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

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# Lessons in slowing down in Surrey

23 February 2024



St Augustine's Abbey in Chilworth, near Guildford Surrey, will open its doors to the public on May 18, 2024, offering a rare insight into the world of **Benedictine monks**. This public talk aims to provide an objective view of the Benedictine way of life, rooted in centuries-old tradition.

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Epsom and Ewell Times seeks to slow down a notch the pace of information in our modern age. We attempt to provide deeper understanding of local news reviving online a tradition lost 20 years ago with the demise of Epsom and Ewells' Herald and Advertiser weekly prints. Benedictine Monks living in the heart of Surrey have kept a slower tradition of existence going for 1500 years!

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The Benedictine Order, founded by Saint Benedict of Nursia in the early 6th century, emerged as a cornerstone of Western monasticism. Benedict's Rule, emphasizing prayer, work, and community life, became the guiding principle for monastic living across Europe. Monasteries under the Benedictine rule became centres of learning, agriculture, and spiritual guidance during the Middle Ages. The order played a pivotal role in preserving knowledge and culture during turbulent times. Benedictine monks contributed significantly to medieval society through their dedication to prayer, scholarship, and service. Today, Benedictine monasticism endures globally, fostering spiritual growth and intellectual pursuits.

The May 18th event will kick off with an optional Holy Roman Catholic Mass at 9 am in the Abbey Church, followed by a talk from 10 am to 11:30 am. Attendees will have the opportunity to delve into the daily rituals and routines of Benedictine monks, including chanting in Latin and the discipline of rising at dawn for prayer, practices that have endured for over 1,500 years.

The event will also explore the relevance of St. Benedict's Rule, written in 530 AD, and its application in modern society. Attendees will gain insights into the motivations driving individuals to embrace the monastic life, characterized by simplicity, contemplation, and service.

In collaboration with the Guildford and District Knights of St Columba, the event aims to be informative for individuals of all ages and backgrounds, regardless of faith. Admission to the talk is by donation, with funds collected to support the monks in their spiritual endeavors.

To secure attendance, interested individuals need to RSVP by emailing richardatob@gmail.com. This event provides a unique opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of Benedictine spirituality within the tranquil setting of St Augustine's Abbey.

St Augustine's Abbey is located at Sample Oak Lane, Chilworth, Guildford, Surrey GU4 8QR.

For more information, visit http://www.chilworthbenedictines.com

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# Bags of Confidence in Epsom for cancer survivors

23 February 2024



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**Epsom**-based cancer support charity **Look Good Feel Bette**r is partnering with Epsom **Café Moka** in the Ashley Centre for a pop-up sale of preloved bags on Thursday 29th February 2024 from 11am until 2pm. Funds raised will go towards supporting people facing cancer to build back their self-confidence and improve their overall well-being.

**Leigh Beth Stroud**, Look Good Feel Better's Community Fundraising Manager, explains: "Our first ever 'Bags of Confidence' pop-up sale is open to everyone and will raise much-needed funds for people undergoing treatment for cancer. Pre-loved, quality handbags will be available to buy, so do come along and have a browse on the day."

This year, Look Good Feel Better celebrates its 30th anniversary. The charity embarked on its journey in 1994 to support people living with cancer and has helped over 200,000 people to date regain their confidence and self-esteem. Look Good Feel Better knows how challenging it can be to process a cancer diagnosis and manage the physical and emotional side effects of cancer treatment.

The charity runs workshops face-to-face and classes virtually to support women, men, and young adults through this time. Services are free and open to anyone facing cancer, and the workshops are led by trained volunteers in the beauty industry to provide practical advice about changes to skin, eyebrows, eyelashes, hair, and nails during treatment, and body confidence.

Ann M, who was recently diagnosed with cancer, attended a workshop and said: "I signed up to a number of the charity's workshops, including the hand and nail care; the headwear, wigs, brows and lashes, and the styling for confidence sessions. And I haven't looked back. The biggest thing was that I felt less alone. Cancer can make you feel very isolated, but here I was surrounded by other people, soaking up the good advice and information. It was just what I needed and I would recommend anyone undergoing treatment for cancer should sign up for a workshop."

If you are interested in hosting your own 'Bags of Confidence' event, the charity will provide you with all the support you need, with a colourful fundraising pack with helpful hints and tips available at www.lookgoodfeelbetter.co.uk

Leigh adds: "You might find your favourite designer bag or pick up another hidden gem. 'Bags of Confidence' is a simple and sustainable event where these handbags will go to a new home, while raising funds for the charity. And no bags go to landfill, so it's a win-win situation."

Established 30 years ago, Look Good Feel Better delivers cancer support services in local communities across the UK through a series of face-to-face and online group workshops, along with video tutorials. Its services help people face cancer with confidence, regain their sense of normality, make friends, and most of all look good and feel better. Its vision is to be recognised as one of the UK's leading cancer support charities and the only one dedicated to improving the physical appearance and overall well-being of people living with cancer.

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# All things Epsom in art work

23 February 2024




A young artist's work was unveiled for the first time on 16th February at **The Ashley Centre** in Epsom. Created in celebration of all things Epsom, the giant mural by 21-year-old Bristol University student **Ole Murphy** is being displayed in the Ashley Centre before moving to its permanent home in the pedestrian tunnel on West Hill. The local community and representatives from Epsom Business Improvement District (BID) attended the unveiling along with the artist and his family. The artwork was unveiled outside the shopping centre's flagship store which later this year will become the largest Primark in the UK outside of London.

The mural strengthens Epsom's role as Surrey's leading destination for inspirational artworks. Its bright, bold colours celebrate many elements of Epsom's history, culture and people. Ole Murphy's piece aligns beautifully with the graphic design students from the University of the Creative Arts (UCA Epsom), who created vibrant, colourful artworks for Epsom's outdoor East Street gallery and Ashley Centre windows in 2022, to celebrate the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

A year previously, the town unveiled a statue of suffragette **Emily Wilding Davison**, who died after stepping out in front of King George V's horse Anmer at the Epsom Derby in June 1913. The suffragette flag Davison was carrying when struck by the horse now hangs in the Houses of Parliament, while her statue holds a position of honour in Epsom's marketplace.

**Karen Pengelly**, BID Manager for Go Epsom, comments: "We are delighted to be adding Ole Murphy's vivid and colourful mural to Epsom's wealth of existing artwork, for enjoyment by all who live in and visit Epsom. Our town has such a rich history and culture, which Ole has captured beautifully in his creative and colourful design. The mural will ensure the West Hill tunnel is bursting with cheer, bringing joy to all those who walk, cycle or drive past."

Every aspect of Murphy's mural has been drawn from local life, from well-known elements such as horseracing and the discovery of Epsom Salts to more niche connections to the area.

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Artist Ole Murphy comments: “I wanted the mural to represent the past and present of Epsom. Within my piece, I draw attention to the history and life that surrounds the town. Whilst Epsom is rich in historic events, I wanted to pay homage to current issues. I reference this in the sprinkling of music from the hands and the silhouetted figures that are walking down a runway. The figures represent the old and the new; their silhouettes are traditional but the red runway they are walking in foreshadows modernity in creative degrees at the university. Most importantly, I wanted my mural to be vibrant and light up the tunnel. I hope its colours run joyfully through the spirits of those who stop to observe it.”

Epsom has a long history of investing in the arts – as well as a bright future. UCA Epsom announced in 2023 that it had obtained planning permission to turn two former office buildings into exciting new places for students and staff. The campus expansion speaks to how valued the role of art is in Epsom life and how intrinsically it is linked with the town’s past, present and future.

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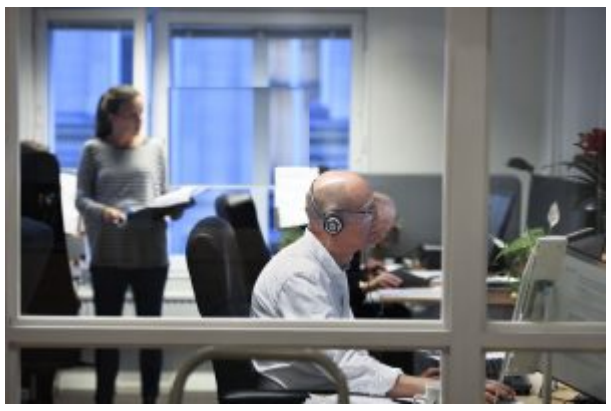
# Surrey’s hotline for mental health

23 February 2024



Ahead of Helpline Awareness Day (Friday, 23 February), Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and Surrey County Council are highlighting a local 24-hour NHS mental health crisis helpline that supports almost 50,000 people each year.

The Mental Health Crisis Helpline, run by Surrey and Borders Partnership, is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Since it started in 2010 it has helped around 600,000 people.

It is staffed by trained professionals who are ready to listen and offer advice, support and signpost to a range of community services.

A mental health crisis is when you feel at breaking point, and you need urgent help. You might be:

- Feeling extremely anxious and having panic attacks or flashbacks
- Feeling suicidal, or self-harming
- Having an episode of hypomania or mania, (feeling very high) or psychosis (maybe hearing voices, or feeling very paranoid)
- Other behaviour that feels out of control and is likely to endanger yourself or others

As well as the Mental Health Crisis Helpline, Surrey and Borders Partnership also provides five Safe Havens across Surrey which provide out-of-hours help and support to adults who are experiencing a mental health crisis or emotional distress.

These Safe Havens are in Aldershot, Epsom, Guildford, Redhill and Woking and are open evenings, weekends and bank holidays. Each one is staffed by a mental health practitioner from Surrey and Borders Partnership and two trained Safe Haven workers.

**Mark Nuti, Surrey County Council’s Cabinet Member for Health said:** “*We are committed to breaking the silence surrounding mental health and providing a safe, confidential and non-judgmental way for people in Surrey to seek hel*p.

“*We believe that mental health support should be available to everyone. No one should have to suffer in silence – the Mental Health Crisis Helpline is here for anyone who needs it.*

“*There is help out there, whether it’s through the Mental Health Crisis Helpline or one of the Safe Havens. Let’s break the silence and start the journey towards better mental health together*.”

**Emily Hackett, Mental Health Crisis Line Service Manager said:** “*If you are experiencing a mental health crisis or emotional distress or if you have concerns regarding someone that you care for, please call us. Our dedicated crisis call handlers are on hand to support you 24 hours a day 7 days a week*.”

If you or someone you know is struggling with their mental health, don’t hesitate to call the Mental Health Crisis Helpline on 0800 915 4644.

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# Here we go again on the Local Plan?

23 February 2024




Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has launched a dedicated FAQ section on its website to inform residents about the ongoing development of the borough's **Local Plan**. According to the Council this initiative aims to provide transparency and dispel any misinformation circulating regarding the plan's objectives and progress.

The Local Plan holds significant importance in shaping the future of the borough, covering various aspects such as job creation, environmental conservation, leisure facilities, housing sites, and infrastructure enhancements. The Council states that no final decisions have been made regarding policy formulations or site selections. Currently, the council is in the process of reviewing feedback received during the initial public consultation on the draft plan and gathering additional evidence to inform its development.

Councillor **Steven McCormick**, Chair of the Licensing & Planning Policy Committee, (RA Woodcote and Langley) emphasized the complexity and necessity of the Local Plan's development, stating:

"The development of our Local Plan is as complex as it is vital. We want to make sure that all those who live in, work in and visit the borough have access to the latest information about the Local Plan, to ensure that they are informed and to dispel rumours and myths about the Plan. We encourage everyone to take a look at the FAQs, either on our website or by coming in to the Town Hall and asking for a copy at reception."

On the key areas of most interest to residents the Council's position is stated and Epsom and Ewell Times summarises:

**Local Plan Decisions Still Pending**

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) has yet to finalize decisions regarding policy formulation and site allocations for the upcoming edition of the Local Plan. Despite ongoing efforts to adhere to the government's planning framework and reviewing feedback from the Draft Local Plan consultation, no definitive choices have been made at this juncture. The council is actively engaged in compiling a comprehensive evidence base essential for the development of the Proposed Submission Local Plan, also known as the Regulation 19 Local Plan.

**Spatial Strategy Uncertain**

Concerns loom over the confirmation of a Spatial Strategy crucial for guiding development across the borough. Originally slated for submission to Surrey County Council for transportation modeling by January 2024, the Spatial Strategy's confirmation has encountered hurdles. Following member briefings earlier this year, the council has been unable to solidify the strategy, prompting a reevaluation of available options.

**Timeline for Local Plan Decisions**

With the evidence base still under development, decisions regarding the Local Plan's content are slated for later this year. The Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC) is expected to receive recommendations on the Proposed Submission Local Plan, incorporating site allocations, by November 2024. Subsequently, the LPPC will forward its recommendations to the Full Council for deliberation. Only upon Full Council approval will the plan proceed to another round of public consultation, marking a critical juncture in the decision-making process.

**Data Informing Local Plan Preparation**

EEBC has relied on a diverse array of data sources to inform the preparation of the Draft Local Plan. Evidence spanning various thematic areas was gathered and published to support the consultation process. Additionally, ongoing efforts are underway to gather further evidence, with updates expected to be made available on the council's website upon completion.

**Housing Needs and Requirements**

Calculating the housing need for the borough involves employing the Government's 'Standard Method,' which utilizes 2014 Household Growth Projections data. While recent updates to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) have reaffirmed the use of this method, the draft Local Plan aims to address just over half of the calculated housing need. This draft plan will undergo extensive scrutiny during the independent planning inspector's examination.

**Current Housing Needs and Challenges**

The borough faces challenges in meeting its housing targets, with housing delivery falling short of expectations. Despite efforts to address housing shortages, the Council's Authority Monitoring Report highlights a deficit in housing delivery.

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Moreover, the increasing number of households on the housing needs register underscores the urgent need for affordable housing solutions.

**Brownfield Sites and Development**

While brownfield sites play a crucial role in meeting development needs, there are concerns about their sufficiency. Although a range of brownfield sites has been considered for development in the next stage of the Local Plan, it is deemed insufficient to meet the borough's housing and economic requirements.

**Preservation of Industrial Estates**

Industrial estates such as Longmead and Kiln Lane are integral to the borough's employment landscape and are safeguarded against housing development. Recognizing their importance in providing employment opportunities, the draft Local Plan designates these sites as Strategic Employment Sites, prioritizing their protection for employment-generating uses.

**Green Belt Protection**

The Green Belt, governed by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), enjoys robust protection against development. However, authorities have the discretion to review and alter Green Belt boundaries under exceptional circumstances, subject to stringent conditions. Despite this flexibility, any proposed changes must demonstrate adherence to outlined criteria, ensuring the enduring preservation of Green Belt land.

The FAQs can be accessed on the council's website at www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/local-plan-faqs.

Members of the public can sign up to receive an alert for future consultations by completing the form at https://epsom-ewell.inconsult.uk/.

**Opposition Voices Express Frustration Over Lack of Transparency**

Cllr **Julie Morris**, Liberal Democrat group leader (College), expressed frustration over what she perceived as a lack of transparency and decisive action in the development of the Local Plan. She stated: "Some many months after several public protests about the inclusion of sites within the Green Belt, do we finally have some information about the status of our Local Plan, relatively bland though it is. Weasel words 'no decision has been made on site selection' need to be read alongside answers to a FAQ on the council's website, where it quite clearly says that site options have been given to Surrey County Council (SCC) who are currently completing their transport modelling. These options may not be the final decision, but most councillors in Epsom & Ewell are not even aware of what these options are, so at this point in time SCC probably know more than us. The Liberal Democrat group of councillors remain frustrated and very concerned at the lack of transparency in decision-making from the party in control of the council – the Residents Association group."

Cllr **Kate Chinn**, Labour group leader (Court), acknowledged the council's recent efforts to inform residents about the Local Plan's progress but criticized what she described as a history of secrecy surrounding decision-making processes. She stated: "It is good to see that the Residents Association (RA) councillors are finally starting the process of keeping residents informed on the progress of the local plan. The confidential briefings, which are shrouded in secrecy and leaks of information have fuelled the rumours, myths and conspiracy theories that prevail. With such a huge majority the ruling group should be able to develop a vision to present to residents that enables homes to be built to meet residents' housing needs. Instead the borough continues to face uncertainty with the RA's divisions, dither and delay meaning decisions are not made.. As the webpage notes 'Following member briefings in early 2024, a Spatial Strategy was not able to be confirmed and therefore options are being considered.'

Without a spatial strategy the local plan is in effect paused. The lack of progress is endangering meeting the deadline to present a plan to the planning inspectorate by the 30th June 2025 leaving the council at the continued risk of unplanned, speculative development. The Labour group would happily contribute and work collaboratively to produce a local plan that sensibly addresses the borough's acute housing need."

Related reports:

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Local Plan to move forward after passionate debate

and many many more. Search "local plan".

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# Arts plan to surprise Surrey and nation

23 February 2024



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In a bold move to redefine Surrey's cultural landscape, a comprehensive strategy and vision for the years 2024–2034 has been unveiled by The Surrey Cultural Partnership (SCP). The "Surprising Surrey: Cultural Strategy & Vision 2024–2034" outlines an ambitious plan to transform Surrey into a vibrant hub of creativity and innovation, celebrating its rich heritage and fostering community prosperity.

Epsom and Ewell Times summarises the highlights:

**Vision for 2034**:

The vision for Surrey by 2034 is one of confidence and vibrancy, where the county's cultural heritage and creativity are celebrated as cornerstones of individual and community wellbeing. Key objectives include improving access to creative experiences, fostering cultural engagement across demographics, supporting creative practitioners, attracting visitors, and boosting investment in cultural activities.

**Cultural Strategy Highlights**:

The strategy underscores the belief that culture is integral to societal well-being, offering benefits such as enhanced quality of life, improved mental health, and economic growth. It aims to address existing disparities in cultural access and investment across Surrey, recognizing the county's diverse needs and potential.

**Challenges and Opportunities**:

Despite its affluent reputation, Surrey grapples with pockets of deprivation and underinvestment in cultural infrastructure. The strategy highlights the urgent need to secure funding and support from both local and national stakeholders to address these challenges and realize its goals.

**Priorities and Action Plan**:

The strategy outlines four key priorities: ensuring culture is accessible to all, fostering resilient communities, enhancing county-wide cultural infrastructure, and supporting creativity as an economic driver. An action plan details specific initiatives, including the establishment of cultural hubs, support for creative enterprises, and community engagement programs.

**Monitoring and Financial Implications**:

To ensure accountability and progress, the Surrey Cultural Partnership (SCP) will monitor the plan's implementation and evaluate its impact through key performance indicators. Financially, the plan anticipates a requirement of approximately £2 million over the next decade, to be sourced from various public and private funding channels.

**Next Steps**:

SCP will establish a steering group comprising stakeholders from diverse sectors to oversee the plan's execution. Additionally, workshops will be conducted to recruit Culture Champions and mobilize community support for the initiative.

The unveiling of the "Surprising Surrey: Cultural Strategy & Vision 2024–2034" marks a significant step towards transforming Surrey into a dynamic cultural destination, where creativity thrives, and communities flourish.

Surrey University's Professor Caroline Scarles, Professor of Technology and Society, School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, and Director of Visit Surrey, said: "It has been a privilege to work with the Surrey Cultural Partnership to develop this strategy that brings together the wide range of vibrant and inspiring cultural leaders, organisations and communities across the county. It is a strategy that has the collaborative voices of the cultural sector as its very foundation. It provides the collective voice and vision for capturing the diversity, drive, and ambition of the county and recognises the central role that culture plays not only for the economy but also for inclusion, diversity, health, and wellbeing."

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# English music for Lent in Epsom

23 February 2024



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,

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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

23 February 2024



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.

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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

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# The fellowship of NESCOT

23 February 2024




**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

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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).

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# Coroner catalogues care failures in diabetic death

23 February 2024




**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

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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.

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# Outwitted by Sidcup's set pieces

23 February 2024



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 quarter 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,

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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 ten-minute 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

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Vincent, Teddy Gibbons, Jonathan Fordham, Sam Carmen, Ben Stock, Steven Evans, Fred Ruff, Billy Williams & Nicholas Jansen.
Replacements: Harry Large, Tom Epps & Alex Ure.

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# First win of the year for Epsom & Ewell FC

23 February 2024

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

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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

23 February 2024



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

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# Business that connects by insulating

23 February 2024



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”?

23 February 2024




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

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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.

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