted by drive-by fly-tipper

4 March 2024



A “horrible, antisocial” pile of rubble was fly tipped outside a popular Surrey primary school by a lorry in a drive-by dump and run.

Neighbours heard a truck driving down Vine Road in East Molesey at about 11pm on Monday, February 26 but say they were unable to spot the culprit, a witness said. A video shows the swathes of rubble lining the residential street.

The huge mess was still there the following morning resulting in the road’s closure during the busy school run drop-off. The nearby school, St Lawrence Church of England Primary, wrote to parents warning of the shut street and knock-on impact.

A witness said: “I heard it thunder down into the road, but it was such a fast drive by that when we went out it was gone. I think one of the parked cars was damaged. Several neighbours came out and we tried to secure the scene from accidents with cones and bins. The police came about an hour later and then the highways lorry came with official road closure signs.”

On February 27, environmental officers from Elmbrdge Borough Council had moved the waste to the side of the road and installed barriers to keep traffic away.

“The police said it was unusual for flytipping to be right in the middle of a residential road rather than in a corner or wasteland. It is a horrible antisocial crime. People who need waste removing really should check that they are using a licensed disposal contractor and not just go for the cheapest. I don’t think people realise that they are responsible for their waste being disposed of legally and responsibly.”

Another parent said: “How can you do this and feel ok about yourself?”

A spokesperson for Elmbridge Borough Council said its enforcement team is visiting the site and will be making enquiries in the neighbourhood. A call for witnesses will also be put out on its social media channels.

The said: “The fly-tip has been reported to our contractors for clearance and will be dealt with within 24 hours. We take fly-tipping incidents very seriously and will investigate every occurrence. If there is enough evidence, we will prosecute the person responsible.

“We will shortly launch an anti-litter campaign for this spring/summer and reiterate a strong message that littering and fly-tipping are not acceptable and will not be tolerated. We will be working with community groups towards a cleaner and

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greener Elmbridge so that everybody can take pride in the borough. We have a beautiful borough, and we will do all we can to make sure it is being protected."

A spokesperson for Surrey Police said: "We were called at around 11.30pm last night (26 February) to a report of a large amount of rubble strewn across Vine Road in East Molesey. We briefly attended to help clear the road and the incident was then passed over to National Highways."

A Green Group that won't belt up

4 March 2024



In a comprehensive critique of **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**'s handling of the Local Plan, a local environmental advocacy group, known as **Epsom Green Belt**, argues there are shortcomings in the council's approach.

In a response to the council's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) (reported by the Epsom and Ewell Times HERE) they assert that the council's failure to provide clear and timely information about changes resulting from public consultation leaves residents in the dark about crucial decisions that will shape the borough's future.

One of the group's key contentions centres around the council's delay in analyzing consultation responses. Despite assurances of ongoing analysis, no outcomes have been made public, leaving residents to speculate about the fate of their feedback. This lack of transparency, the group argues, undermines the democratic process and erodes trust in local governance.

Furthermore, the Group criticizes the council's handling of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC), highlighting concerns about the committee's apparent exclusion from significant decision-making processes. By sidelining the LPPC, the council risks bypassing important checks and balances, raising questions about the integrity of the Local Plan's development.

A central focus of the group's critique is the contentious issue of Green Belt development. They accuse the council of disregarding public opinion and pressing ahead with plans to build on protected Green Belt land without adequately demonstrating the exceptional circumstances required by National Planning Policies. This, they argue, not only threatens valuable green spaces but also reflects a disregard for community sentiment.

In addition to these overarching concerns, the Group points to specific discrepancies in the council's representation of housing needs and affordability. They highlight the council's reliance on inflated housing figures and failure to explore alternative solutions, such as maximizing brownfield sites. This, they argue, calls into question the accuracy and integrity of the data informing the Local Plan.

Epsom Green Belt calls for immediate action from elected councillors to address these concerns and restore public confidence in the Local Plan process. They emphasize the need for transparency, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making to ensure that the interests of residents and the environment are adequately represented.

The full case being argued by Epsom Green Belt can be accessed HERE.

Related reports:

Here we go again on the Local Plan?

Minister gets heavy on a Local Plan delay

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Face saved by late rally

4 March 2024

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Epsom & Ewell FC 3-4 Alton. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 24th February.

A competitive and entertaining, if niggly encounter at the Madgwick on Saturday ended with visitors Alton scraping a win by four goals to three after a couple of late strikes from our boys gave us a hope of pinching a point right at the end. It wasn't to be though and to be honest, if we had, it would have been harsh on our opponents, who were well in control in the first half and should probably have been out of sight by the break anyway, even if the second period was more even. The fightback did at least help us with our goal difference and who knows how important that might prove to be for both teams at the end of the season.

Alton remain solid bets for one of the four playoff spots after this victory and were well on top for large periods, with one of the biggest differences between the two teams being the quality of service into the danger areas. Alton were able to get down our flanks on a regular basis and sent the ball in for the big men in the box which caused us trouble all day long, while our opportunities and in particular our set pieces were really poor in this match. However, it is impossible not to ask if things would have been different had a key flashpoint not been better dealt with, and yes, regrettably I do have to question the performance of our match officials a little after this encounter.

With many other matches called off and even with a number of travelling supporters, our attendance was advised as an extremely disappointing 68. Yes, results haven't been great, but using the club's figures we averaged 92 in the League last season (110 if you include the playoffs) while this season we average 81, despite larger away support and more local matches. Our club doesn't currently engage with the few really loyal supporters it has and our match programme doesn't even welcome them to the ground any more. The player stats within it were also wildly inaccurate and it even carried a full page advert for our "home" match this coming Tuesday, when in fact we are away! Our club recently advised on Twitter that much hard work is being done by our Committee, yet all of this "work" is apparently deemed too important to tell mere supporters what it is, while the attention to detail in the limited club output is really poor. The club actually has one fairly big story which I'm told will be announced very shortly, but even this has been an open secret on the circuit for the last three weeks!

We only made two changes from our fine win at Camberley as Rory Edwards was unavailable and was replaced by Reggie Savage, making his first start, while our goalkeeping turnstile rotated for the fifth straight week with the addition of new keeper Shay Honey who played against us for Spelthorne Sports back in October. Whilst we had five keepers in four matches almost exactly a year ago, this is the first time in club history that we have started five different ones in consecutive matches. Honey performed well on his debut and it is hoped that our Management have now found someone they are happy with between the posts, although alarmingly once again we only named four substitutes.

After a fairly even opening ten minutes we had the first strike at goal, although Savage's strike was well kept out by Lewis Mees in the Alton goal before anyone noticed that the offside flag had been raised anyway. The visitors started to gain the ascendency and opened their account in the 22nd minute with a deep corner that was met with an unmarked downwards header from close range by Ryan Stepney that Honey had no chance of keeping out. A combination of keeper and defenders blocked another chance on goal minutes later. We had an opportunity in the 27th minute after the tricky Sirak Negassi was brought down some twenty yards out, but the subsequent free kick was probably one of the worst in our history as Nick Wilson stuttered over taking it, before being replaced by regular taker Adam Green who then ballooned the strike way over the bar!

However, the next issue in this match came when Jerry Antwi picked up a facial injury on the half hour. Having seen the video of the incident it was really clear that Pat Cox raised an elbow above his head and it clattered into our player's head. The bright orange sleeved arm was really clear to see, even though the video was taken from sixty yards away, yet the referee who was much closer, didn't even award a free kick for the assault that absolutely warranted a red card. Insult was added to injury when a clearly incensed Antwi also had to be replaced by Ayran Kugathas and Wilson made his views clear, only to find himself in the sin-bin as a result! The number one priority for a match official has to be the protection of the players and it wouldn't surprise me if during the injury break, the referee realised he had got this one wrong as his performance was very shaky from this point with both teams taking the opportunity to appeal for almost everything from that point onwards.

With one of our defenders off the field for ten minutes we looked very vulnerable and the only Epsom person winning a header during this period was long-serving supporter John Bonner who headed the ball back into play from the sidelines! Green was alert to clear the ball off the line from another free header that had beaten Honey, before a right wing cross was met by a superb half volley from Cox that Honey tipped over. Whilst that corner was cleared, the visitors kept up the bombardment and a left wing cross from right out on the touchline was as good as any you will ever see in the Premier League, leaving Cox the simple task of nodding the ball in at the far post from a couple of yards out in the 45th minute. Whether Cox should still have been on the field was of course extremely debateable, but in the five minutes of injury time that followed, we were grateful to Honey for making two further good stops in that time. We were very fortunate to be only two goals down at the interval.

The second half had to be better if we were going to get back into this match, but that's exactly what happened. An early chance for Ethan Nelson-Roberts was blocked before Savage drove the rebound just wide from the edge of the area and whilst Alton had an appeal for a penalty after a header on goal struck Green's arm, it would have been extremely harsh had it been given. As we entered the 53rd minute Savage chased down a ball in midfield, winning the tackle and setting

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up Negassi to streak down the right wing. We were a bit short of options in the middle, so he tried to cut back onto his left foot and was brought down in the area as he did so, earning a rare and uncontested spot kick that Wilson tucked away a minute later to give us hope.

We had to make an adjustment just before the hour as Ethan Brazier limped off, and with Luke Miller coming on we had to move a few players around to accommodate. This took a little bit of time to bed in and we found ourselves being pushed back, although there was time for an Alton player to volley the ball away after it had already crossed the touchline, which as regular supporters will recall, earned our Captain Wilson a yellow card just seven days previously! However, we were grateful to Honey again as another ball in from the right was struck at goal and turned away by our debutant keeper. Unfortunately our defence had little chance in the 66th minute as we were pushing forward, but lost the ball in midfield and the counter attack was brutal, sending the ball inside the advanced Kugathas, by now playing at right back, with the square ball in being knocked in from close range by former Camberley favourite Jamie Hoppitt to make it 3-1.

Alton missed a good chance with a close range header before Wilson picked up a yellow card for a foul. Moments later someone took revenge on him, leaving him to require treatment, but the referee didn't want to know how it occurred, even ignoring an Assistant who was flagging on the far side. Then in the 80th minute Tijani Eshilokun unwisely chose to speak out to the referee after Nelson-Roberts was pulled up for a foul out on the Alton right wing and found himself having a ten minute breather as a result. As with our first half sin-bin we then conceded while short handed as the free kick was met by another close range finish, this time giving Staples his second goal of the match and giving the visitors an probably unsurmountable 4-1 lead in the 82nd minute.

Oddly enough we then produced our best ten minutes of the match and Negassi was pulled down right on the edge of the area by Archie Larkum who picked up a yellow card. Whilst the free kick from Green from wide out wasn't a very good one, it squirmed through the wall and was diverted goalwards from six yards by Wilson, completely deceiving Mees at his near post and giving us a second goal in the 87th minute. We continued to press and Negassi sent in a powerful shot from 20 yards which had a lot of swerve on it. Mees did well to parry the strike but Miller was on the loose ball in a flash and as Mees spread himself expecting Miller to strike at goal, our man held the ball up skilfully before strolling round the prostrate keeper to tap in from a couple of yards to make the score a scarcely believable 3-4!

With that goal coming in the 90th minute there were probably about seven additional minutes to play, but even with the reappearance of Eshilokun we were unable to engineer any further real chances. Instead the game continued in its niggly way and wasn't helped by some strange decisions, firstly when Kugathas was pulled back yet no card was issued, and then bizarrely when an Alton player fell to the ground in the 96th minute. Was he wasting time or genuinely injured? Well, if you are a physio, you can't take that chance and our physio Alfie Wyld came on to look after what he felt was a potential head injury, only to then receive a yellow card from the referee for entering the field of play without permission! I am certain the referee thought he was carding an opposition physio and had no idea it was our man. Either way though, our man may now think twice before rushing to help someone on the field, which is a concerning development, although pretty much summed up the day for the man in the middle and he faced a fair bit of criticism from both sides as he departed the scene moments later.

For our boys it was a much improved second half, but Alton are a very solid side who play good football and get the ball into the danger areas well and consistently. We simply couldn't afford to give them a two goal head start and hope to get away with it. We face another tricky match at Knaphill on Tuesday evening but once this match is complete, the fixture list eases significantly after a brutal February where we have played many of the top teams. Although Colliers Wood United closed the gap between us and them to four points at the foot of the table after their pivotal 2-1 win at Sheerwater, I'm seeing enough from our boys in patches to remain confident that we can stay up, although it would be nice to see a full bench again and some better club advertising and information to try and welcome more people as we enter this critical phase of the season!

Epsom & Ewell: Shay Honey, Ethan Brazier, Jerry Antwi, Adam Green, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson (c), Sirak Negassi, Thompson Adeyemi, Reggie Savage, Tijani Eshilokun, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Ayran Kugathas for Antwi (35), Luke Miller for Brazier (56), Mekhi Savage for R.Savage (68)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Two years on – Epsom stilled by Ukrainian voices

4 March 2024



Saturday morning the Epsom community gathered at the Epsom Market Place to mark the solemn occasion of the second anniversary of the start of the war in Ukraine. Organized by the **Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network** (EERN) and **Surrey Stands with Ukraine** (SSWU), the event aimed to show solidarity and support for the people of Ukraine during these

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challenging times.

The atmosphere was one of unity and reflection as locals joined together to honour the resilience of the Ukrainian people. The local Ukrainian choir, **Renaissance**, delivered a moving rendition of the Ukrainian National Anthem, followed by a heartfelt prayer for Ukraine, touching the hearts of all those in attendance.

Jo Sherring, founder of the Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network, welcomed the crowd, emphasizing the importance of standing in solidarity with Ukraine during this difficult period. “We are privileged to have met and worked with such wonderful people and we will continue to support them as long as they need our help” she stated.

Roy Deadman, Chair of Surrey Stands With Ukraine thanked all the volunteers who have devoted countless unpaid hours to raising funds, collecting donations and sorting and packing aid for Ukraine.

A member of the choir, **Konstantyn**, a Ukrainian resident of Epsom, stepped forward and gave a poignant speech expressing his gratitude for Britain for its unwavering support to the Ukrainian community. “It is with a profound sense of appreciation that we extend our gratitude to everyone who has supported our country, whether in word or deed,” he remarked.

The presence of The Worshipful the Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Councillor **Rob Geleit**, and the Lady Mayor, added a sense of official recognition to the event, further underscoring the community’s commitment to standing with Ukraine.

Although unable to attend in person, **Chris Grayling**, MP for Epsom & Ewell, conveyed his heartfelt message of solidarity to the Ukrainian community. “I am sorry not to be with you this year, but wanted to take this opportunity to extend my hand of friendship to all of our friends in Ukraine, both those of you who are here, and to your families who are back there.

I am very grateful to all of those locally who rose to the occasion, providing homes and other support for those escaping the War, to the teams of volunteers who continue to work with the Ukrainians who are here, and also the team in Surrey Stands For Ukraine who continue to provide direct aid to those back in Ukraine.

I know that this is a sombre occasion, but it is one which is really important as a signal of our determination to stand with Ukraine. That determination will not waver here in Epsom and Ewell.”

The event served as a reminder of the ongoing struggle faced by the people of Ukraine and reaffirmed the commitment of the Epsom community to support them in their quest for peace and stability.

This week SSWU sent its 100th van packed with aid to Ukraine and the day’s event raised over £1000. The charity is sending a long-laddered fire engine to Zaporizhzhia. Being near the front line the city’s tower blocks can be struck by Russian missiles before the siren warns.



Alan Avis (SSWU), Cllr Neil Dallen (Residents Association), Mhairi Fraser (Conservative PPC), Cllr Bernie Muir (Conservative Borough and County), Lady Mayoress, Cllr Robert Geleit (Mayor and Labour Councillor), Helen Maguire (Liberal Democrat PPC), Roy Deadman (SSWU)’ joined together at the offices of SSWU and EERN in Global House. Offices generously donated by the **Ashley Centre** and generously exempted from business rates by **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**.

Politicians from all parties suspended differences in supporting the event.

Lionel Blackman director of the charity for SSWU observed: “After the disunity and chaos in Parliament this week over the war in Gaza it was heartening to see local politicians from all sides demonstrate their united support for the humanitarian work being done in the Borough and Surrey for Ukrainians here and at home.”

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If you wish to hear the Ukrainian Choir Renaissance and other professional Ukrainian musicians come to the social and music evening free of charge (leaving collection at discretion) on Saturday 30th March at the Epsom Methodist Church Ashley Road. Bring and share nibbles appreciated from 6pm and music starts at 7pm. No booking necessary.

Top Image- Ukraine Choir Renaissance with supporters from EERN and SSWU

Police probe abuse of public funds

4 March 2024



Suspected fraud and alleged breaches of procedure in **Guildford Borough Council**'s housing maintenance team have snowballed, culminating in a police investigation.

Last year, the council instigated a staff investigation following what was described as "an issue" within the housing maintenance department of Guildford and Waverley Borough Councils. They share services as part of a cost-cutting drive.

The Local Democracy Reporting Service understood at the time that staff had been suspended, contracts terminated and possible fraud examined. **Surrey Police** previously confirmed it had escalated its fraud investigation to a regional organised crime unit.

This week, the two councils announced they had received a report following a review of its housing maintenance team. It found 'serious areas of concern' which they said needed further investigation to determine whether correct governance processes were followed in the letting and management of housing maintenance contracts.

The councils have also announced that two strategic directors, Annie Righton and Ian Doyle, responsible for the relevant service area at the time contracts were let, have both agreed to step back on a temporary basis from their roles "to protect the integrity of the investigation".

However the councils said they were "unable to provide a copy of the confidential report" as it's "essential that the integrity of any investigatory process is upheld."

Leader of Guildford Borough Council, Councillor **Julia McShane** and Cllr **Paul Follow**s, leader of Waverley Borough Council issued a joint statement. It read: "Public bodies need to be absolutely resolute in their commitment to openness, transparency and accountability for public money. We are determined to identify exactly what has happened in order to safeguard both councils and continue to deliver on our commitment to best value and service delivery possible for all our residents and businesses."

The councils joint chief executive, **Pedro Wrobel**, said: "When it comes to public money, nothing is more important than propriety and value. All monies should be used to deliver the best possible services for our residents and businesses. I will be working with officers, councillors, external investigators and auditors to get to the bottom of these issues and account for every penny. I will ensure the organisation has the right systems in place to safeguard the public's money, and will take robust action where necessary."

Related report:

Good money goes after bad

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