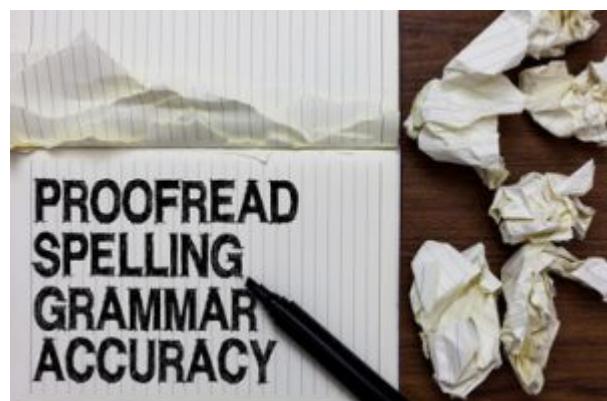




Two petition river pollution correction

22 December 2022



Epsom and Ewell Times refers to our reports:

River "Bogsmill" blights Borough 30 June 2022

and

Local sewage uploaded 12 December 2022

In the second report we stated the first "Labour" sponsored petition had expired. Epsom and Ewell Times apologises to Mark Todd and the local Labour Party. The petition raised by them on change.org is still live. The link may have been temporarily broken when we checked on 12th December 2022. The link to that petition is [HERE](#). The second report provides a link to a more general petition to tackle river pollution nationwide raised by Liberal Democrats.

Epsom and Ewell Times will always publish justified corrections when we are in error.

Are you emoji aware?

22 December 2022



Over the past two weeks, Surrey Police has been raising awareness about the alternative meanings of emojis, which some young people may use to reference drugs and sexual behaviour.

Have you ever wondered how children use emojis in their day-to-day life? Does that snowflake really mean snow is on the way? Are fruit emojis always only used to reference fruit?

These are some of the questions we have been addressing in our most recent campaign, which is focused on being 'emoji aware'.

Throughout the campaign, we have aimed to educate parents, carers, teachers and those working with children on this secret world of emojis and their more concerning meanings. While this campaign might sound worrying, and we want to highlight the serious meaning these emojis can take on, we are keen to stress that the use of these emojis on their own does not necessarily mean a child is involved in drugs. Instead, this may be seen as part of a bigger picture of a change in their behaviour. Other changes may include (but aren't limited to):

- Changes in their mood
- A change in their performance at school

Them becoming increasingly secretive

Detective Chief Inspector **Kate Hyder** said: "We really want parents and guardians to feel confident to have a conversation with their children about this, if and when they need to. We have shared a lot of information around emojis over the past couple of weeks, both on social media and with our local partners to help raise awareness and start the discussion around this."

"Our focus on this doesn't stop with the end of this initial campaign. We will be continuing to work with local partners to



extend the conversation around emojis. We're also aware that emojis and their alternative meanings are something that will constantly change, and so our work and research into this will continue."

For guidance on starting these conversations and support if parents or guardians are concerned, there are a number of resources and services that can help, some of which are specifically for children:

- Catch 22 - Surrey's Young People Substance Misuse Service
- Talk to FRANK has helpful advice about drugs for children and parents
- NSPCC has advice about keeping your child safe, including how to have difficult conversations
- Childline - information for young people about drugs and sexual relationships
- YMCA WiSE (What is Sexual Exploitation) supports young people around staying safe in relationships, online and in the community
- Surrey Police website about county lines drug dealing

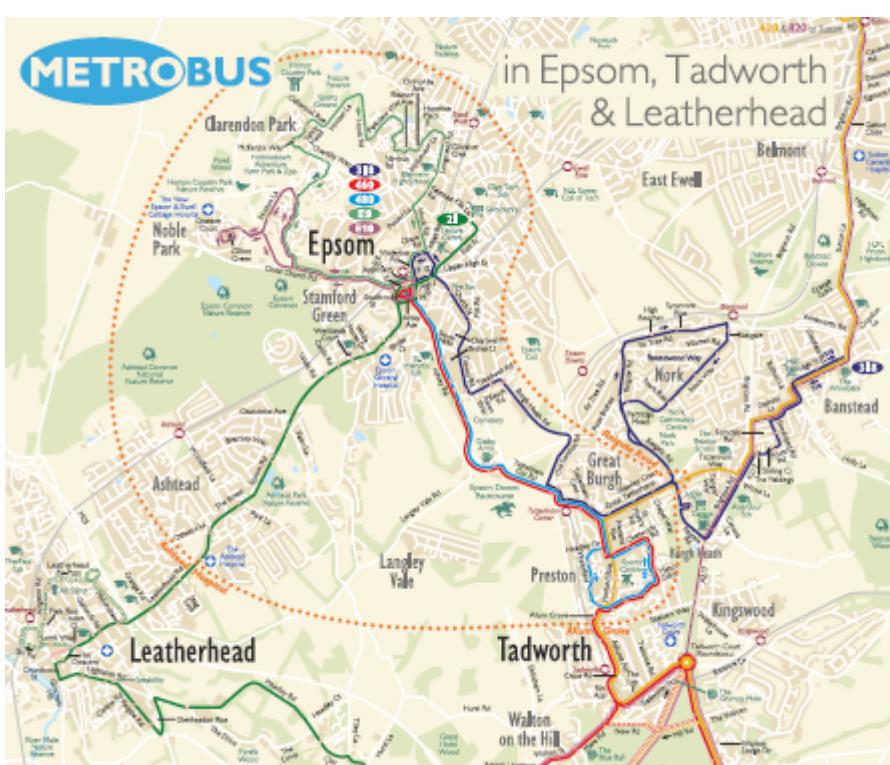
This isn't a campaign that starts and finishes within this two-week window. Instead, this is about encouraging parents and guardians to have conversations with their children at a time that works for everyone involved. What is vital in these discussions is trust. We're very aware that checking phones could break down this trust between a parent and their child, and therefore we are not suggesting parents do this. Instead, we want people to be aware of what these emojis mean, in case they do happen to see them.

Epsom bus fares being capped at £2

22 December 2022



Epsom's main bus operator Metrobus joins nine other bus operators across the county in signing up to the Department for Transport's £2 bus fare cap scheme announced 19 December 2022. The Epsom buses include numbers 318, 460, 480 and the E9 and 10.



From 1 January to 31 March 2023, a single bus journey will cost no more than £2 on selected routes across Surrey, helping people to save money and use their car less. With an average single local bus ticket costing £2.80, passengers are expected to save almost a third of the ticket price per journey.

Operators taking part so far are:

- Compass operating in Cranleigh, Dorking, Godalming, Guildford, Redhill and Reigate
- Stagecoach operating in Camberley, Farnham, Guildford, Haslemere, Hindhead, Woking
- Metrobus operating in Banstead, Caterham, Epsom, Horley, Leatherhead, Lingfield, Redhill and Reigate
- Falcon operating in Addlestone, Byfleet, Chertsey, Cobham, Epsom, Esher, Leatherhead, Molesey, Sheerwater, Staines, Walton, Weybridge and Woking
- Waverley Hoppa operating in Godalming and Guildford
- Thames Valley Bus operating in Camberley



- Surrey Connect (Mole Valley DDRT) operating in Leatherhead and Dorking
- East Surrey Rural Transport Partnership operating in Tandridge
- First operating in Staines and Egham
- Southdown operating in Caterham, Horley, Lingfield, Oxted, Redhill and Reigate

Matthew Furniss, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Growth said: "We welcome this scheme which will help our residents to take the bus at a significantly reduced price, at a time when many are facing pressures from the rising cost of living.

"The bus industry is also facing a challenging time, resulting from the drop in passenger numbers and rising costs following the COVID-19 pandemic, so we hope that this scheme will also encourage new and old passengers to get back on the bus.

"We are currently investing £50m to improve bus services and grow patronage. This will see more zero emission buses, more real time passenger information and more measures to help buses run to time. When this £2 flat fare scheme ends, we will introduce a half fare scheme for young people aged 20 and under to further encourage bus usage.

"With transport accounting for 41% of carbon emissions in Surrey, it is hoped that cheaper bus travel will also lessen the need to travel by car for some journeys."

POSTED BY SCC · DECEMBER 20, 2022

All change in Surrey's County Town?

22 December 2022



Guildford town centre is going through some huge changes, with developments taking place on the sites of some former big names and plans to open up the riverside. The LDRS* has broken down the areas which will see new homes built, and how the town centre will be changing over the coming years.

Guildford's town centre masterplan sets out the future vision for the town, including developing the town's underused sites around North Street and hundreds of new homes. New homes in the town have been put forward as the more sustainable option, with shops, facilities and public transport all within walking distance and a need in the area for lower-priced homes. But the amount of affordable housing has been an issue on some developments, with developers citing rising construction costs and lengthy planning processes meaning schemes are no longer able to offer high numbers of affordable homes, if any.

We round up some of the biggest developments below and how they will change the face of Surrey's county town.

Debenhams

A planning application for nearly 200 homes on the former Debenhams site was narrowly approved by councillors on November 22. The development will see the old store knocked down and two new buildings replacing it alongside shops, a riverside walkway and possibly a boutique cinema. Councillors approved the controversial plans by six votes to five, debating the limited amount of affordable housing and the flood risk, with the Environment agency ultimately satisfied with measures put in place to reduce the risk of flooding. This site will be a key part of the town centre redevelopment and opening up the riverside for the public.

Train station

In February 2018, planning permission was granted on appeal for developer Solum's £150million regeneration of the land around Guildford Station. The borough council had refused the application because of concerns about the development's impact on the Grade II* listed St Nicolas Church, among other things. The Station Quarter when complete will include a new station building, more than 400 homes, as well as shops and office space. The developer's website highlights £25million of station improvements including a multi-storey car park and new plaza with shops and cafes.

Old Orleans restaurant

The former restaurant next door to the Odeon cinema is currently empty and the council, as the owner of the site, has no current plans to lease it out. Councillor Tim Anderson (Residents for Guildford and Villages, Clandon and Horsley), the authority's lead councillor for assets and property, said it would not be cost-effective to lease it in the short-term while there were plans to develop the building. He added: "The full plan for the Bedford Wharf area, including this site, forms part of the emerging town centre masterplan, Shaping Guildford's Future. Proposals are that the land will support a wide mix of uses. It will support the town centre with new homes, jobs, community and service spaces."



North Street

The area around North Street has been called the “poor relation” to the town’s picturesque high street – just don’t call them cobbles. The redevelopment of land around the bus station, including the refurbishment of the bus station itself, could bring nearly 500 new homes and part-pedestrianise North Street. Plans originally put forward in December 2020 included 700 homes, this has steadily been reduced after public consultations, as has the height of the buildings in the scheme. The tallest building has been reduced from 14 to 13 storeys and the second tallest from 10 to nine storeys. A video on the developer’s website shows public squares, restaurants, and new shops and cafes as part of the plans, which should be considered by the council’s planning committee in January 2023.

Wisley airfield

While it’s not within Guildford town centre, the proposed new town which may be built on the former Wisley Airfield could still have an impact. Campaigners have raised concerns about how local village roads will cope with traffic from the residents of the proposed 1,700 homes. The new town would be around a 20 minute drive down the A3 from Guildford, and a similar distance from Woking. The site is also just over a mile from the A3’s junction 10 with the M25, where junction upgrade works have started.

It may be just another reason to look again at Guildford MP **Angela Richardson**’s calls for the A3 to tunnel under Guildford to help with traffic and pollution, as she called for in Parliament in December.

An outline application for the plans will come to the council’s planning committee in 2023.

North street “fly through” video by developers: <https://www.northstreetregeneration.co.uk/virtual-flythrough.html>
Solum webpage on station development: <https://www.solum.co.uk/development/guildford/>

*Epsom and Ewell Times BBC partner - Local Democracy Reporting Service.

Related reports:

Tunnel vision for Surrey’s A3?

Housing plan flying in the face of opposition

Local poverty moves 12 year old to give up pocket money

22 December 2022



Merland Rise church caretaker told LDRS* reporter: “Last week a young girl, about 12 years old, came and knocked the door. She’d gone to Asda with her pocket money and spent it on food for the food bank. I was nearly in tears.”

Decision makers need to listen to the “lived experience” of people using food banks to tackle the root causes of poverty, according to one organiser. **Tadworth’s Merland Rise church** is home to a weekly food bank, as well as being one of Surrey County Council’s warm hubs, where people can go if they are struggling to heat their own homes.



Image: Staff, volunteers and councillors at Merland Rise church, which holds a weekly food bank and warm hub. Emily Coady-Stemp

While uptake on the warm bank had been slow, the modern church was still a hive of activity when the LDRS* visited in



late November to talk to some of those involved. The food bank has seen a rise in its users, and has moved downstairs to a bigger room in the church, while organisers are sure that as people use the church for other activities, the news will start to spread about the warm hub.

The building, where warm hub visitors can get a tea or coffee and a hot meal, is large and modern, and used for many community activities. Its administrator **Christina Lane** said she probably takes the building for granted given she goes to church there every week. She recognised that many people were struggling at the moment, and didn't want anyone to feel embarrassed about coming down. "There's no shame, we just have to club together," she said.

Jen Barnard is strategy lead at **Good Company**, which was established this year and is an umbrella organisation working with several food banks, the **Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network** and the **Epsom Pantry** among others.

She said there had been a rise in numbers of people using the food bank, compared to pre-pandemic levels, and that 10,000 food parcels have been given out this year across the five food banks in Banstead, Leatherhead, Tadworth, Epsom and Ewell.

Offering advice to those who visit on all aspects of their life, Ms Barnard said people may be referred on for mental health support, help with applying for disability benefits or advice on reducing energy consumption.

A key part of the work, she believes, is in listening to users and looking at what changes might help them.

"It seems like a small thing," she said, "but listening to people and understanding that everyone is an individual, everyone is unique. And a willingness [is needed] to try to think in new ways, and trying to really hear what people are saying and respond to it."

She said the organisation's aim was to work towards a poverty-free future, but in the meantime to support those who needed it. "Very much a part of our strategy is participation and trying to bring together people with lived experience with decision makers, trying to say: 'We can make changes locally that are going to improve people's lives,'" she added.

Andrea Lewis is the Merland Rise church caretaker, who helps run the building including the many events that go on there, from the food bank to birthday parties, exercise classes and more. Speaking before December's cold snap hit Surrey, she said the warm hub hadn't really "kicked off" but she thought the word would spread as more people visited the church, including for a Surrey County Council bingo event taking place that afternoon.

Word spreading throughout the community also means people are being brought together at a time when many are struggling. Surrey County Councillor **Rebecca Paul** (Conservative, Tadworth, Walton & Kingswood) and Reigate and Banstead Borough Councillor **Rod Ashford** (Lower Kingswood, Tadworth and Walton) both recognise that people get a lot out of volunteering for projects such as the food clubs that run in the borough.

The borough council scheme offers people discounted food for an annual subscription of £1 and £2 payment to attend each week, giving people more ownership of the situation. Cllr Paul said: "In an ideal world we would hope that we wouldn't have to do this. It does strengthen communities, it's building the social fabric that these things are going on."

The warm hub is open on Tuesdays from 10am-6pm, though it won't be open on December 27.

*Epsom and Ewell Times BBC partner - Local Democracy Reporting Service.

Cover image - for illustration only.

Surrey woman's coercion experience shared

22 December 2022



The powerful testimony of a woman who was subjected to years of coercive controlling behaviour has resulted in a man being handed an eight-year restraining order against her at Guildford Crown Court on 19 December.

Image - is purely for illustration. Neither the defendant or victim are represented.

The court heard how **Douglas Martin**, 42, of Winkfield Lane in Windsor, would intimidate and bully her so often as their relationship progressed that she has been left with acute anxiety and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Over a period of around three years, Martin would control where she could go, who she could be friends with and what belongings she was allowed to have, throwing away items he believed were not acceptable in their shared home.

Chores had to be done to a standard he would accept and he would become verbally abusive when things weren't done his way. The jury saw evidence of the extent of Martin's controlling behaviour after they were shown a photo of a Christmas tree she was made to decorate in the garden because he wouldn't allow her to have decorations inside the home. In addition, the court was played recordings of Martin's relentless berating and aggressive verbal abuse, used to belittle, exert control and a sense of superiority.



Martin was given an 18-month custodial sentence, suspended for 18 months, after the jury found him guilty of coercive controlling behaviour. He was also ordered to attend rehabilitation programmes, including a course on how to build healthy relationships.

In an impact statement, she relayed how constantly living in fear made her feel physically ill with heart palpitations and nausea. Speaking after the trial, she said: "Coercive controlling behaviour is happening to so many people who don't realise they are experiencing domestic abuse. I want those people to read what I have been through, recognise similarities in their own relationships and understand that it is not a situation they simply have to endure. They can find the strength to say enough is enough and trust in the fact that there is help, support and justice out there."

Investigating Officer **Natalie Ridley** said: "Today's result is testament to the courage of the victim in coming forward, disclosing the abuse and giving evidence in court, which is ultimately what secured Martin's conviction.

If someone is continually behaving in an abusive way towards you which controls how you live any aspect of your life, that is coercive control. You do not have to suffer alone or in silence. We have specialist support in place to help you and will do everything possible to pursue offenders and hold them to account for their appalling actions."

Some of the signs of coercive controlling behaviour include:

- controlling your finances, such as taking your wages or benefits or only allowing you a small allowance
- preventing you from working or studying or controlling your ability to go to work
- controlling what you wear
- controlling when you can sleep and eat
- repeatedly putting you down such as telling you that you are worthless
- isolating you from friends or family

You can find more information on how to report domestic abuse, including coercive controlling behaviour, and details of support organisations [here](#).

Recycling for food

22 December 2022



A group of environmental volunteers in Surrey is helping support its local community by recycling items that the council cannot accept through their kerbside recycling bin collections.

Catherine Banks, Founder of Tadworth TerraCycle, has signed up to a number of free recycling programmes offered by TerraCycle, collecting items including cheese packaging, Baylis & Harding products and packaging, and biscuit and snack wrappers that would ordinarily be destined for landfill or incineration. For each item of waste the group sends to TerraCycle, they are awarded with a monetary donation to the charities of their choice.

Pictured: Catherine Banks from Tadworth TerraCycle with two young volunteers and some of the items they have collected so far

The group has been raising money for charity since 2019 but recently its members have been prompted to donate funds to **Epsom and Ewell Foodbank** where they will be used for purchasing and sorting food and distributing it to those who need it most. More than £300 has been raised for the foodbank so far by collecting waste from the community via a public drop-off location in Tadworth.

The Trussell Trust reported that deliveries of aid parcels were up 14 percent compared with pre-pandemic levels, amounting to more than 2.1m parcels in the year to April 2022, and with the growing cost of living crisis facing the UK, this number is likely to increase in the coming months.

Catherine explained: "*We initially signed up to the TerraCycle programmes as a way to inspire the children at the local primary schools. By teaching them the importance of recycling and taking care of the environment at a young age we can ensure that the Earth will be in safe hands with future generations.*

"One of the schools we work with decided they would like to support the food bank and unsurprisingly all the other schools agreed it was a good idea. The cost of living crisis is affecting so many people and giving to the foodbank is the best way to help those most in need."



As well as the foodbank, the group also donates to other good causes including funding books for local schools and donating litter picking equipment to the local community group, and in the last 6 months more than £1,000 has been donated to the Dementia Society.

Catherine continued *"This really is a worthy cause so we encourage the entire community to get involved and drop these items at Tadworth Terracycle, 36 Bidhams Crescent, Tadworth. The more we recycle together, the more money we can raise for those who need it."*

The free recycling programmes which the group has signed up to include the Cathedral City Cheese Packaging Free Recycling Programme, the Baylis & Harding Free Recycling Programme and the Pladis (McVitie's and Jacob's) Biscuits and Snacks Free Recycling Programme.

The items the group sends to TerraCycle are recycled by shredding, cleaning and turning into plastic pellets which can then be used by manufacturers to create new plastic products such as outdoor equipment - reducing the need to extract new resources from the planet.

Related reports:

Reaching recyclables others cannot reach

Epsom students put Xmas style in Centre

22 December 2022



Fashion Imaging & Styling students studying at **Epsom's University for the Creative Arts** (UCA) have created a festive window display for the town's Ashley shopping Centre.

The local students created work that interpreted the festive season through cutting-edge fashion styling and eye-catching photography.

Their work was inspired by colour themes, seasonal climate, festive paraphernalia, and clothing - from wearing a wrapping paper design, referencing traditional tartans, or joining the ski elite.

"Collaborating with local shops and retail allows us to play an active part in the Epsom community. It will give residents the chance to view and share in the creative journey of our young creatives," said **Martin Sparkes, a senior lecturer at UCA Epsom.**

The Ashley Centre's Manager added: *"The Ashley centre is the heart of the town of Epsom for retail, and it is important that we work closely with the community. So, we are delighted to be able to collaborate with these talented students by giving them the opportunity to showcase their talent, as well as learn more about the retail industry from the shopping centre."*

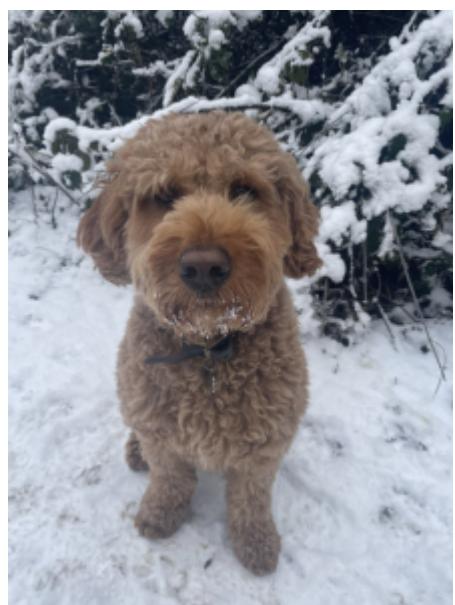
The window installation will be up until the end of January 2023.





Top snow dog gallery heats up

22 December 2022



Dog ownership in Epsom and Ewell saw a big rise during the pandemic, especially among young families. Poodle mixtures being evidently the most popular varieties purchased. And sometimes for £1000 or more. The Epsom and Ewell Times invites you to submit photos of your dog of any type in any of the open spaces we and our canine friends enjoy in the Borough. Please send in new photos taken outdoors during the Christmas period.

Image: Harvey, a two and a half year old male Goldenpoodle photographed by Claire Beim in Nonsuch Park on 13th December.

Send your photo with your name (let us know if you want anonymity or not), name, type, age and sex of dog and where and when the photo was taken.

Email to

admin@epsomandewelltimes.com

Related story:

[Dogs in Frost and Snow](#)

We will publish a gallery in the early New Year.

Thank you

Xmas balloon race and a hamper for charity

22 December 2022



Epsom Rotary are raising funds for many local good causes this Christmas. Take part in a virtual balloon race or guess the value of a hamper donated by **Honey and Bamboo** of Ewell.

Ballooning venture:

At a loss as to what to buy someone for Christmas? Buy them a balloon in our Christmas Day Balloon race. These are just like helium balloons and the aim is to see which balloon travels furthest in the week following Christmas. There is a prize for the winner!!

You can choose how much helium is put in the balloon and how thick the rubber of the balloon should be. You can choose the shape of your balloon and you can decorate it appropriately. You can also name the balloon eg Grandad Ron.

The difference is that the balloons do not exist in the real world. A computer simulates the flight of all the balloons, updating where they would have got to every 15 mins.

No ruining the environment and causing mayhem with birds and fish. You can log in at any time to see where you have ended up. Real weather data is collected for the simulation so, at Christmas, you may have strong winds and cold to contend with. You are racing against the other balloons in the Rotary Christmas race and a fun thing for your family is to phone round every day to see where the balloons have got to, plot the positions on a map and share it with the family



members.

Its great fun and so cheap. Each balloon costs £3 and £2 of that goes to our charity account. Fun and doing good at the same time!!!

You can buy a set of codes to give to others and they can log in using the code - your gift to them.

THEY MUST LOG ON THEMSELVES BEFORE CHRISTMAS DAY TO SET UP THEIR BALLOON READY FOR THE RACE WHICH STARTS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Click [HERE](#) to buy your balloons



Hamper Competition

Honey and Bamboo Ltd, in Ewell offers a Christmas Hamper as a fundraiser. Entries are charged £5.00 per entry to guess the total value of the hamper. The winner would be the nearest guess below the actual value of the Hamper.

Details of what the hamper contains are:

Bottle of Surrey Honey, Christmas pudding, Bottle of Red wine, Bottle of White wine, Roast potato spice mix, Ferrer Roche Chocolate, Bottle of Honey and Ginger, Mature cheddar Cheese, Spice mix for turkey stuffing, Gravy mix, Box of Ceylon tea, Box of mince pies x 2, Caramelised Onion Chutney, Two packets of Afiya wax melts, Bottle of dried tomato, Olive and Garlic in Virgin Olive Oil, Wax wrap, Box of Christmas Crackers, 250 grams of mix fruit and nuts, Christmas stocking filled with sweets.

Send your £5 (or more!) to Epsom Rotary Trust Fund and mark it Hamper

Account Number 17256844 Sort Code 60-08-01

[Click here to Entry Form](#)

Examples of local good causes supported in recent years by **The Epsom Rotary Charity Trust Fund** include:

Kids Out & Carers/Activity Holiday, Surrey Youth Games, Nescot Award, Young Musician, Rosebery School, Blenheim School, Youth Speaks, Young Photographer, French Speaking Competition, Young Champion, Employment Fair etc.



Giraffes adapt from Serengeti to Surrey vegetation

22 December 2022



Surrey County Council has partnered with Chessington World of Adventures Resort to help provide additional food for the Giraffes over the winter months. Surrey's countryside estates team regularly coppice the council's woodlands as part of essential habitat management on Surrey's countryside sites. Chessington have been working with them to coppice hazel, chestnut and other local tree species within Norbury Park near Dorking to feed their herd of Giraffes.

During the autumn and early winter, the hoofstock team at Chessington made regular visits to Norbury Park where they cut back browse (leaves, shoots and branches). The team transport the browse back to the Zoo where they chop into smaller pieces and store in airtight containers which are then placed in freezer storage. This enables an ongoing stock of fresh food to feed the giraffes throughout the winter months.

The 1,340-acre Norbury Park is part of a European Special Area of Conservation (SAC) within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and forms part of Surrey County Council's countryside estate which comprises over 10,000 acres open for public access.

Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for the Environment comments: "We are delighted to partner with Chessington to benefit not only the endangered Giraffes, but also the wildlife in Surrey. Coppicing areas of land on Norbury Park helps to improve the health and biodiversity of the woodland by opening it up to the sunlight, which allows a wider range of plants to flourish. We hope to extend this partnership with Chessington to benefit other parts of Surrey's countryside estate."

Rebecca Apperley-Gawn, Senior Hoofstock Keeper comments: "It's been great to partner up with the countryside estates team at Surrey County Council. Norbury Park is closely located to our Zoo so it's great to keep food miles down and the browse fresh for our herd. The Giraffe spend up to 75% of their day eating and it is vital for their diet that we include fresh food particularly during the long winter months. We look forward to continuing with this partnership over the coming years".

As well as providing feed for the Giraffes, the Chessington team also took back to the Zoo the stems of coppiced material to make additions to animal enclosures and entertain the Rhinos who love to push them around their enclosures!

For information on Surrey County Council's countryside sites, visit the website.

Let's not forget Surrey successes!

22 December 2022



Teams and individuals who do outstanding work on behalf of the people of Surrey have been celebrated at the first Stars in Surrey award ceremony. In part sponsored by Epsom based firm Atkins

The event - funded through sponsorship - saw standing ovations, laughter and some tears last week.

Winners included County Council staff who look after young people in care, help elderly people live at home for longer, keep Surrey's libraries thriving and encourage more people to access the countryside.



There was also special recognition for people doing extraordinary things at partner organisations like Ukraine UK Unity Woking.

Founder of Ukraine UK Unity and winner of 'The Make It Happen Community Hero Award (Empowering Communities)', Irina Garmash Creeger, said: "It was an emotional and very inspirational night. It felt like I was sharing a room with superheroes & each nominee had special superpower.

"I was pleasantly surprised, overwhelmed & honoured to receive the Award. Although the award was given to me as an individual, I wanted to share it with the incredible multicultural strong team of volunteers at Ukraine UK Unity.

"Our efforts have been stellar, our commitment is unquestionable, and our goals for the future will always involve spreading kindness, compassion and hope, and sharing in all that we have and know with people in need."

Leader of the Council Tim Oliver, who presented an award, said: "Stars in Surrey really was a wonderful way to pay tribute to some incredible people and teams who work in many different ways to benefit Surrey.

"Everything we do as a council is driven by our ambition that no one is left behind here, and the stories from the Stars in Surrey Awards are all a great reflection of that work.

"I'd like to say a big thanks to the sponsors of the event too that made it possible, and for everyone who nominated their Surrey heroes."

The final award presented on the night was the People's Choice Award, that received 1,200 votes, and was won by Christy Niven, a Specialist Speech & Language Therapist in the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning directorate.

The event was sponsored by Atkins, Pick Everard, Concerto, Vail Williams, Tile Hill and Impower.

Here is the full list of winners:

- Award for Outstanding Customer Service - **Claire Hodgson**, Trading Standards Specialist, Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards
- Team Award for Innovative Working - **South-West Asylum Care Leavers' Team**, Children, Families and Lifelong Learning
- Championing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Award - **Funke Adelekun**, Principal Project Manager, IMP Major Projects
- Greener Future Champion Award (Enabling a Greener Future) - **Sharon Newton**, Resource Manager, Children, Families and Lifelong Learning
- Young employee of the Year Award - **Durante Cartwright**, Weekend Library Assistant at Camberley Library, Customer and Communities
- Frontline Worker of the Year Award (No One Left Behind) - **Jo Ellis**, Occupational Therapist Assistant, Elmbridge Locality Team, Adult Social Care and Integrated Commissioning

Nominated by Amy Watts: "Jo is the hardest working person that I know and her dedication to her role and supporting vulnerable adults and children is something to be admired... One (urgent welfare visit) that sticks into my mind where the gentleman was really, really vulnerable, due to Jo's willingness to go the extra ten miles they managed to keep him home and safe... I couldn't think of anyone better to receive Frontline Worker of the Year."

- Entrepreneurial Person or Team of the Year Award (creating a sustainable economy) - **Caroline Price**, and **Helen Delatouche**, Countryside Team, Environment, Transport and Infrastructure
- The Make It Happen Community Hero Award (Empowering Communities) - **Irina Garmash-Creeger**, Ukraine UK Unity Woking

Nominated by David Meller: "On the fourteenth of March this year the UK opened its borders to Ukrainian refugees through the Homes for UK scheme... Irina stepped in to really make it happen for our community. She matched hosts with refugees, she set up the hub where refugees could get support on administration matters when they arrived... I think she is really one of Surrey's brightest stars."

- The Jacqueline Foglietta unsung hero Award - **Andy Baldwin**, Support Worker, Leaving Care Teams, Children, Families and Lifelong Learning
- People's Choice Award - **Christy Niven**, Specialist Speech & Language Therapist, Children, Families and Lifelong Learning

Surrey County News.

School transport failings lead to foodbanks...

22 December 2022



Families were pushed to using food banks and suffered an impact on their mental health when Surrey County Council-funded school transport was not provided for their children.

Surrey County Council carried out a review into the school transport “failure” after nearly 150 families, many with children with additional needs, were left without a way to get their children to school at the start of term.

Alongside the authority’s internal review, Family Voice Surrey carried out its own, including a survey which heard from 290 families about the impacts of children not being provided with transport to and from school.

The survey showed that 71 per cent of those who responded had experienced challenges with home to school transport during the autumn term and that 19 per cent of children and young people were unable to attend school or college on the first day.

Leanne Henderson, the organisation’s participation manager, said they heard from “desperate” families every year about issues with school transport, often right at the end of August, when transport had not been confirmed for the start of the school term.

She also raised concerns about the communication that came from the authority, with many families waiting a long time for contact from the council.

The approach of the council had been “very inconsistent” she told a meeting of the authority’s children, families, lifelong learning and culture select committee on Thursday (December 15).

Ms Henderson said: “We had some families that told us they had to use food banks because they were so financially disadvantaged due to not being able to transport their child to school, and that was really quite worrying.”

She also told the meeting that the organisation was “shocked” that 86 per cent of respondents said the situation had adverse effects on their mental health and well being, and increased anxiety.

More than a third of respondents reported financial issues.

She said: “They were the two elements that really hit home and made us wonder: ‘Why has this happened? What is going on?’”

The meeting heard that at least six factors had led to a backlog of cases at the start of the school year, including an increase in applications, a policy change earlier in the year and a lack of resources.

Ms Henderson said she could see council staff were “totally overwhelmed”, saying she could see from both sides in talking to the families affected and those working at the council.

She said: “I could see the team and I really felt for them.

“They were doing the absolute best that they could do under really difficult circumstances.”

The council’s report listed 50 recommendations to ensure the issues would not be repeated next year, and there were recommendations in the Family Voice Surrey report.

Councillor Clare Curran (Conservative, Bookham and Fetcham West), the authority’s cabinet member for education and learning said she had also been “swamped” by emails on the matter.

She said the review that had been carried out was a “substantial piece of work” and not a “five-minute fix”.

The council spends more than £50m a year on helping children and families get to school, which Cllr Curran told the meeting is a fifth of the entire net budget for children and families.

Cllr Curran added: “I don’t underestimate the task at hand, I don’t underestimate the work that needs to be done.

“But I’m confident that we are going to get it done and next September families, children and young people won’t suffer the failure that there was in September this year.”

ENDS

Tunnel vision for Surrey’s A3?

22 December 2022





Guildford's MP says it is time to tunnel the A3 under Guildford to help with traffic. **Angela Richardson** said "short-term sticking plasters" were not enough to help with the pollution outside the town, claiming the road is the most polluted in the strategic road network.

Speaking at Prime Minister's Questions on Wednesday (December 14) the Conservative MP said it was time to "think big", following the green light being given to the Solent free port this month. The development could lead to more traffic on the A3, with Ms Richardson highlighting the point where it narrows through Guildford as very polluted. She said "short-term sticking plasters" like nine-metre high air pollution barriers would further entrench divisions in Guildford and were not acceptable to her or to her constituents.

The MP said: "It is time to think big, it's time to think long term. It's time to tunnel the A3 under Guildford."

In response, the **Prime Minister** thanked the MP for her question, recognising it was an issue she had "long-championed". He said **National Highways** were "developing a range of solutions" for the A3 through Guildford and that the Department for Transport would consider the case.

Guildford councillors have been considering a congestion charge as one way to reduce traffic and pollution in the town, which is due to see major redevelopment in the coming years.

It has been met with concerns it could impact on businesses in the town and "discriminate" against those who can't afford to upgrade their cars.

Related report:

County Town to charge congestion?

Image- south entrance A3 tunnel at Hindhead. Martinvl cc

Gove gives pause for thought on Local Plans?

22 December 2022



A **Surrey council** has paused its plan for 6,000 homes after central government changes which could mean lower housing targets. Mole Valley District Council has paused its local plan saying it would be "unwise" to carry on with the process in the face of potential changes at a national level.

The authority released some green belt sites in the district for new homes, in a plan that was examined by government inspectors between January and October.

Image: Councillors-and-residents-concerned-about-Mole-Valley-Local-Plan. Emily Coady-Stemp

A local plan sets out a council's policies and sites for homes and infrastructure, with Mole Valley's setting out plans until 2037. Changes from central government are expected to be announced before Christmas, with Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities and Surrey Heath **Michael Gove** outlining in a letter earlier this month (December 5) that more control should be given to councils and local communities.

Councillor **Margaret Cooksey**, cabinet member for planning on the district council, said the council would pause its local plan process until it had a better understanding of what government was saying. Cllr Cooksey (Lib Dem, Dorking South) said in a statement the decision had not been taken lightly and given the progress made during an "exhaustive" examination of the plan, that pausing the plan is not what the council wanted to do. She added: "However, it would be unwise to carry on when we are not sure what the wider national planning policy situation is so we have committed to wait until such time that the Inspector can advise us on what should be done next. We had been due to consult with stakeholders on the modifications proposed by us and the Inspector in January. We remain hopeful that clarity will be provided and we will take the best course of action for our residents."

Mole Valley's only Green councillor, **Lisa Scott** (Charlwood) said she wanted clarification on what "pause" actually meant, calling for the plan to be "fully reviewed" when national policy had been revised. She said: "We wholeheartedly welcome the change in housing numbers required by government, which was leading to huge green areas being sacrificed to questionable house building targets and are very pleased to see that the local plan has been paused." But she raised concerns about areas of green belt still being included in the submitted plan, claiming some had been "significantly expanded" from the public consultation stage, so residents could not have their comments considered by the council.

She said possible changes also meant more brown field sites could be included and the types of homes could be reassessed, with terraces and town houses being more efficient to heat and cool than detached homes.

A letter from Michael Gove sent on December 5 said the changes would mean communities would "have a much more



powerful incentive to get involved in drawing up local plans". While he said planning would always start with a number of homes required in an area, though it should be an "advisory starting point" and not a mandatory figure. He added: "It will be up to local authorities, working with their communities, to determine how many homes can actually be built, taking into account what should be protected in each area - be that our precious green belt or national parks, the character of an area, or heritage assets."

The majority of homes in the local plan as it stands would be built in Leatherhead and Dorking but there was also concern about communities in rural areas being "ruined" in areas such as Hookwood where more than 550 homes were planned over four sites.

At the February meeting of the council where members voted to submit the plan, the administration promoted its maintaining of 99.3 per cent of the district's green belt in the local plan.

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1000 Surrey children wait for special needs plans

22 December 2022



A senior Surrey councillor admits it is "not good enough" that nearly 1,000 children with special educational needs in Surrey are waiting for an education plan. Nearly a third of those have been waiting more than the statutory 20-week limit for a Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), with a shortage in educational psychologists among the reasons the council put forward for the backlog.

Surrey County Council's cabinet member for education and learning said nationally for 60 per cent of children being assessed for an EHCP it was being done within the 20-week period. **Clare Curran** (Conservative, Bookham and Fetcham West) added: "Clearly it is not only a situation that prevails here in Surrey. Notwithstanding the national situation, I admit that it's not good enough and not one that we would expect or want for our young people."

An EHCP is put together by a council for children to outline what help they may need at school to support them with their special education needs and disabilities. There are 988 active EHCP requests at the council, of which 284 were known to be over the 20-week period, according to meeting documents.

Cllr Curran explained to a meeting of Surrey's council on Tuesday (December 13) that a shortage of educational psychologists meant a mandatory part of the EHCPs could not be completed, which was contributing to delays. She said recruiting and training up caseworkers had been a focus, and the workforce was now around 80 per cent staffed across the county.

Her answers came in response to a question put forward by **Lance Spencer** (Liberal Democrat, Goldsworth East and Horsell Village) who said families were being "left behind" by the council and asked what was being done to reduce the "excessive delays". Cllr Curran said that the council's ambition was to achieve "better timeliness" by the end of the year in completing EHCP plans. She added: "I know the situation is not good. I know we are not achieving the level of service that we would want to for our children and young people. We are doing our very best to address that and make sure that things improve."

In a written response, the council denied that parents threatening legal action sped up the time scales for getting an EHCP in place. Cllr Spencer's written question read: "It would appear that where the parents threaten legal action that the EHCP timescales are reduced" and asked for the number of parents who had written threatening legal proceedings.

A written response said data was not collected at the council in that way, adding: "This process is not influenced by the threat of legal proceedings."

The meeting heard that the issues impacting the outstanding EHCPs were also a factor in nearly a fifth of annual reviews not being carried out within six months of their due date.

A question put forward by **Catherine Baart** (Green, Earlswood and Reigate South) asked for an update on annual EHCP reviews at the authority. The response in meeting documents showed that at the start of term, 59 per cent of plans had an up-to-date annual review in place or were due within the next month, being 6,445 of the 10,963 plans in place. There were



also 4,517 plans that were overdue a review, of which 1,849 were more than six months overdue.

Documents said the availability of staff over the summer had played a part in fewer annual reviews being completed on time, and that an improvement should be seen by the end of the autumn term. Cllr Curran said she did not know if there was a target within the department for completing reviews on time, but that the service was prioritising reviews for children who were vulnerable, including those looked after by the county council or on child protection plans.

Councillors also raised the issue of home to school transport in Surrey, described as “the biggest concern of many of our residents” by the Green Party Group leader on the council.

The council’s leader, Cllr **Tim Oliver** (Conservative, Weybridge) apologised in October for a backlog in sorting school transport for some of the county’s most vulnerable children, when more than 150 families were left in limbo at the start of term.

Jonathan Essex (Redhill East) called on the council to look in its review at the views put forward Family Voice Surrey which had spoken to 290 families as part of its own review.

Cllr **Nick Darby** (Dittons and Weston Green Residents, The Dittons) told the meeting the internal review listed more than 50 recommendations for the council, which he described as “a terrible indictment of the situation”. He said the school transport was “best described as a shambles” and questioned the creation of a new board to oversee progress being made up of officers and cabinet members, many of them previously involved in the process.

On Thursday (December 15) a meeting of the council’s children, families, lifelong learning and culture select committee will consider the council’s review of what happened at the start of the school year.