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

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Top stuff for Cuddington Croft

30 January 2024



Staff and students at Cuddington Croft Primary had reason to celebrate when the latest SAT results revealed that the school ranked within the Top 10 in the county.

The Department for Education Performance Table for Key Stage 2 2023 SAT results showed that the school – which is part of the GLF Schools Multi-Academies Trust – was among the 10 highest performers out of 476 Surrey schools, according to the combined percentage of children attaining the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths.

“This is a really impressive achievement, considering the size of county and number of schools in Surrey,” said Mike Skelton, who is Head Teacher at the school. “If there was a table for combined greater depth scores, Cuddington would have been in the top three.”

“Cuddington is proud to be a consistently high achieving school,” he continued. “Post-covid, this is the first results published, so we are proud they continue to be this high, despite the disrupted learning caused by the pandemic.

“It shows the hard work of the staff from Nursery to Year 6 to enable the children to be successful and achieve their highest potential.”

Staff and parents alike at the school were delighted with the results.

“The staff were extremely proud of the hard work and dedication to support the children to achieve the results they did,” added Mr Skelton.

“A parent of a child in that cohort said: ‘It really is amazing. It makes us so proud of our child and the school. It has given our daughter the best possible start to secondary school.’

“Well done to all the children and all the staff for their hard work.”

Cuddington Croft PR.

A helping hand from the Council

30 January 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has launched a local campaign to tell residents about community support services that offer them, and their loved ones, a helping hand.

The council offers a range of valuable services for those who are elderly or vulnerable. They are run by staff who provide a personal and caring service, and council subsidies mean that costs are kept to a minimum. Services include:

• The Dementia Hub: respite care for people living with memory loss and dementia.

• Meals at Home: tasty, healthy meals delivered to homes in and around Epsom & Ewell, catering for any dietary requirement. The team can even drop off shopping, too.

• Transport from Home: DBS checked drivers help people in Epsom & Ewell, who are unable to use public transport, with door-to-door travel.

• Community Alarm: easy-to-use devices that raise an alarm in an emergency and can even help find a loved one who has become lost whilst away from home.

• The Community & Wellbeing Centre: support hub for the over 55s; a place to relax, make friends, join activities, and feel at home.

Residents will notice information about the services across the borough on council social media accounts including

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Facebook, Instagram and X, in the council email newsletter, and in local advertising.

Councillor Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said: “As we become older, or for people with additional needs, living independently can feel challenging. We also know that many of our residents are carers for loved ones who would really benefit from our services.

Our trained teams offer care and support for people who need it most, allowing them to stay independent for longer. We hope this campaign will reach residents who could use a helping hand and encourage them to talk to us to find out how we can help.”

If you or someone you know could use any of these services, please talk to Epsom & Ewell Borough Council today. Call 01372 732000 or visit the website: www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/communitysupport

The Dementia Hub, meals at home and shopping service are also available for people who live outside of the borough of Epsom & Ewell.

The Battle of Medway lost

30 January 2024

Medway 37 Sutton & Epsom RFC 26. Saturday 27th January. Sutton & Epsom returned to a most happy hunting ground on Saturday as their only previous trip to Priestfields saw them gain promotion in 2016 with an Andy Matthews hat trick. There were two survivors from that famous afternoon being back row brothers George London and Matt Whitaker. If nostalgia filled the air it was also because it was a red-letter day for Medway stalwart Tom Beaumont who was making his 200th league appearance. For the veteran flanker the hosts obliged with a 37-26 win in a hard fought and entertaining encounter.

Sutton saw a welcome return to Ellis Rudder, last seen four years ago at Westcliff in National 2, and Lawrence Eliott after injury breaks of vastly contrasting lengths of time. The Priestfield playing surface was in excellent condition considering the recent vagaries of the weather as Freddy Bunting kicked off on a dry but chill winter afternoon. S&E were on the attack immediately with a surging break to the opposition 22 from the prolific Matt Whitaker after the initial line break from Gareth O’Brien. An early riposte from the hosts gather the ball on the blindside on halfway with great prospects the ball inexplicably fell to earth. After this entertaining start the opening score was rather more mundane. The visitors conceded a penalty and were penalised for not retreating> The second infringement lead to a lineout in the corner. It was third time unlucky as the referee gave Owen Church-Mills the opportunity to open Medway’s account. The Number 10 assuredly bisected the uprights to put Medway 3-0 up after five minutes.

Sutton & Epsom only took five minutes to not only open their account but claim the lead. Another Whitaker carry and support by the forwards led to a penalty. It was the hosts’ turn to defend a lineout near their line. The men from Surrey secured the ball and Alex Mount was the beneficiary of their control as he forced his way over for a try. Freddy Bunting added the extras for a 7-3 advantage. Five minutes later the Black & Whites were celebrating a second try. Advancing into the 22 Freddy Bunting’s probing kick behind the defence was gathered by winger Kyren Ghumra who finished with panache. Captain Bunting made it 14-3 with a relatively simple conversion. At the end of the first quarter the productive opening by the Rugby Lane XV was undone by a fatal self-inflicted wound as a woeful clearance in their 22 was predictably charged down. Medway took advantage of the retreating defence as Captain Antony Clement’s perfectly timed pass gifted his centre partner, Sean Marriott, a try. Owen Church-Mills conversion made it 10-14.

The Black & Whites had a chance to reprise their opening score but Freddy Bunting overcooked the penalty and instead of a 5-metre lineout his team set up to receive a drop out. As the half continued to ebb and flow Medway were playing with great continuity and Sutton were indebted to a splendid tackle from Kyren Ghumra and an over-eager forward going off his feet at the ruck.

Medway made their first change as Deji Oyesola replaced Ryan Eastley in the front row. S&E were hampered by poor kicking from hand as two kicks in as many minutes found opponents with perfect precision who gratefully called ‘mark’. As the errors mounted it was a great relief for the travelling supporters when fluency returned from the familiar source of Matt Whitaker. Gareth O’Brien and Tom Boaden continued the move that was only halted by foul play. The result was a yellow card, Medway reduced to 14 and Sutton with the penalty. The forwards took control and Chris Farrell burrowed his way over for his sides third try. Freddy Bunting’s precise kick left the scoreboard reading Medway 10 Sutton & Epsom 21.

In time added on a long clearance kick unfortunately rolled through the dead ball area to the

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advantage of the home team. Whether you view that as careless or unlucky is up to the generosity of your spirit. However, this territorial penalty was compounded by then conceding a penalty. Owen Church-Mills stepped up to conclude the first period with his second penalty of the afternoon which took some of the gloss off the visitors first half performance but Sutton still led by 21-13 as the teams turned around.

Medway seized the initiative early in the second period. They camped in the Sutton 22 and carried relentlessly with powerful runs ably supported. However, defiant defence by Sutton averted the try that seemed imminent as a frustrated home team decided to opt for the three points at the third time of asking. Owen Church-Mills made it three out of three for penalties and his team were within a score at 16-21. It was becoming one-way traffic in the third quarter with Captain Clement at his influential best orchestrating the backs. But the stoic Sutton defence were a match for each and every carry and it was a mark of their defence that again the hosts opted for a kick at goal. It was rather a surprise when the latest strike slid wide. The despair of the home crowd was immediately replaced by a joyous cheer. The drop kick was taken by Number 8 Todd Johnson and the previously adamantine defence dissolved as he broke through a couple of tackles on his way to the 22. Then Deji Oyesola exploded through the ruck to run in untouched under the posts. The easiest of conversions was added and Medway had taken the lead 23-21.

This setback inspired Sutton who finally got some attacking ball having won a penalty at a scrum they kicked to the corner. It was the turn of the Medway defence to face the music. Willem Ratu, Freddy Bunting and the pack advanced to the line. One, two and three penalties were awarded. From the third the irrepressible Matt Whitaker added another try to his record-breaking career tally. The blustering breeze carried the conversion narrowly wide but a resurgent Sutton held a slender advantage at 26-23. Suddenly it appeared to be anyone’s game with ten minutes left on the clock.

After what had gone before the denouement of the match was most disappointing for the visitors. Great credit must go to Medway who raised their game to play with urgency, accuracy and potency. They declined a kickable penalty for the lineout in the corner. This time the sustained pressure resulted in a try for lock Dan Jackson. Owen Church-Mills increased the gap to 30-26 with the game still in the balance. But the hosts were in no mood to sit back on so precarious a lead. At once they went in search of the bonus point and another try to secure the win. Ewan McTaggart appeared to have won an important lineout steal but the he tapped back bounced cruelly away from the visitors and was gathered by the alert Kent pack. Once more the hosts burst through a ruck but this time it was an assist to Deji Oyesola who was perfectly placed to trot in under the posts for his second try of the afternoon and an impregnable 37-26 lead as Owen Church Mills made his personal tally 16 points. The hosts had no problem running down the clock to secure the 37-26 bonus point win.

It was the third game in a row that Sutton & Epsom had led in the second half but failed to hold onto their advantage. For long periods their defence was of the highest quality but unfortunately errors were punished. Medway, as they had at Rugby Lane, carried aggressively with great continuity created by timely offloads to excellent support players. Antony Clement was at his influential best whilst Todd Johnson and Deji Oyesola impressed in the pack. For S&E there was a great sense of frustration despite a try-scoring bonus point they had the chance for more. For long spells the defence was first rate but there was a sense that more than one of the scores could have been avoided. In attack the Black & Whites conversion rate in the 22 was high and four tries on the road should be the foundation for a victory. There is an urgent need to find a way of seeing out these close finishes to win matches that are in the balance.

Next Saturday Sutton and Epsom entertain Gravesend, at Rugby Lane at 2:30pm, who like the hosts and Sidcup have a 10-6 loss record in the rather congested nether regions of the league.

Sutton & Epsom:
Gareth O’Brien, Kyren Ghumra, Lawrence Elliott, Freddy Bunting ©, Ellis Rudder, Tom Lennard, Steve Munford, Alex Mount, Chris Farrell, Tom Boaden, Josh Glanville, Ewan McTaggart, George London, Rob Hegarty & Matt Whitaker.
Replacements: Callum Gibson, Ben Green & Willem Ratu.

Medway:
Perry Macauley, John Sipawa, Sean Marriott, Antony Clement, Conor Chalmers, Owen Church-Mills, Ben Dance, Ryan Eastley, Josh Knight, Jack Nickalls, Dan Jackson, Jordan Stubbington, Harry Gibbons, Tom Beaumont & Todd Johnson.
Replacements: Deji Oyesola, Joseph Byrne & Robert O’Brien.

LibDems in the market for power in Epsom and Ewell?

30 January 2024

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In a surprising turn of events in Epsom & Ewell, Liberal Democrat Leader **Sir Ed Davey MP** made a noteworthy appearance in Epsom Market last Saturday, marking the launch of Parliamentary Candidate **Helen Maguire**'s 2024 election campaign. Maguire has emerged as the first candidate from the major political parties to kick-start her campaign in the constituency, which is currently under the Conservative stronghold of **Chris Grayling** MP.

The upcoming election, however, presents a unique scenario. With Grayling stepping down, the Conservatives facing a decline in national polls, boundary changes, and a revitalized local Liberal Democrat party, the battle for the next **Epsom & Ewell** MP is shaping up to be a two-horse race.

A recent YouGov poll, commissioned by the Daily Telegraph, surveyed 14,000 voters nationwide and has added a new layer of intrigue to the contest. The poll indicated that the Lib Dems in Epsom & Ewell are marginally ahead of the Conservatives for the first time in many years, leaving Conservative MPs with a gloomy outlook and fueling speculation of a potential general election defeat.

Helen Maguire, a former Captain in the Royal Military Police with service in Bosnia and Iraq, is also known for her charity fundraising consultancy, which has raised over £1 million for charities across the UK. She recently earned the British Empire Medal for her work and management of the project to rebuild the Claygate Pavilion after a destructive fire.

Maguire's campaign is centered around key issues such as the cost-of-living crisis, environmental concerns arising from sewage dumping in the Mole and Hogsmill rivers, and support for the Epsom & St Helier Health Trust's efforts to construct a new critical emergency hospital.

At the campaign launch in Epsom Market, Ed Davey expressed confidence, stating, "I'm here because I think we can win this seat. I think the people of Epsom & Ewell, indeed people across the country, want to get rid of the Conservatives for they have failed our country. Whether it's the cost of living or the health service, they're not listening to people. They are so out of touch, and I think people want change."

Maguire emphasized the Liberal Democrats' 'Fair Deal' promise, advocating for a fair, prosperous, and innovative economy that promotes opportunity and well-being. She envisions a strong economy as the solution to the cost-of-living crisis and a means to provide quality public services for Epsom & Ewell.

Related reports:

Conservatives adopt new contender for Parliament

LibDem PPC awarded Medal by the King

Grayling not to contest a seventh election

Opposition unite against division of opposition

A question of pay for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

30 January 2024



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's annual allowances paid to its elected Councillors has long been lower than all other 10 Surrey Boroughs. Currently standing at the basic allowance of £4031.70 this compares with the highest paid in Guildford of £8348. EEBC is the smallest borough in the County both in size and population.

On Thursday 25th January the councillors serving on the Strategy and Resources Committee (S&R) of EEBC voted to increase the basic allowance for all councillors by 29% to an annual sum of £5736.90 (plus 6%). The committee's recommendation goes to the Full Council.

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The printed decision of the meeting refers to the approval of the recommendation known as “option B” that gives the annual figure of £5736.90. The vote taken at the meeting was “option B plus 6%”.

Cllr **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch) said that for the average number of hours of 15 per week that Councillors devoted to Council business meant that they were the lowest paid of all Council “employees”. That the allowances had increased in the last 10 years at an average of 2.1% per annum. Cllr Leach proposed “option B plus 6%”.

Cllr **Alison Kelly** (LibDem Stamford) spoke in favour of option B on the basis that the Council needed to attract a diverse range of people to stand as Councillors.

Subject to other Borough’s increasing allowances paid to their members for 2024/2025 the league table of allowances now looks like this:

Council	Allowances
Tandridge District Council	£4,446.00
Mole Valley District Council	£4,793.01
Runnymede Borough Council	£5,500.00
Elmbridge Borough Council	£5,512.00
Waverley Borough Council	£5,609.10
Surrey Heath Borough Council	£5,711.00
Epsom and Ewell Borough Council option B	**£5,736.90**
Reigate and Banstead Borough Council	£5,956.00
Spelthorne Borough Council	£6,531.00
Woking Borough Council	£7,380.00
Guildford Borough Council	£8,348.00

Other increases were recommended for the chairs and vice-chairs of some of the Council’s committees.

At the same meeting the 6% increase for Council workers for 2024/2025 was confirmed with the following observations being made in an officer’s report to the committee:

The Government has confirmed that the national living wage will rise from £10.42 to £11.44 from April 2024. This represents an increase of 9.8% and it is acknowledged that this is significantly greater than the 6% increase which will be applied to our pay scales from April 2024.

There is currently no formal commitment within our Pay Policy to pay the Voluntary Living Wage (vLW) promoted by the Living Wage Foundation as the minimum hourly rate at which an employee should be paid. The 2024/25 vLW rate for outside of London is £12.00 per hour. This represents a 10% increase on the 2023/24 vLW rate of £10.90.

The bottom of EEBC’s lowest pay scale is £21,734 and the top of the Chief Executive scale is £151,979. This is a pay multiple of 1:7. These figures are based on pay scales and not actual salaries.

As at 30 November 2023 the mean average pay for employees other than Chief Officers was £36,177; therefore currently the ratio of mean average Chief Officer pay to mean average pay of other employees was 1:2.9.

The Chief Executive Officer and Directors remuneration was also considered and a 6 % increase recommended:

Post	2023/24: Bottom of salary range (£ per annum)	2024/25: Bottom of salary range (£ per annum)	2023/24: Top of salary range (£ per annum)	2024/25: Top of salary range (£ per annum)
Chief Executive	£126,072	£131,016	£143,376	£151,979
Director	£89,677	£93,156	£103,135	£109,323

In addition to the basic salary the CEO and Directors may receive the following additional benefits:

*Payment into the pension scheme if the employee has opted in and pays into the required employee contribution rate. The employer’s contribution is currently 17.4% of pensionable pay, with the next actuarial valuation due 31 March 2026.

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*Chief Executive and Director monthly allowance of 4% of basic salary in respect of subsistence and other expenses, thereby reducing administration and providing a cap on the cost.

*Payment of up to two annual subscriptions to professional institutions where this is an essential requirement of the role. Costs of memberships vary but most are around £200.

*Allowance for the requirement to have a car for the effective performance of duties. The amount varies according to the role of the individual.

Any CEO or Director fulfilling the role of Returning Officer at elections receives additional pay depending on whether an election is contested and the number of electors involved.

Related reports:

Council staff to get 6% pay increase?

County CEO’s pay rise triggering strikes?

Pay rises for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Surrey Police funding: not a fair cop

30 January 2024



The “outdated” underfunding of Surrey’s police is “unfair” to residents according to the May 2021 elected Conservative Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner **Lisa Townsend**.

The Government announced its funding for police forces in England and Wales in December saying they would receive £18.4 billion – up £922 million on the previous year. But the way that money is divided has meant some areas received significantly larger shares than others, prompting Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend to write to the Government.

Surrey’s funding will be £308.7m in 2024/25, an increase of up to £17.3m when compared to 2023/24. Her letter, to the minister of state for crime, policing, and fire, **Chris Philp**, was seen by the Local Democracy Reporting Service. It read: “Whilst being thankful for the additional resources that have been made available to policing, I am concerned about the way these have been allocated.

“Once again rather than being allocated in proportion to costs incurred i.e., for pay linked to headcount or payroll costs, these grants have been allocated using the outdated formula grant model. This is a particular issue for Surrey where only 45 per cent of our total budget is covered by grant compared with over 80 per cent in Northumbria. This means that Northumbria gets 77 per cent more of the additional pay grant for the same level of cost compared to Surrey.

“I did write to you about this when the pay grant was originally announced, and you assured me that the allocation method would be changed but so far this has not happened.”

In Autumn 2021, the Government announced it was to review how funding was distributed. It has since been engaging with the police sector to determine policing demand and the impact of local factors on forces. Two and a half years later that work remains ongoing with the Government saying the existing model remains the fairest way to allocate core funding to maintain officer numbers and avoid financial uncertainty.

A Home Office spokesperson said: “Our priority is to deliver a robust formula that allocates funding in a fair and transparent manner, ensuring that police have the resources they need. So far, a total police funding settlement of up to £18.4 billion in 2024-25 has been proposed and Surrey Police is receiving up to £308.7m. “We have engaged closely with the policing sector on an evidence-based assessment of policing demand, and the impact of local factors on forces. This work remains ongoing.”

Lisa Townsend said: “In December last year, I wrote to the policing minister in response to the settlement for policing which included the recent pay award for officers funded by the government. Our policing teams go above and beyond on a daily basis to keep our communities in Surrey safe and this pay award was richly deserved. I believe it will help in Surrey Police’s efforts in a tough employment market to recruit and retain police officers against a background of rising costs and better paid jobs in the local area.

“However, in my letter I did raise concerns about how these additional resources have been allocated using the current funding formula. This model is outdated and remains unfair to the residents of Surrey. We receive proportionately the lowest level of formula grant in the country meaning we will receive a smaller grant to cover the pay costs compared to other forces.

“Throughout my term as Police and Crime Commissioner, I have been committed to fighting for fair police funding on

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behalf of our residents and I will continue to lobby government for a change in the current formula."

Related reports:

Surrey County chief talks to the BBC

Met poaches Surrey police claims Commissioner

Longmead gets a Godly clean-up

30 January 2024



On Sunday, January 21, joined by the Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, Councillor **Rob Geleit** (Labour Court Ward), 40 volunteers from ASEZ (Save the Earth from A to Z), the young adult volunteer group from the World Mission Society Church of God in Epsom, gathered to clean Longmead Road and adjacent streets in Epsom.

In a matter of 2 hours, the volunteers collected a total of 75 bags of litter; allowing the greenery to flourish and preventing plastics and litter from entering the waterways. The residents of Longmead Road were pleased and cheered the volunteers expressing their gratitude. As they walked along the areas of the clean-up and honked when they drove through, as a way to show their gratitude and the glory of God spread.

Out of 35 participants, more than half were young adults aged from 18 to 29. The clean-up event was a great opportunity not only for the environment but also for promoting positive activities and reducing antisocial behaviour among young adults.Ahn Sahng-hongOut of 35 participants, more than half were young adults aged from 18 to 29. The clean-up event was a great opportunity not only for the environment but also for promoting positive activities and reducing antisocial behaviour among young adults.

A passer-by, **Howard Gregory** from the Epsom and Ewell Tree Advisory Board and Elms Over Epsom explained "I saw this amazing crowd and amazing pile of rubbish, and this is fantastic."

The World Mission Society Church of God is in East Street Epsom. The Church was founded in South Korea, inspired by the writings of Ahn Sahng-hong, considered by followers to embody the second coming of Christ.

Regardless of beliefs ASEZ did a great job.

"Heat and Dust" epic in Epsom

30 January 2024



You don't need to read or watch the historical romantic drama set in the British Raj epoch in India by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. The **Chalk Pit** off College Road Epsom has been the source of noise and dust generated heated debate in Epsom and Ewell Council for years.

Conservative Councillors for Horton, **Bernie Muir** and **Kieran Persand**, in July proposed the following motion to full Council:

"That this council mandates officers to install professional noise measurement equipment around the Chalk Pit site in College Road, Epsom, to leave that equipment in place for a minimum period of three months, and to respond to any breaches of noise regulations on the site with the imposition of a noise abatement order on the landowner and any identified operators responsible for the excess noise."

The full Council referred the matter to the Environment Committee to resolve.

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The Chalk Pit site is the centre of a fiendishly complex plot of overlapping planning laws, regulations and three different law enforcement authorities: The Environment Agency (EA), Surrey County Council and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

In a detailed report to Councillors of the Environment Committee of Epsom and Ewell, sitting on Tuesday 23rd January, officers attempted to explain.

Here is a summary of that report:

Background:

The Chalk Pit site in College Road, Epsom, has been used for light industrial purposes for around 40 years. Businesses operating at the site include Skip It, Reston Waste, and a coach company, among others. Noise and dust emissions from various activities, such as trommel processing, materials handling, and vehicle movements, have led to increased complaints from nearby residents since 2021.

Complaints and Regulatory Responsibilities:

Prior to 2021, complaints were minimal, but they increased significantly in recent years. Regulatory responsibilities involve collaboration between the local authority, Environment Agency (EA), and planning authorities (Surrey County Council SCC and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council EEBC).

Complaints related to EA regulated processes are directed to the EA, while non-regulated sources fall under the local authority's jurisdiction.

Council's Response to Complaints:

The council's Environmental Health service conducted an extensive investigation, involving in person monitoring, remote monitoring, and the installation of CCTV. Despite the intensive investigation, a June 2022 assessment did not provide sufficient evidence to issue an abatement notice. A renewed effort in October 2023 identified a specific nuisance related to a particular piece of machinery, leading to the issuance of an abatement notice.

Enforcement Actions:

The council issued Community Protection Warning Notices to the landowner and various users, mandating specific actions. Legal steps included a notice requiring a skip company to cease operations on the site. Ongoing monitoring will determine compliance, potentially leading to further enforcement, including prosecution.

Financial Implications:

The investigation has incurred costs of £5,600. Potential future costs for further investigations, legal proceedings, and appellant expenses may reach £140,000. The council is exploring funding options within existing budgets and may seek additional funding from reserves.

Professional Opinion and Future Actions:

The report suggests that despite previous efforts, there was insufficient evidence for an abatement notice until October 2023. Ongoing construction may impact noise levels, but relevant planning conditions could help control noise. The burden is on the council to demonstrate statutory nuisance, and further evidence may be required for potential legal proceedings.

The report recommends that the Council continues to monitor and take necessary actions to address the noise and dust issues at the Chalk Pit site.

Cllr Muir opened the debate: "I'm alarmed that there is even a suggestion of walking away from funding and monitoring the Chalk Pit against the recommendations of the last Environment Committee and the previous Strategy and Resources Committee. The Chalk Pit site has now increased its activity with another major operator, Reston. Skip-it has not yet completed their building, with major doubts that the building will stop the problems. Anyway, there is still nuisance noise and potential hazard of dust. The Environmental Agency stipulates this operation needs to be enclosed to protect residents. Also, no building will address the noise and dust of skip and truck movements, which is excessive given the massive exponential rise in truck movements. Residents still complain about noise experienced outside permitted hours, starting any time from 5:30 in the morning. It is inevitable that noise will continue."

She added: "On a personal level, I would not be able to live under these conditions and that they have been subjected to for the last three years. I have sat in on all the borough meetings, which thus far have done little more than kick the can down the road."

Cllr. **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) said: "the Chalk Pit situation is something that I've been involved with, and fellow councillors and I have been involved in trying to find a resolution for a significant period of time. It gets bounced around between the different agencies, and there is no light at the end of the tunnel for our residents, which is deeply upsetting." He added: " We are primarily a Resident Association Council; we are driven to support our residents and represent our residents, and if we don't do this, I think we would be failing significantly in our duty."

Cllr. **Julie Morris** (LibDem College) said: "It's a complicated situation, not helped by years of everybody trying to dodge the bullet, really. But we do understand, I think, that the Strategy and Resources Committee are taking the planning breaches quite seriously now, which is good news. There is now light pollution to add to the noise and the dust, isn't there, because of the various hours of operation and some hefty bulbs that they use to be able to see down there. We can't just not do anything."

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The debate continued with detailed discussion of the nuisances complained of and the financial implications of the costs of enforcement.

After a lengthy and at times heated debate the Environment Committee finally resolved to “Submit a request to the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Council that funding be allocated from limited Council reserves to instruct external noise consultants to conduct a fresh investigation based upon the activities on the site and that significant complaints continue despite the buildings being constructed and commissioned. It is anticipated that further investigations may require a substantial financial commitment of taxpayer’s funds of up to £140,000”.

Related reports:

Chalk Pit debate deferred by late abatement

Will the dust ever settle on Chalk Pit conflict?

Image – Nick Kenrick – CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 DEED

Local A&Es stretched in the cold snap

30 January 2024



More than a thousand people visited one of St George’s, Epsom and St Helier’s emergency departments (EDs) on Monday, as demand for care soars.

It was the busiest day this winter, placing extreme pressure on services – which only continue to rise.

Demand typically rockets when temperatures plummet – often in the days following a cold snap – and this week has been no exception. More than 100 extra people visited one of the EDs compared to a normal Monday.

There has also been a spike in the number of very poorly people arriving at hospital in recent months, meaning a rise in those requiring specialist and complex care.

Dr Luci Etheridge, Chief Medical Officer for St George’s, said: “Our hospitals are stretched, and we are under extraordinary pressure.

“Our priority is to ensure our sickest and most seriously ill patients – of which there are many – receive the care they need. And while we are doing everything we can to provide that care against a backdrop of pressures, the public can also play a significant part in helping us by using NHS 111 online if they need urgent health advice.”

Dr Beccy Suckling, Chief Medical Officer for Epsom and St Helier, said: “It’s a common misconception that going to an emergency department when it’s not an emergency means you’ll be seen more quickly. You will, in fact, be waiting longer, and could even be redirected for care.

“When it’s not an emergency, NHS 111 online can signpost you to the best place for care. But prevention is just as important – and one of the best ways you can protect yourself and others is by getting vaccinated this winter. It’s not too late to get your flu and Covid jabs, and if your child hasn’t had their MMR vaccine to protect against measles then I’d strongly urge you to look at that, too.”

If you need urgent medical help, NHS 111 online should be the first port of call. This is a 24/7 service that can direct people where to go for care. Pharmacies, meanwhile, provide advice on minor illnesses such as colds, coughs, and earache.

It’s important that people continue to call 999 or go to an emergency department when it is life-threatening.

Vaccines help stop the spread of winter illnesses, as does washing hands regularly with soap and water.

Measles cases continue to rise across the country, and parents are being urged to book their children – including teenagers and young adults – in for their missed measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine at a GP. Measles is a serious illness, with one in five children who get the disease admitted the hospital for treatment.

St Georges, St Helier and Epsom NHS Trust.

Image Wellcome Images CC licence Scene of the catastrophe, at the gate, Chelsea Hospital 1852

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Different ways to tackle foul-deeds

30 January 2024



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's approach to dog-fouling in its public parks may seem rather tame compared with the nearby Surrey Borough of Spelthorne.

Spelthorne has adopted powers in the Anti-Social Behaviour and Policing Act whereby its parks are made the subject of "Public Space Protection Orders" [PSPO]. Under these orders fixed penalty fines can be imposed on dog walkers who fail to clean up and indeed for walking unready with a "poo-bag".

The order, which makes it an offence to take dogs into certain marked areas with fines of up to £1,000 if it leaves its mess behind, has to be renewed every three years. On Wednesday, January 18 Spelthorne Borough Council's neighbourhood services and enforcement committee did just that.

Despite the notices, dog fouling continues to be an issue with the council receiving around 80 complaints a year. Leader of the council, Councillor Joanne Sexton also pushed for new signage to include scannable QR codes in the hope of making it quicker and easier to report offences – and therefore reduce the amount of dog poo lying on the ground.

Officers told the meeting that catching the antisocial behaviour in the act is extremely difficult given how brief the indiscretions are but said that by reporting it the council could find patterns of behaviour and look to target problem areas – turning up at 5am if that's what the data showed.

The zones cover the council's parks and open spaces with dogs excluded from fenced off areas such as tennis courts. Officers told the meeting: "We would like people to report to us. If we know that a dog goes to the park at 3pm on most days we can put in some patrols to give that person some advice – we won't go in heavy. Our aim is always not to give people fines but to make them compliant with rules and regulations. If people see dogs running around like crazy and frightening their dog they should report it."

Spelthorne Borough Council provides about 550 bins as well as dog waste disposal bags in 50 of its parks and open spaces.

Since Spelthorne imposed the order in 2012 it has issued a total of 11 warnings under the PSPO – 2 for dog fouling, 1 for means to collect (not having a bag), 1 dog in tennis courts, 1 professional dog walker with too many dogs, and 6 directions given to keep a badly behaved dog on a lead.

The authority also issued 3 Fixed Penalty Notices for dog fouling offences in the same time frame (all paid).

However, Spelthorne acknowledges that dog fouling (and other dog related issues) are notoriously difficult offences to actually enforce, as unless the dog owner is actually known to the person reporting, or officers happen to be in the right place at the right time, there is often very little to no evidence that allows investigation.

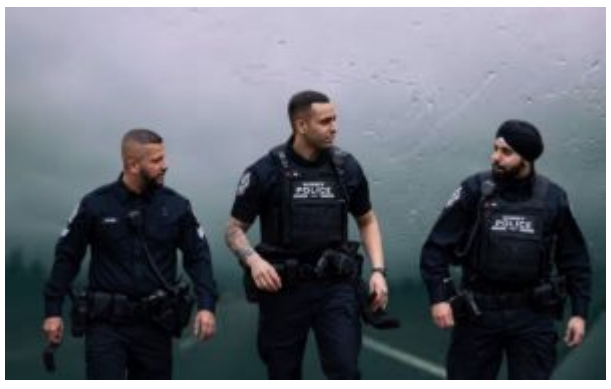
This reality may explain Epsom and Ewell Council's more realistic approach stated on its website:

"What can we all do about dog fouling? Report it and we'll remove it. If you notice dog fouling, let us know by filling in our online form 'Street Cleansing' at the top of this page or calling 01372 732000."

Nevertheless, without the authority of a PSPO it still may be an offence under the Anti Social Behaviour and Policing Act to allow a dog to persistently foul a public area, leading to the possibility of a prosecution and fine.

Surrey Police all clean in the wash

30 January 2024



In January of last year, the Home Office asked all police forces to submit details of all serving police officers, staff and

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volunteers in order to check them against the Police National Database (PND) to identify any areas of concern that may have been missed and warranted further investigation.

To be as transparent and thorough as possible, Surrey Police also took further action than those mandated by the Home Office, which included checking all employees against its own police records management system.

Of the 4,593 individuals that were cross-checked, one officer and one staff member were flagged as requiring a vetting clearance review and one staff member was flagged for a management intervention.

None of the individuals who were identified required further criminal or disciplinary investigation as a result of the integrity screening exercise.

Head of Professional Standards, Superintendent Andy Rundle said; “The work that was carried out, not only across Surrey but across all forces in the UK, will help to ensure that the correct checks and balances are in place and that the Force is seen as an open and transparent organisation which is fit to serve its local communities and where employees can also feel safe and supported.

“The large majority of our officers and staff are professional and a credit to the Force. However, it is essential that we deal robustly with those who do not meet our high standards or compromises our integrity.

“We have invested in a comprehensive programme of cultural change towards challenging, reporting and tackling unethical or unprofessional behaviour. This included every officer and staff member under-taking mandatory training and plenary sessions in abuse of position for a sexual purpose, gender and racial bias.

“We also have a confidential internal anti-corruption reporting tool ‘Anonymous’ which encourages colleagues to report anything concerning them to us in a safe and supportive manner.

“While the number of individuals identified as part of the data wash is low, we are not complacent and remain determined to root out any individual not fit to serve the county and its communities, as part of our commitment to ensuring that Surrey is not only safe, but feels safe.”

Maintaining business standards in Surrey

30 January 2024



Residents are encouraged to do their research and always look for reputable and recommended tradespeople before having any work done on their property.

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards is pleased to announce a partnership with United Knowledge Ltd to provide its ‘Trading Standards Approved’, trader’s scheme.

The collaboration marks a significant milestone in the efforts to enhance consumer protection, promote fair trading practices, and ensure businesses in both counties adhere to the highest standards of excellence. It will also enable trading standards to support residents who are scammed or targeted by rogue traders by supplying a safer choice.

UKTSA offers a list of local businesses who have each given a commitment to trading fairly.

The scheme aims to support both local businesses and consumers, providing honest traders with a way to be identified and therefore stand out from the crowd.

From February 2024, residents will be able to find a Trading Standards Approved trader, introducing an added sense of confidence with the reputable accreditation.

The scheme is able to include a diverse range of trades and businesses, whether consumers are in search of a trustworthy plumber, pest controller, landscaper, electrician, or any other contractor.

The partnership between Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards and UKTSA is aimed at creating a more transparent and trustworthy marketplace for businesses and consumers. Through the implementation of rigorous standards, and continuous monitoring, both counties will be able to identify and address any potential issues or breaches of trading regulations promptly.

Councillor Kevin Deanus, Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue and Resilience at Surrey County Council said: “*Our Trading Standards team is committed to protecting consumers and supporting legitimate business in Surrey. Honest businesses are also victims of rogue traders when their trade is linked to dishonest practices and their reputations tarnished. This collaboration will strengthen our ability to protect consumers and support businesses in our counties. Together, we can ensure fair and ethical trading practices, enhance consumer confidence, and contribute to the growth and prosperity of our local economies.*”

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Paula Hines from United Knowledge Ltd said: *"We are pleased to welcome our new partners on-board. We are looking forward to working with Buckinghamshire Council & Surrey County Council and the local business communities to make this scheme a success."*

Steve Ruddy Head of Trading Standards at Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards said: *"Schemes such as this offer additional protection to residents as well as clear procedures for resolving problems, which benefits both residents and businesses. Trading Standards always advises residents to get a range of quotes from reputable traders through trustworthy sources such as the new Trading Standards Approved trader's scheme. The scheme gives people access to a list of reliable traders that have been vetted and approved by to ensure that they operate in a legal, honest and fair way."*

Residents who have experienced problems with tradespeople or companies to report it to the **Citizens Advice consumer helpline**. The helpline takes all enquiries on behalf of Trading Standards across England and Wales and will pass your report to the relevant Trading Standards team.

Business operators can visit the **Trading Standards Approved** website to find out more about the registration process and joining fees.

Consumers can search the register HERE on the UKTSA website

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

30 January 2024



Surrey County Council expects to add a further billion pounds in "additional" debt to its balance sheets but experts have praised its financial sustainability and suggested it is better placed to cope with any potential issues.

The council currently has about £1.3 billion in capital financing requirements and has forecast this to surge to £2.4bn by 2028/29. It expects to fund much of this through borrowing.

According to its own figures the council has an estimated borrowing limit of £1.06 billion which it forecasts will grow to £2 billion by 2028/29. It will do this, it says by borrowing an additional £1.24 billion over that time frame.

The finances were presented to Surrey County Council's Audit and Governance committee on Wednesday January 17 and comes as data found Surrey councils were racking up some of the biggest debts in the UK.

Analysis from the Shared Data Unit shows Woking Borough Council topped the charts owing £1.95bn as of September 2023 – working out at about £19,000 for every resident, the highest in the country. Spelthorne was second with average debts of £10,415, per person and Runnymede fifth, on £7,270 with the Public Accounts Committee warning that these massive debts posed a risk to local services.

Addressing the meeting was council officer Nicola O'Connor. She said: "The table does demonstrate an ongoing commitment to capital expenditure by the council. Our capital program, to be approved in the coming weeks, remains ambitious and remains significant in terms of our capital investment over the next five years. That does result in an anticipated increase in our borrowing. We will manage that and review actual spend compared to forecast before we undertake borrowing."

She added: "There is an expectation that the borrowing of the council will increase in the coming years in order to support and finance that ambition in the capital program."

Surrey County Council lost £27 million from the value of its capital investments in 2023. The finance model continues the same line the council has managed in the past with no significant changes. It sees the continuation of its plan to "maximise our internal borrowing and to balance the long and the short term debt portfolio in order to manage that cost of carry".

Surrey County Council borrowed an additional £79m in 2023. This is forecast to rise by a further £156m this financial year, with further sums of £372m, £360m, £193m, £129m and £131m added in debt in each of the following years until 2029 – bringing the total additional borrowing for £1,18 billion.

If the plan is followed through the council's capital funding requirement would grow from £1,3bn to £2,4bn – bringing it almost in line with bankrupt Woking Borough Council which declared itself effectively bust last year.

It would also mean the council would be spending £59m a year to service the debt through minimum revenue protection payments. Overall the council's financial health remains bullish, considering the serious risks other local authorities were in.

Paul Dossett of accountancy firm Grant Thornton told the meeting that, although the council was not immune to financial challenges hitting local authorities across the country, it had the support in place to better navigate them. He said: "It's a

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very very strong position and you have the right mechanisms in place". He added: "Your strong governance is linked to the fact that your financial sustainability is in a better place than some other councils. Your strong arrangements for aching value for money is linked to the reasons of your financial sustainability.

"I'm not downplaying the challenges you face. because you face some… but overall it's a very strong report it will be absolutely in our top quartile at least for these types of reports this year."

Related reports:

Relative relief about Epsom and Ewell's debt?

Surrey Borough running up big debts

Underinvestment hits most vulnerable

Tory leader pleads with Tory Government

Surrey County chief talks to the BBC

A blast celebrates 40 years past of Epsom Playhouse

30 January 2024



On Friday 19th January, the Band of the **Coldstream Guards** joined residents of Epsom to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the **Epsom Playhouse**.

Led by Director of music Lieutenant Colonel **Stewart Halliday**, the band performed an eclectic mix of music ranging from classic marches to hits from the West End.

As expected the band played with military precision, and there were some virtuous solos from all sections including a stunning performance of 'Victors Tale' from the film 'The Terminal' by principal clarinettist Lance Sergeant **Natalie White**.

The audience was delighted to see the concert organiser and former Senior Director of Music, Household Division, Cllr Dr **Graham Jones** MBE (RA Cuddington) pick up his baton once again to conduct the band, and encouraged the audience to participate in the encore in the 'Radetzky March' by Johann Strauss.

This concert has raised awareness and funds for the Epsom & Ewell Royal British Legion and the Epsom & Ewell Mayor's Charities. With all programme sales being match funded by Barclays Bank.

We hope this will be the start of more world class bands coming to perform at Epsom Playhouse.

The Epsom and Ewell Times is proud to have supported the concert.

Claudia Jones – Reporter

Image courtesy Steven McCormick Photography

Lionel Blackman, who was in the original staff team of the Playhouse when it opened 40 years ago, writes:

40 years have passed since the Epsom Playhouse first opened its doors to professional and amateur performers alike. The Council head-hunted **Graham Stansfield**, a great professional, to kick-start the programme and establish the venue. The first management was in the hands of a then young and dynamic **Robin Hodgkinson**. The theatre came with the development of the **Ashley Centre** by the **Bechtel Corporation**. Originally the main hall's retractable seating allowed the venue to host balls and exhibitions. Today it has fixed and comfortable seating for 406 and a smaller flexible hall space, The Myers, with a seating capacity of 80.

From those early years onward Epsom Playhouse attracted many high-class acts: The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the bands of Humphrey Lyttleton, Kenny Ball and James Last. The Pasadena Roof Orchestra and the Instant Sunshine entertainers came regularly. The world famous Stepan Grappelli once cast his magic violin over a sell-out audience and many many more through to today. Many of the UK's top comedians will spend an evening in Epsom when on tour: Jack Dee, Count Arthur Strong, Harry Hill and many others. It remains the venue for the annual and very popular Christmas Pantomime.

The venue is the permanent home of local amateur talent the Epsom Symphony Orchestra and The Epsom Players among others.

The **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** and all local residents who support the venue can be proud of The Epsom

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Playhouse and its 40 year roll-call of talent, opportunity and entertainment.

Why not give up an evening of Netflix or YouTube and see some live entertainment at your local venue? Visit www.epsomplayhouse.co.uk

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Should we have a petition about petitions?

30 January 2024



While Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's ePetition platform offers residents a voice in local decision-making, a closer examination of the data reveals a challenging picture. From September 2016 to the present, the Council's ePetition system has faced difficulties in garnering community support and has seen a high rate of rejections, often on vague grounds.

Debate Requests – An Uphill Battle for Support

a) Petition Requests Submitted for Full Council Debate: 13

b) Permitted: 4

c) Successfully Reached Required Number of 1500 for Debate: 1

The stark reality emerges when analyzing the numbers. Despite 13 petition requests for Full Council debate, only four were permitted, with a solitary petition managing to secure the necessary support. The challenges in mobilizing community backing for debates raise questions about the effectiveness of the ePetition platform in truly representing resident concerns.

Rejected Petitions:

1. Continued designation of Hook Road Arena as Green Belt land

   Reason for Rejection: Relates to the Council's Planning or Licensing functions, separate statutory processes in place.

2. Railings outside the Metro Bank and Lester Bowden's

   Reason for Rejection: Relates to a matter for which this Council is not responsible or cannot influence.

3. Petition to EEBC regarding height and density regulations for Proposed building developments

   Reason for Rejection: Relates to a matter for which this Council is not responsible or cannot influence.

4. Subject matter not specified in petition submission

   Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council's ePetition Scheme.

5. Objection to the Epsom Hospital Development Scheme

   Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council's ePetition Scheme.

6. Hook Road speed limit & cameras

   Reason for Rejection: Relates to a matter for which this Council is not responsible or cannot influence.

7. Keep Epsom and Ewell Green Belt

   Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council's ePetition Scheme.

8. Fairview Road temporary homes for the homeless

   Reason for Rejection: Relates to the Council's Planning or Licensing functions, separate statutory processes in place.

9. Compulsory Purchase Order for Horton Cemetery

   Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council's ePetition Scheme.

Dismayed at the Council's refusal, made on the basis it was for the Strategy and Resources Committee not the Council (sic), The Friends of Horton Cemetery set up their own petition on change.org

The rejection of petitions, often on grounds as vague as not complying with the ePetition Scheme requirements, underscores the challenges residents face in navigating the system. This pattern raises skepticism about the transparency and accessibility of the ePetition platform.

Scrutiny and Accountability

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The removal of the Council Officer appearance request from the Petition Scheme in May 2023 marks a significant shift in the dynamics of accountability, leaving residents with fewer avenues to question and scrutinize Council decisions.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's ePetition system, while ostensibly a tool for community engagement, faces challenges in attracting support and exhibits a high rate of rejections. The rejection of petitions on rather vague grounds raises questions about the system's accessibility and transparency, prompting a critical examination of the Council's commitment to genuinely amplifying resident voices.

For more information and to explore current and past ePetitions, visit www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk.

Image: The Surgeons Petition or The Barbers Triumphant: Science Museum, London. (CC BY 4.0)

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