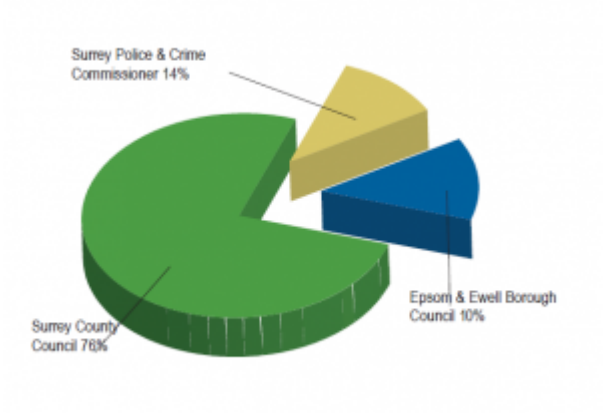
EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

No budging on Council budget

14 February 2024



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

It boils down to this:

A. Epsom and Ewell's share of Council Tax goes up the equivalent of 2.99% – the maximum the law allows. (£6.57 for a Band D property – the most populous in the Borough).

B. Councillors' basic allowance goes up 50%, from £4031.70 to £6081.11. Chairs and Vice-chairs of committees get additional allowances ranging from 30% to 100% of the basic members' allowance.

C. Council staff salaries will increase 6%.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For Labour Cllr **Chris Ames** (Court Ward) said: "I understand it's regularly alleged at these times that Labour doesn't understand the need to find more money to meet the needs of residents. We absolutely do, but we don't think it should be done by transferring budget pressures to the people we are elected to serve. The cost of living crisis hasn't gone away just because the current inflation figures have fallen. Not only is the current 4 or 5% still far too high, it means that over the last year, prices rose over and above where they were after a period of double-digit inflation.

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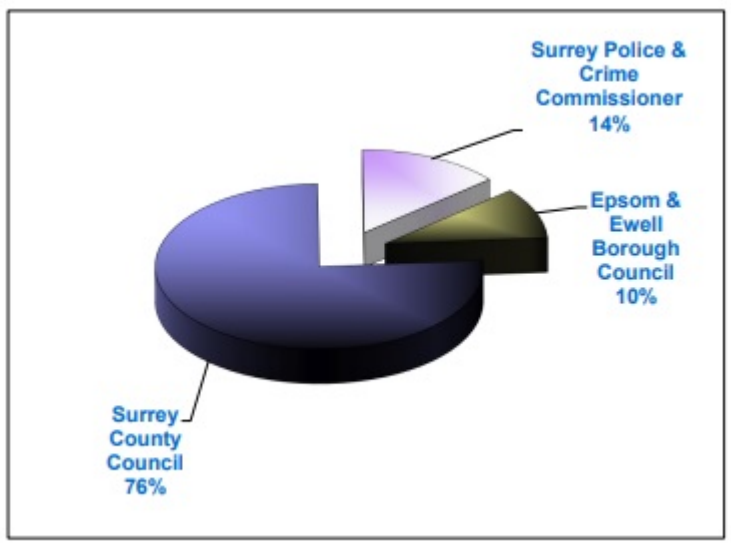
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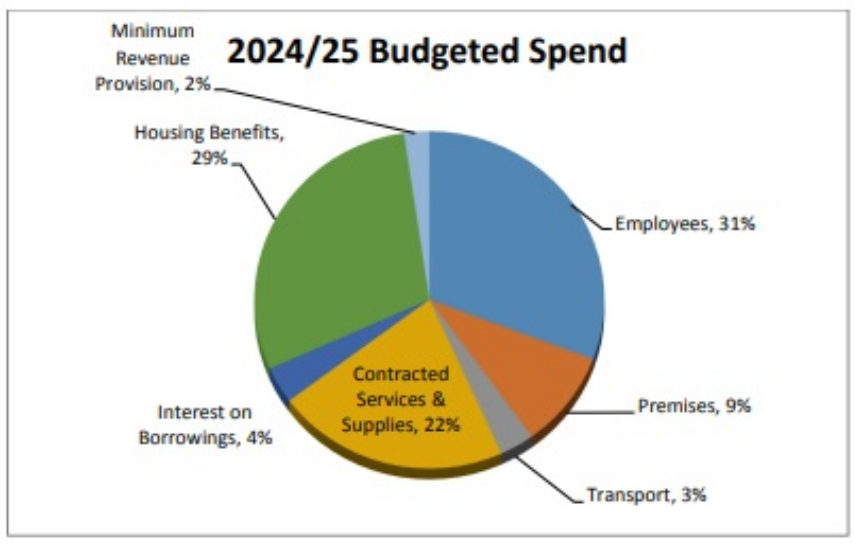
We still have large numbers of residents unable to feed their families or relying on food banks to do so. We still have residents who lie awake at night wondering how they're going to pay their bills, their rents, or mortgages."

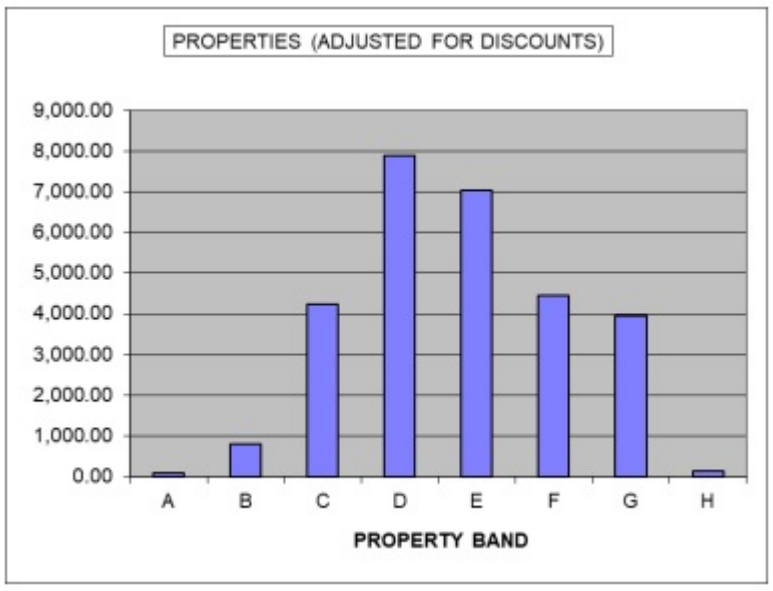
Cllr **Kieran Persand** (Conservative Horton) said: "Financial mismanagement has serious consequences, which we have witnessed on multiple occasions in recent times. However, we should err on the side of caution. We're introducing measures which may prove to be counterproductive.

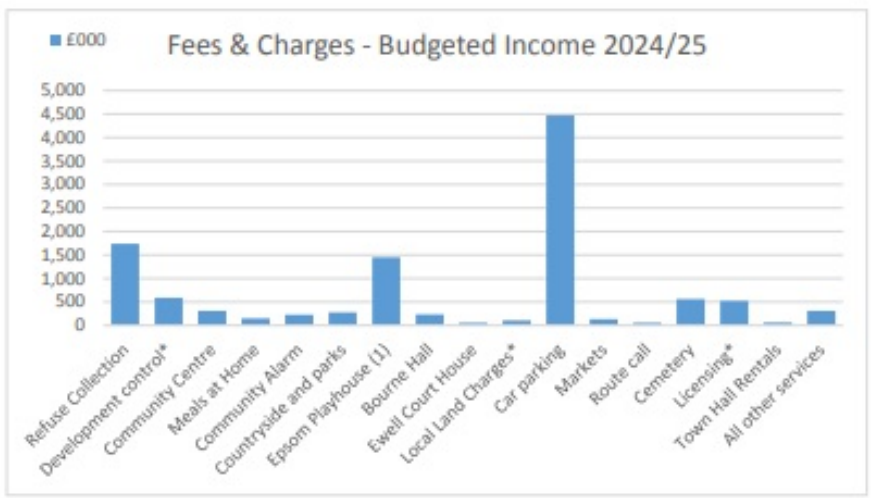
As stated in the report, the major challenge is the delivery of the £1.4 million of additional income and savings and finding a further 0.5 million reduction in council's net exponential by 2027/28. However, the council has acquired a number of commercial properties both within and outside the borough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

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









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

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

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

Related reports:

"Audit and Scrutiny" under scrutiny

A question of pay for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

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

Relative relief about Epsom and Ewell's debt?

Surrey Borough running up big debts

Tory leader pleads with Tory Government

Spitfire downed Messerschmitt over Epsom

14 February 2024



What connects Epsom's Market Square statue of Emily Davison and the Spitfire that shot down a German Messerschmitt over the Town in World War 2?

"WW2 People's War" is an archive of World War 2 memories that have been documented by the public and gathered by the BBC.

A gentleman who was a young boy living in West Hill, Epsom when war was declared in 1939 contributed to the archive in 2003 and referred to the time a Supermarine Spitfire flew down Epsom High Street:

"I remember a German Messerschmitt flying very low along Epsom High Street, coming down over the Clock Tower. It was heading towards Ewell and being chased by a Spitfire. Everyone ran into the shops to take cover. The aircraft was shot down by the Spitfire over Epsom Downs; the pilot bailed out and was captured".

It seems likely that the Supermarine Spitfire flew over the space now occupied by the bronze statue of the suffragette, Emily Davison and if this is indeed the case then the statue of Emily Davison also serves as a reminder of an almost forgotten suffragette who played a major role in the development of the iconic Supermarine Spitfire that was only just created in time for The Battle of Britain in 1940.

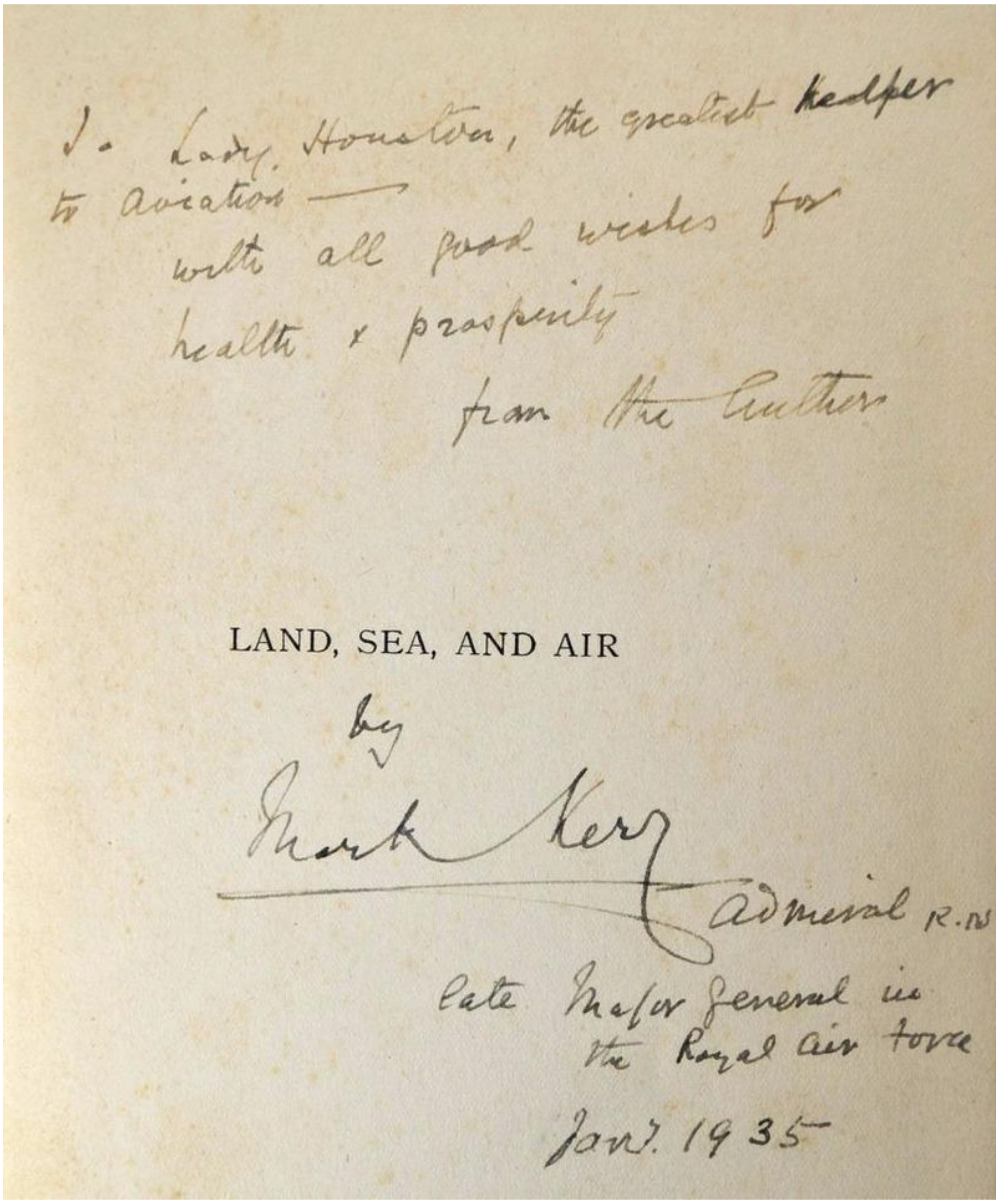
I have to be honest and admit to not knowing who the forgotten suffragette referred to above was until I commenced researching the life and career of Admiral Mark Kerr and acquired an old book from an online auction site.

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The first photo shows the inscription I was amazed to find inside the book which was written by Admiral Mark Kerr, who was one of the founders of The Royal Air Force and who had been beaten by Alcock and Brown in the race to fly across the Atlantic Ocean in 1919.

The book was therefore given to Lady Houston by its author, Admiral Mark Kerr and it was Admiral Mark Kerr who described Lady Houston as “the greatest helper to aviation”, but who was Lady Houston and why was she so highly respected?

Lady Lucy Houston had been a suffragette and in 1931 donated the £100,000 funding the Government refused to give Supermarine and the aircraft designer, Reginald Mitchell (see the film “The First of the Few” on You Tube) allowing the RAF to win the Schneider Trophy and Reginald Mitchell to make inroads into the creation of the Supermarine Spitfire which came just in time for The Battle of Britain.

In 1933 Lady Houston financed the Houston – Mount Everest flight expedition, in which aircraft flew over the summit of Mount Everest for the first time – a feat Admiral Mark Kerr had previously claimed could not be achieved until 2018 at the earliest.

Lady Lucy Houston was therefore instrumental in the development of the Supermarine Spitfire and in aviation advancements that enabled man to fly over Mount Everest much sooner than anticipated. It is for this reason I believe that Admiral Mark Kerr, one of the founders of the RAF referred to Lady Houston as being “the greatest helper to aviation” in 1935 when gifting her this book one year prior to her death.

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The book was Admiral Mark Kerr's own copy because he made some amendments inside it which only he would have known to have made.

Without Lady Lucy Houston's generous £100,000 donation to Supermarine and Reginald Mitchell the Supermarine Spitfire would not have been ready in time for The Battle of Britain and the consequences could have been very serious indeed.

Admiral Mark Kerr, one of the founders of The Royal Air Force clearly wanted to thank Lady Houston for her endeavours whilst acknowledging the fact that she proved him wrong re flying over Mount Everest by giving her the book I later acquired from a well-known online auction site with the inscribed page shown above inside it.

The bronze statue of Emily Davison is suitably positioned in Epsom's Market Square to remind us of the Supermarine Spitfire that once flew over the Clock Tower in defence of our town, which would probably have never been created if it had not been for the enormous generosity of one of Emily Davison's fellow women's rights campaigners – the remarkable Lady Lucy Houston.

2 years on Epsom to gather in solidarity with Ukraine

14 February 2024



The Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network (EERN) and Surrey Stands with Ukraine (SSWU) are calling upon the community to join them in a special gathering on Saturday February 24th at 11 am in the **Market Place in Epsom**. This gathering marks the solemn second anniversary of the commencement of the war in Ukraine.

The local Ukrainian choir, **Renaissance**, will render the Ukrainian National Anthem. Attendees will have the opportunity to engage with Ukrainian residents regarding the ongoing situation in Ukraine and to learn how they can extend support to the Ukrainian community within Epsom & Ewell.

The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Cllr. **Rob Geleit** (Labour Court), will attend. The event will foster a sense of unity and

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solidarity with the Ukrainian population residing in and around Epsom.

“We are deeply moved by the outpouring of support from the Epsom community for Ukrainian refugees,” said **Jo Sherring**, Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network Lead. “This gathering is an opportunity for us to stand together in solidarity with our Ukrainian friends and reaffirm our commitment to supporting them as they rebuild their lives.”

“It is important for us to get together on this sad date to commemorate those who lost their lives in the war, to thank our supporters, defenders, volunteers, and the British people who gave shelter to us at these hard times for Ukraine.” said **Nataliia Zadorizhna**, pianist and director of the Renaissance choir who has been living in Ashtead with her 11 year old daughter since May 2022. “It is an enormous privilege to stay in the UK and to be surrounded by such noble, caring and generous people.”

Epsom has exhibited remarkable solidarity with Ukraine since the outbreak of the war, with numerous families opening their doors to Ukrainian refugees and contributing substantial amounts towards humanitarian aid. The community has banded together, with volunteers actively aiding refugees in assimilating into the local fabric.

All members of the Epsom community are warmly encouraged to attend this event, which promises to be a meaningful demonstration of support for the Ukrainian populace.

For further inquiries, please contact:

Nina Kaye: nina@goodcompany.org.uk | 07778 406834



English classes for Ukrainians and other refugees in Epsom.

Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network (EERN)

Established in 2015, operates as a community-driven organization in close collaboration with the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. It operates under the auspices of the charity **Good Company (Surrey)**, with a mission rooted in compassion, solidarity, and inclusivity. EERN extends support to refugees and asylum seekers within Epsom and its environs, facilitating their integration into the community through various initiatives including employment guidance, educational support, cultural orientation, and free English language lessons.

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Epsom and Ewell residents welcome Ukrainians fleeing war.

Surrey Stands with Ukraine (SSWU)

At the onset of the conflict in Ukraine, a collective of British and Ukrainian residents from Epsom joined forces to establish Surrey Stands with Ukraine (SSWU), a humanitarian relief project dedicated to aiding Ukraine. SSWU provides support to both the Ukrainian populace within Ukraine and those residing in the UK by gathering and distributing medical supplies and other essential aid. Operating under the registered charity **Harrop HR Missions Ltd**., SSWU ensures that 100% of all donations are directed towards supporting the people of Ukraine, with no fees or wages deducted for volunteers or trustees.

EERN and SSWU are very grateful for the magnificent support provided for their efforts by **The Ashley Centre** Epsom, through its donation of the use of a suite of offices used for processing donations, English classes and an advice centre. Also to **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** that has waived the imposition of business rates.

Related reports:

Epsom and Ewell Borough of Sanctuary

Hosts of Ukrainian refugees appreciated

Flight of refugees: history repeating?

Breaking the mould for Ukrainian refugees

Local refugee cash appeal

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30 years’ smile stamped on local Post Offices

14 February 2024



Postmistress **Nidhi Prashar** has reached her 30 years’ milestone of serving Post Office customers in Surrey. Three decades ago, Nidhi and her husband, Anil, bought Oxted Post Office and for most of that time Nidhi has served that community. Now Anil runs that branch since Nidhi became Postmistress for **Epsom** in July 2017.

Postmistress, Nidhi Prasahar, said: “I loved serving the people of Oxted, but there was suddenly an opportunity to take on a bigger, busier, branch as well at Epsom, so Anil now runs Oxted branch. First Epsom was temporarily based at Epsom & Ewell Town Hall to restore service to the town, then I opened my permanent branch and card and gift shop in the High Street in February 2018.

“I get on really well with my customers in Epsom too. Thankfully I’d just got settled before Covid struck, but that was strange as many businesses in the high street were closed, so those customers were not around. However, other people who would normally have been commuting to elsewhere, were suddenly working from home and visiting my Post Office,

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so there were lots of different customers to get to know. People were grateful that Anil and I were able to keep both Oxted and Epsom branches open."

Last year Nidhi was filmed at Epsom branch as part of an episode of Stacey Solomon's Sort Your Life out programme. A local family had their home de-cluttered and they came across lots of different foreign currencies, which was then converted into useful sterling at her Post Office. Many of her customers immediately recognised her from the programme.

Nidhi, said: "I love being a postmistress. It's the people that you meet that make it so great. There aren't many jobs where you have this great interaction with people. People come in regularly and you build up a relationship. Customers become like extended family.

"In Oxted there are no banks left and we meet the banking needs of the community – so it's non-stop banking customers. In Epsom there are lots of banks and building societies, but we are open longer hours than all of them, so for some customers they find it more convenient to come here."

At Oxted and Epsom customers also have the choice of DPD and Evri services in addition to Royal Mail and Parcelforce mail services.

Post Office Area Manager, **Richard Wilder**, presented Nidhi with a 30 Years' Long Service Award. He said: "I want to thank Nidhi for being a first class Postmistress in Surrey for 30 years. Nidhi and Anil provide great customer service and they really care about the people that they serve in Oxted and Epsom. Both branches look great too with the retail alongside."

The Post Office.

Epsom 3rd in a 2024 "Best Places to Live"

14 February 2024



In the latest edition of national estate agents "Garrington's Best Places to Live" index for 2024, Epsom has clinched the third spot after an assessment of rankings in a range of categories.

Garrington's evaluation of **over 1400 locales** across England and Wales underscores Epsom's strengths in various key aspects, including heritage, wellbeing, educational opportunities, employment prospects, and housing affordability.

With its longstanding association with the prestigious Derby and a rich historical backdrop, Epsom ranks high in heritage, landing at 90th place. Its commitment to community wellbeing, supported by a serene natural environment, earns it a respectable 282nd position in this category.

Moreover, Epsom's strategic location near London, coupled with its excellent schools and robust job market, positions it favorably in terms of employment prospects and connectivity, securing the 99th spot in Garrington's evaluation.

While property prices in Epsom reflect its status, with the average family home costing £810,809, a modest 0.4% increase in the past year underscores its resilience amidst market fluctuations.

According to Garringtons: "As the real estate landscape evolves, Epsom maintains its reputation as a stable and desirable locale, offering residents a blend of tradition, convenience, and quality of life."

Jonathan Hopper, CEO of Garrington Property Finders, emphasizes the practical significance of the 2024 ranking, stating, "As the market stabilizes and borrowing costs decrease, buyers are re-evaluating their options. Garrington's guide offers insights to help individuals identify locales that meet their needs and preferences."

"Epsom remains attractive to homebuyers with its solid fundamentals and promising prospects for a fulfilling lifestyle."

Related reports:

Housing need or desire?

Anchored in reason on local housing need?

Salts defeated in presence of legend

14 February 2024

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AFC Croydon Athletic 5-2 Epsom & EwellFC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 10th February.

Despite scoring seven times in matches against AFC Croydon Athletic this season, we only have three defeats to show for our efforts and without sounding like a broken record, I felt we have been unlucky in all three of them! In this match, and despite the introduction of four new debutants, we gave as good as we got, only to be punished by some clinical finishing that gave the scoreline of 5-2 a hugely flattering look.

Fortunately, from a personal point of view, the disappointment on the field was eased by the presence behind the goal of our Club legend and record goal scorer **Tommy Tuite**, who scored the huge total of 391 goals for our club between 1973 and 1987. How we could do with that sort of loyalty and production right now. His attendance enabled us to talk about the good old days when we were one of the better teams in Surrey and had a ground with a welcoming atmosphere. Those days are sadly gone for now at least.

Our four new starters were Conor Beattie, Alex Green and Mekhi Savage, whose father Reggie would also make his debut later on. However, any chance of us having a father and son combination on the pitch for what would be only the second time in club history would have to wait until next week, as one replaced the other! Some of you may not be aware that a large number of players have departed in the last week, hence the replacements, although it was interesting to note that the opposition Manager stated in the match programme that we had let some players go, which couldn't be further from the truth!

Either way though, the new Management Team were going to have to add some players and Savage and Green look like being useful additions to the squad, while we may have to wait a little longer to analyse Beattie's performance as he injured himself very early in the second half and was unable to continue.

Despite the bare facts that showed AFC Croydon Athletic had won their last four League matches while we had lost our last four, we started confidently and had the early share of possession. Until the fifth minute that is, when Oalekan Osideko broke away on the right and drilled a shot low at goal. Beattie was down to make the save but could only parry it back into the danger area where the Croydon goal machine Louis Theophanous was waiting to drill the shot past our by now horizontal keeper from a few yards out. It didn't seem to dent confidence too much though and Savage Junior struck low from twenty yards, requiring Toby Fisher to turn the shot wide. From the corner Thompson Adeyemi was there first, but was unable to keep the header down.

The home side headed another good chance over, although the offside flag would have cancelled any goal out, and we were back on the attack soon after. Carl Oblitey, playing against one of his former clubs, nearly scored when he was denied by a good block, with the loose ball being sent back in with interest by Green who saw the ball deflected wide. Oblitey then headed just over from the resultant corner. However, fortune was not going to be on our side today and on the half hour mark Osideko's shot was well saved by Beattie, only for the rebound to strike the incoming Nick Wilson, who was only able to clear the ball once it had gone over our goal line. A really unlucky way to concede, although we scored twice last season in similar circumstances. Swings and roundabouts!

Again though we responded well to the set back and within a minute we had a goal back. Ethan Nelson-Roberts fired the ball towards goal, only for his somewhat wayward strike to reach Oblitey, who controlled the ball on the edge of the area and drilled the ball low into Fisher's right hand corner. Savage then produced a good run, only for the final product to be straight at Fisher. As we went in at the half, we were very unfortunate to be 2-1 down.

The half had been in progress for a few seconds when Beattie came out to clear a long ball, but missed his kick and injured his leg in the process, requiring his replacement. Toby Colwell came on and the game continued in a similar style with Green next to have a try after some good pressure, only for his shot to go just beyond the far post from an angle. In response, the hosts struck the bar with a powerful shot from an angle, but we were asking as many of the questions, if not more than our opponents and Sirak Negassi made a good run, only to be fouled just outside the area. Regrettably though, the free kick was cleared and on the break it took two simple passes to cut our whole team out and leave Andre Coker the easiest of tap ins at the far post in the 68th minute.

With that two goal lead the home team began to grow in confidence and seven minutes later they extended their lead with a fantastic strike from Theophanous who volleyed the ball in from thirty yards with Colwell completely unable to do anything about it. Things got worse as it became 5-1 in the final minute of normal time as Theophanous drilled the ball low past Colwell from the edge of the area.

We had time to pull a goal back when substitute Rory Edwards made a good run on the right and his early low cross was guided past Fisher from six yards by Nelson-Roberts in the 94th minute, but it was barely a consolation and the final whistle blew a few minutes later with the home side victorious by five goals to two.

It wasn't all bad though; there were glimmers of hope as we performed fairly well against one of the form teams in the League who will surely make the playoffs if they continue to stay fit and healthy, in particular their striker Theophanous who was almost unstoppable. We have brought in some new players, but no defenders yet, and it is fair to say that we are going to need to strengthen in that area if we are to avoid further defeats, even if we manage to score more. Up front Oblitey looks a handful and if only we could have had a young Tuite playing alongside him, we could go into the next matches with more confidence, but up next is the Farnham juggernaut, chasing a world record, and that match looks rather daunting right now.

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Epsom & Ewell: Conor Beattie, Ethan Brazier, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Adam Green, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson (c), Mekhi Savage, Thompson Adeyemi, Carl Oblitey, Tijani Eshilokun, Sirak Negassi

Subs: Toby Colwell for Beattie (50), Reggie Savage for M.Savage (75), Rory Edwards for Adeyemi (75), Ayran Kugathas for Negassi (83)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Murder investigation in Epsom

14 February 2024



A murder investigation has been launched following the death of a man at a residential address in Epsom on Wednesday (7 February).

Officers were called to Eleanor Avenue at 9pm following a concern for safety of a 47-year-old man. South East Coast Ambulance Service attended but the man was sadly pronounced dead at the scene. His family has been informed and are being supported by specially trained officers.

A 44-year-old man from Epsom was arrested last night on suspicion of murder. He remains in custody.

An investigation, led by Surrey Police and Sussex Police's Major Crime Team, is underway to establish the circumstances of the man's death and enquiries remain ongoing.

Senior Investigating Officer **DCI Craig Emmerson** said: "The investigation is in the early stages and a specialist team of officers are working around the clock to follow up enquiries. At this time I can share that we believe this is an isolated incident which poses no risks to the wider public.

"Our thoughts are with the victim's family at this difficult time. There remains a significant police presence in the area and we would like to thank local residents for their cooperation as we conduct our investigation. We will provide further updates as soon as we can."

As the ward councillors Chris Ames, Kate Chinn and Rob Geleit are saddened to hear of the death of a man after the incident in Court Ward. **Kate Chinn** said: "Our thoughts are with the family and friends of the victim of this tragic event at what must be a difficult time. The police do not consider there is any risk to the wider public. We would like to thank the emergency services both the ambulance staff and the police who responded to and managed the incident."

If you have any information which may relate to this incident, including any dashcam, CCTV or doorbell footage or any information which may help the police, please get in touch as soon as possible quoting PR/ 45240015016 via:

– Webchat on the website https://www.surrey.police.uk/
– Online https://www.surrey.police.uk/tua/tell-us-about/cor/tell-us-about-existing-case-report/
– Calling 101

If you do not wish to leave your name, please call the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Another news in store for Epsom!

14 February 2024

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

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Following **Primark**'s announcement it is opening in **Epsom** we have a further welcome boost to the local economy, B&M are thrilled to announce the launch of its brand-new store in Epsom, Surrey. The launch of the new store will create 60 jobs for local people.

The discount retailer has taken possession of a previous Wilko store which provides a space of 26,548sqft. which will undergo a comprehensive internal and external refurbishment programme before officially opening its doors at 8am on Friday 1st March 2024.

Customers can expect to find a wide variety of branded groceries for the best possible price including a range of food, drink and pet food. There will also be a fantastic selection of quality health and beauty products, homeware, electricals, DIY essentials, toys, games, gifts and plenty more to explore.

The store manager from B&M said: "We're feeling extremely positive about the creation of more jobs for local people, and we hope customers are going to be delighted with their new store."

"We are all really excited to get the doors open and welcome new customers through the door."

Related reports:

Primark to open in Epsom

5 Shops that could replace House of Fraser in the Ashley Centre

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Epsom PC is tough on crime and the causes of crime

14 February 2024



Police Constable **Bethan Evans-Jones** has been working to reduce shoplifting in **Epsom & Ewell** including working with one prolific individual who has recently been convicted of 24 counts of theft. Thanks to her interventions, he is also being supported to break out of the cycle of crime.

Bethan joined Surrey Police in 2022 via Police Now's National Graduate Leadership Programme, which recruits, trains and develops talented graduates to excel as neighbourhood officers across England and Wales. Previously training to be a solicitor and working in her local MP's office before deciding to become a police officer, Bethan speaks to us about her role on the frontline and her passion for supporting vulnerable people in the community.

Last summer, Bethan investigated a series of repeated thefts that targeted a petrol station in the borough of Epsom & Ewell.

Bethan began to visit the petrol station as part of her regular patrol route, and developed strong relationships with the staff, to ensure she would be directly alerted to any incidents while in the area.

She was subsequently able to intercept and arrest the offender as he attempted to shoplift alcohol. Thanks to the evidence she gathered during her investigation, he was convicted of 24 counts of theft at a local magistrates' court. He was given a Community Protection Warning prohibiting him from entering any local businesses without the means to pay. He is also required to undertake drug rehabilitation and to pay compensation for his offences.

Police Constable Bethan Evans-Jones said: "I'm pleased to have been able to support staff at the local petrol station, who have the right to feel safe in their place of work.

"It is also important to me that the offender is supported to break out of the cycle of crime he had fallen into and receive

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the help he needs. He is well known within the community and, despite the crimes he committed, the shop staff spoke kindly of him – so it was important to all of us that he receive help.

“I referred him to local partner agencies, and he was able to get help from a charity that supports those with drug addictions and was also assigned a social support worker. He recognised that these were the first steps to ‘getting better’ and we believe that this will be an important step to prevent him from re-offending.

“Drugs and drug misuse has become a particular area of interest for me, because of the often-vulnerable nature of the offender themselves, as well as the need for victim support. This is the kind of thing that neighbourhood police officers can really support with, through strong partnership working with local charities and organisations, as well as compassion and a real understanding of what the vulnerable members of society experience. Getting to know people in the neighbourhood and being on patrol is what ultimately enabled me to apprehend this individual.

“That’s one of the reasons I decided to join the force via Police Now’s neighbourhood programme, where I knew I could embed myself in the local community and build relationships to make a difference. The programme also offers other development opportunities and I have successfully secured a four-week secondment with the Home Office to work on county lines policy. This will be a great opportunity to develop my skills further and bring key knowledge back to my neighbourhood, to better support residents across Epsom and Ewell.”

West Surrey Intelligence Manager, **Inspector Alan Knight**, said: “Bethan is a very competent and capable police officer. She has the principles of community policing at the heart of all the work she undertakes, and this is reflected in what she has achieved.

“By tackling the core issue of the matter and diverting offenders from the vicious circle of reoffending to fund an addiction, Bethan has not only supported her community by preventing future criminality but is inspiring neighbourhoods that feel safe. I hope that the results in this case will provide reassurance to victims of crime that we are focused on pursuing those responsible.

“Bethan’s work has shown that working with communities and victims of crime promotes the partnership sharing of intelligence and information which is so vital when combating all levels of criminality.”

Epsom MP cuts ribbon of new nursery

14 February 2024



Children at a new nursery welcomed MP **Chris Grayling** who cut the ribbon to officially open the new provision at an Epsom school.

The **Vale Primary School** now offers a curriculum for two to 11-year-olds and its nursery already has 23 children on the roll with more joining in the spring.

Mr Grayling, MP for Epsom and Ewell, joined **Julian Drinkall**, CEO at GLF Schools, in cutting the ribbon to officially open the nursery on Wednesday 7 February.

“I was delighted to be invited to attend the official opening,” said Mr Grayling. “The additional nursery places will support the government’s expansion of childcare support to working parents and offer the local community free, funded 15 and 30 hour early years places for two, three and four-year olds. It is clearly going to be a really happy nursery,” he added.

The school is a member of the GLF Schools Multi-Academy Trust which has a strategy to promote school readiness by ensuring as many as possible of its primary schools can cater for children aged from two to 11 with a school-run nursery on site.

Sarah Leyland and **Cathy Browne**, co-heads at The Vale, said they were both very proud of the hard work and community collaboration which has seen the creation of ‘such a positive environment for our young children.’

To add to the celebration aspect of the event, a specially made cake depicting the school logo and an array of cupcakes were made by a former parent of the school.

“I am delighted for our community and the parents and carers with us today that GLF can offer this new nursery provision. GLF’s nursery strategy emphasises the importance of ensuring our youngest children have access to high quality early education and being ready to start school,” said Mr Drinkall.

“It was clear today that our new nursery at The Vale Primary School is quickly becoming an integral part of the local community and provides local families with the opportunity to access a new and exciting two-11 curriculum.”

The nursery will be holding an open morning on Wednesday, March 6 and Friday, March 8 and visits can be booked at the school on 01372 273639 or via info@thevaleprimary.org

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The Vale Primary School website also has details on how nursery funding is changing and how parents can apply for funded places for 15 hours childcare for two-year-olds. More details on www.thevaleprimary.org

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Primark to open in Epsom

14 February 2024



Primark will occupy 44,000 sq ft in the former House of Fraser space in the Ashley Centre, Epsom, utilising two floors and sitting adjacent to the scheme's central square near retailers such as JD. Forming the destination's anchor tenant, the new store will feature Primark's full offer, incorporating menswear, womenswear and childrenswear, as well as accessories, beauty, home, and lifestyle. The store is expected to create around 100 jobs for the local community and is set to open in early 2025.

Louisa Butters, Head of Retail Asset Management UK at CBRE IM, commented: "Primark's signing is a milestone moment for the Ashley Centre. The opening will mark the final stage of our two-year repositioning project that underpins our long-term strategy for the revitalisation of the Ashley Centre, ensuring that it continues to serve the needs of the community in every way possible. We are looking forward to welcoming Primark early next year, and delivering an optimised and enhanced experience and environment for our visitors."

Philippa Nibbs, Director of Sales UK, London and the South East at Primark, also said: "As we continue to invest in the UK high street, we are delighted to announce our new store in Epsom that will open next year. We look forward to becoming a part of this community and playing a central role in the refurbished Ashley Centre."

Primark in Epsom will join Newbury, Berkshire, as the next locations confirmed for Primark in 2025. This follows the recent news that Primark will be investing more than £100m in its UK stores this year, as it celebrates 50 years of Primark on the Great British High Street. Local shoppers in Epsom and the surrounding areas looking to get their Primark fix in the meantime will be able to visit the nearby Sutton, Kingston or Woking stores.

In 2023, the Ashley Centre welcomed a raft of new openings such as JD, Deichmann, and GAIL's Bakery, forming a key part of the centre's leasing strategy to evolve its retail and F&B offer. The centre's £7 million refurbishment will also work in tandem, seeing the reconstruction of the East entrance and enhancements to the interior, creating a refreshed and modern look.

Related Reports:

5 Shops that could replace House of Fraser in the Ashley Centre

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Ada of Surrey inspires big AI project

14 February 2024



Drawing inspiration from **Ada Lovelace**, who resided in Surrey, a computing pioneer and translator who overcame societal barriers in the 19th century, the "ADA network" based at **Surrey University** aims to usher in a transformative era of AI research focused on digital inclusion.

Augusta Ada King, Countess of Lovelace (*née* **Byron**; 10 December 1815 – 27 November 1852) was an English mathematician and writer, chiefly known for her work on Charles Babbage's proposed mechanical general-purpose computer, the Analytical Engine. She was the first to recognise that the machine had applications beyond pure calculation. In 1835, she married the first Earl of Lovelace, becoming Lady King. They had a home in Ockham Park, Surrey.

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The **University of Surrey** has been granted a multi-million-pound award from the **Leverhulme Trust** to spearhead a groundbreaking initiative aimed at ensuring equitable access to artificial intelligence (AI)-powered digital media. This ambitious project, named the Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarships Network for AI-Enabled Digital Accessibility (**ADA**), will receive a grant of £2.15 million over eight years.

Professor **Sabine Braun**, ADA Director at the University of Surrey, emphasized the importance of digital media accessibility, stating that it is pivotal for engaging with various aspects of life, from public information to entertainment. The ADA project aims to leverage AI technology to make digital content accessible to individuals of all ages, languages, cognitive and sensory abilities, and physical mobility.

In today's digital landscape, interacting with digital content involves complex sensory inputs. However, accessibility issues arise when individuals cannot access content in their preferred language or format. While traditional methods like text subtitles or simplified versions have been used to address these challenges, the sheer volume of digital content necessitates AI-driven solutions.

The ADA project seeks to advance AI-driven accessibility solutions by integrating insights from the humanities and social sciences to better understand user needs.

The Surrey Institute for People-Centred AI (PAI) will host the ADA project, aligning with its mission to advance AI from a human-centric perspective. The project will draw expertise from three renowned research centers at the University of Surrey: the Centre for Translation Studies (CTS), the Centre for Vision, Speech and Signal Processing (CVSSP), and the Nature Inspired Computer and Engineering Research Group (NICE).

CTS will contribute expertise in language and translation technology to improve media accessibility, while CVSSP will leverage its world-leading AI and computer vision capabilities. NICE will provide specific expertise in knowledge-driven AI and machine translation for under-resourced languages.

Professor **Adrian Hilton**, Director of PAI and CVSSP, highlighted ADA's vision to establish a hub for high-quality research training in AI-enabled digital accessibility. By collaborating with Surrey's Digital World Research Centre (DWRC), Digital Societies, and Brain and Behaviour research groups, the ADA project aims to drive meaningful advancements in AI accessibility, ensuring that media services are accessible and inclusive for all individuals and society.

Image: Daguerreotype by Antoine Claudet and Surrey University's newest lab that has 200 machines which are each equipped with a Nvidia Quadro P4000 Graphics Card: useful for intensive jobs that require multiple cores in areas such as data science, AI and deep learning.

LibDems call "Love All" for local tennis

14 February 2024



With charges pending for using **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** tennis courts the local LibDems ask for free sport for low income players.

In a bid to bolster recreational opportunities and promote an active lifestyle within the community, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has joined forces with the **Lawn Tennis Association** (LTA) to revitalize public tennis courts across the borough.

The LTA has pledged £26,650 towards the refurbishment of a dozen tennis courts spread across key recreational areas including Auriol Park, Alexandra Recreation Ground, Court Recreation Ground, Gibraltar Recreation Ground and Poole Road Recreation Ground.

The initiative encompasses a comprehensive upgrade plan featuring state-of-the-art gate access technology, the implementation of a user-friendly online booking platform, and court enhancements geared towards ensuring top-tier facilities for local residents.

Beyond the infrastructural improvements, the partnership also promises an array of activities catered to all age groups and skill levels. Weekly complimentary tennis sessions, inclusive of equipment provision, will eliminate barriers to entry, fostering inclusivity and accessibility. Additionally, Local Tennis Leagues will host friendly competitions, promoting a sociable and active lifestyle within the community.

The Council will roll out a 'pay as you play' scheme across all tennis courts in the borough, slated for implementation in the coming year. The generated revenue will be reinvested to maintain and enhance the borough's tennis infrastructure, ensuring its longevity for future generations.

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Cllr **John Beckett**, (RA Auriol Ward) Chair of the Environment Committee, expressed enthusiasm over the collaboration, emphasizing its significance in bolstering community well-being and fostering a culture of physical activity. He lauded the forthcoming free coaching sessions as pivotal in diversifying tennis participation across socioeconomic backgrounds.

Julie Porter, Chief Operating Officer at the LTA, echoed Beckett's sentiments, highlighting the project's alignment with the UK Government and LTA's Parks Tennis Project. She affirmed the commitment to providing enduring tennis facilities, thus broadening access to the sport.

In response to the impending introduction of charges for tennis court usage, Cllr **James Lawrence**, (LibDem College Ward) has launched a petition advocating for free access for disadvantaged groups. The petition proposes complimentary access for children during weekends and school holidays, as well as free usage for households receiving council tax support and other benefits.

The petition underscores the importance of preserving equitable access to public amenities, particularly for vulnerable segments of the population. As the council deliberates on the matter, stakeholders await a decision that balances fiscal responsibility with social inclusivity, ensuring that tennis remains an accessible pursuit for all within the community.

Related reports:

Anyone for tennis? If you pay.

Tennis at 95 is the norm.

Dementia nurses coming closer to Epsom

14 February 2024



Dementia UK, the specialist dementia nursing charity, in partnership with Leeds Building Society, is launching free face-to-face 'Closer to Home' clinics to provide life-changing support to families living with dementia in **Epsom**.

The clinics will be held in the **Epsom branch** of Leeds Building Society, bringing emotional and practical support closer to families with dementia through the charity's specialist dementia nurses, known as Admiral Nurses. Dementia UK's Closer to Home clinics will run on 28th and 29th of February and the 5th, 6th and 7th of March 2024.

The face-to-face clinic will offer a safe, comfortable, and private space for families to discuss any aspect of dementia and receive the specialist support of Admiral Nurses. Between June 2021 and December 2023, over 4,000 families have been helped through Dementia UK's 'Closer to Home' clinics, and the charity has partnered with Leeds Building Society to offer in-person support across the United Kingdom since 2022.

Nationwide research conducted by Dementia UK into the impact of dementia revealed that nearly half (47%) of people in the South East of England have been affected by dementia, and 51% of people in the region are worried about how a diagnosis would affect their relationships with family and friends. Only 16% of people in the South East have heard of Dementia UK's specialist Admiral Nurses.

In April 2020, Dementia UK and Leeds Building Society announced a four-year partnership to raise £700,000 to help over 2,500 families with dementia across the UK. As part of this partnership, the innovative 'Closer to Home' project was also launched in June 2021, to improve access to dementia care and support.

The partnership's initial target of £500,000 has now been exceeded. Thanks to this, Dementia UK has been able to develop and deliver virtual appointments with specialist dementia nurses for an even larger number of families and individuals.

Hannah Gardner, Admiral Nurse at Dementia UK, said:

"We're proud to bring our Closer to Home project to Epsom to offer specialist face-to-face clinics in the area. We know the difficulties that families in Epsom and the surrounding area often experience. We know that dementia doesn't just affect the person with the diagnosis: families, friends, and carers are also impacted.

"Dementia is a huge and growing health crisis – someone in the UK develops dementia every three minutes. This means it's more important than ever for us to reach families and offer one on one support from our dementia specialist Admiral Nurses. From worries about memory problems to understanding a dementia diagnosis and how the condition progresses, we will be providing practical and emotional advice on caring for someone who lives with this progressive condition, along with giving advice on financial and legal issues."

Richard Fearon, CEO of Leeds Building Society, said:

"Dementia UK was voted as our charity partner by our members and colleagues, and we are thrilled to have raised over £700,000 for them, exceeding the £500,000 fundraising target we set ourselves at the start of this partnership."

Dementia UK's Closer to Home clinics will take place in Epsom on the 28th and 29th of February and the 5th, 6th and 7th of

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March 2024.

To book a confidential and in-person appointment with an Admiral Nurse, visit dementiauk.org/closer-to-home

dementiauk.org

Surrey’s Tory MPs exiting the County

14 February 2024



Kwasi Kwarteng the Conservative MP for Spelthorne has just joined four other of his Party’s Surrey colleagues in announcing he will not stand at the upcoming General Election. Surrey has 11 constituencies and all are held by Conservatives.

With Paul Beresford MP for Mole Valley, Dominic Raab MP for Esher and Walton, Crispin Blunt MP for Reigate and Banstead and our own **Chris Grayling** MP for **Epsom and Ewell**, all having confirmed they are not going to run, this leaves 6 Surrey Conservative MPs still standing.

One can expect Michael Gove MP for Surrey Heath and Jeremy Hunt MP for South-West Surrey, who serve in the Cabinet, to seek re-election. Leaving Jonathan Lord MP for Woking, Ben Spencer MP for Runnymede and Weybridge, Angela Richardson MP for Guildford and Claire Coutinho MP for East Surrey assumed to be still up for the fight.

Epsom and Ewell Conservatives have already put in place their new prospective Parliamentary Candidate, **Mhairi Fraser**, an anti-corruption lawyer.

She will be challenged by **Helen Maguire** of the Liberal Democrats, **Gina Miller** of the True and Fair Party and **Steve Mckenna** of the Green Party. Labour has yet to select its Prospective Parliamentary Candidate.

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