### Council staff to get 6% pay increase?

November 14th, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Strategy and Resources Committee grappled with the decision of recommending a pay award for staff in the fiscal year 2024/25. The recommendation to the full council came amid challenging financial projections and a backdrop of heightened inflationary pressures.

The annual pay award, previously agreed upon for a four-year period spanning from 2020 to 2024, necessitated a new deal for the fiscal year 2024/25. Over the past four years, the cost of living pay award had been closely tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation, with a 3% cap implemented when CPI exceeded 3%. The council had maintained a partnership approach, actively consulting with the Staff Consultative Group (SCG) in accordance with its Employee Pay & Reward Procedure.

However, the past two years had seen staff receive pay awards beneath prevailing inflation rates. As of the latest data, CPI inflation for September was at 6.7%, down from 8.7% in April, with projections suggesting further moderation. Despite this, public sector unrest had been evident, and the government had accepted recommendations for pay awards in the range of 5-7% for millions of public sector workers, including police officers and teachers.

In an effort to gauge staff sentiment, the SCG conducted a survey, receiving 140 responses, representing approximately 40% of all staff. The overwhelming preference was for a single-year deal (82% in favor). Furthermore, 58% expressed support for including provision for recognizing those at the top of their pay grade within the pay deal.

The survey also indicated that 80% of staff believed an increase in the 5-7% range was appropriate, with a leaning towards the higher end. Notably, there was a sentiment that the council should prioritize funding the highest percentage pay award rather than opting for one-off, non-consolidated payments or other perks.

As the council faced a budget deficit of £1.1 million in 2024/25, financial prudence was crucial. Budget planning had assumed a 3% pay increase for the next four years. Any award above 3% would escalate the projected deficit, necessitating additional service income or savings.

Despite financial constraints, staff and wider-public sector settlements, coupled with the persistent high level of inflation, indicated that a 3% offer might not be acceptable to employees. The council also had to consider its position as an employer compared to neighboring authorities with higher starting salaries.

The UK National Living Wage (NLW) was expected to rise to at least £11.00 per hour (a 5.7% increase) from April 1, 2024, posing additional challenges for the council in maintaining pay differentials.

The committee was tasked with considering several pay options, each with financial implications. Option 1 maintained a 3% pay award, aligning with existing financial projections. Options 2 through 4 escalated the pay increase and subsequently increased the council's projected budget deficit. Importantly, all options ensured that staff remained eligible for pay progression, and no employee would be paid below the National Living Wage rate uplift.

Councillor **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch) expressed concern that the 3% pay award in recent years was below the rate of inflation, effectively resulting in a pay cut for staff in real terms. He advocated for a higher rate, specifically 6%, considering the impact of inflation.

Councillor **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) echoed Councilor Leach's sentiments, emphasizing that staff should not consistently receive pay awards below inflation. He supported the idea of a 6% increase.

Councillor **Alison Kelly** (LibDem Stamford) highlighted that the borough was among the lower-paying ones and expressed disappointment in the need to express concern about the living wage. She favored one of the higher rates.

Councilor **Alan Williamson** (Ra West Ewell) acknowledged the importance of considering the budget deficit implications and proposed a 5% increase, citing projections of a downward trend in inflation.

The debate continued, with various councillors expressing their views on the appropriate pay rise percentage. The discussion also touched on the distribution of staff salaries and the potential impact of the pay award on the budget deficit.

Ultimately, Councillor Leach suggested a voting process, starting with the highest figure (6%) and moving down until a majority-supported percentage was reached. A unanimous decision was reached in favor of recommending a 6% pay rise for staff.

The chair Cllr **Neil Dallen** (RA Town) clarified that this recommendation would be presented to the full Council, emphasizing that the percentage discussed did not guarantee approval but would be subject to further debate.

#### **Local Council stalwarts up for local honour**

In a proposal put to the Strategy and Resources Committee of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council on 14th November, councillors were urged to consider bestowing the prestigious title of Honorary Alderman upon three distinguished figures: former Councillors **Eber Kington**, **Chris Frost**, and the late **Clive Smitheram** (to be awarded posthumously).

The proposed honours come as a customary practice at the commencement of a new municipal term, wherein the Council contemplates honouring Councillors of longstanding and outstanding service, typically those who have held the position of Mayor of the Borough.

A formal nomination for the former Councillors has been submitted to the Council's Chief Executive, underscoring their significant contributions to the community.

Former Councillor Eber Kington, a stalwart in local governance, dedicated an impressive 36 years of service as an Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillor, presiding as Mayor of the Borough in 1999-2000 and Deputy Mayor in 2000-2001.

Similarly, former Councillor Chris Frost, with 24 years of devoted service from May 1999 to May 2023, held the role of Mayor of the Borough in 2015-2016 and Deputy Mayor in 2014-2015.

Tragically, the late Former Councillor Clive Smitheram, who served for 23 years until April 2022, is being considered for the posthumous title. His term included the role of Mayor of the Borough in 2010-2011 and Deputy Mayor in 2011-2012.

Eber Kington last served Ewell Court Ward until he switched to his new home ward of Horton where he lost out in this year's May election. He still serves as a County Councillor. Chris Frost for many years served his local ward of Woodcote and the late Clive Smitheram was a councillor in Ewell West. All three represented Residents Associations.

Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 empowers Local Authorities to appoint both Honorary Freemen and Honorary Aldermen. The criteria for appointment, whether as Freemen or Aldermen, hinge on an individual's distinguished service to the community or the Council.

The Act stipulates that the appointment must take place at a Special Meeting of the Council, convened exclusively for that purpose. The endorsement requires a two-thirds majority of Members in attendance. While Honorary Aldermen do not enjoy legal or social precedence, it is customary for them to be invited to Civic ceremonial events.

The proposal contemplates posthumously awarding the title of Honorary Alderman to the late Clive Smitheram, an unprecedented move prompted by his exceptional service to the council.

Related report:

Long serving Councillor Clive Smitheram dies at 76

## Flooding concerns defer Church St care home plan

9th November Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Planning Committee considered once more the plan to build a care home on the sites of the Church Street police and ambulance stations.

Concerns raised by neighbouring land owners about increased risks posed by the development to ground-water flooding to their properties triggered a deferral of the application.

Cllr Neil Dallen (RA Town) proposed the deferment for the applicants to provide a more detailed assessment of flood risk from a "recognized authority".

Concerns were also expressed about the safety of refuse and re-cycling vehicles entrance and exit from the development.

There was discussion about whether the application could be approved with the imposition of conditions to address these concerns but ultimately no final decision was reached.

Related reports:

Epsom care home plans

Two Epsom brownfield developments?

### Care home plan lacked the "wow" factor

9th November Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Planning Committee debated the proposal for a care home on the site of the now demolished Organ and Dragon pub on the junction of London Road and the Ewell-By-Pass. A site that has been a sore-sight for many years.

Cllr **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley) described the design as "bad" and the car parking provision as "ridiculous". She said "Coming into Epsom or out of Epsom, it really should be something people should go by and think "Wow that's lovely."".

The officer's report was quoted in the meeting: "While the Applicant is an organisation with no history of operating car homes itself, there is no reference to a care provider working in partnership with the organisation in (the previous) application. There is therefore very little indication of what type of care will be delivered on Site, whether the care home would operate with or without nursing care provision, and no description of exactly how the particular development would benefit local residents or the joint health and social care system."

Councillors stated more information was needed as to the exact type of care the applicant intended to provide. Then the committee could determine whether the car parking provision in the application was adequate. Presently, it was assumed that 25 spaces would not be sufficient given the site's proximity to one of the busiest junctions in the Borough with little to no street parking available.

After a lengthy debate and an initial refusal being voted the matter was deferred to a later meeting.

Related reports:

Epsom care home plans

"Blot on the landscape" - Ewell care home inked in

 $Image - The \ former \ Organ \ Inn \ alongside \ the \ care \ home \ design$ 

#### Ukrainians uplift all in Epsom evening of culture

On Saturday 11th a choir of locally settled Ukrainians crowned an evening of their nation's culture at **Epsom Methodist Church**. Several folk songs preceded a rousing rendition of the National Anthem of Ukraine, bringing the audience to their feet, right hands on hearts.

Cllr. **Kieran Persand** (Conservative: Horton Ward of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council) welcomed all. He said "In the face of adversity, the world has witnessed the unwavering spirit of the Ukrainian refugees. They have been forced to leave behind their homes, their loved ones, and the familiar landscapes of their homeland. It has been incredible to see how our community has stood with and welcomed them in and that should be celebrated too. Hosts who have offered shelter, compassion, and a sense of belonging – I thank you. It shows what can be achieved when communities come together."

The social and cultural evening was opened by **Diana Zadorizhna**, a young vocalist, accompanied on the piano by her mother, **Natalia** (also the Choir's director). Along with Diana, young **Nika Vlasova**, who played the violin, will enter the first round on Tuesday 14th November, of the Rotary Club of Great Britain's annual music competition, taking place at Epsom College.

Maria Zhornikova, a professional pianist, played several pieces by Ukrainian composer Valentyn Silvestrov. Yulia Komyshan, a regular performer at the Ukraine music evenings, delighted once again with varied pieces played on the Ukrainian bandura instrument.

Young Daniel Stets read a poem in both English and the original language by the Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko.

The Ukrainians expressed their gratitude to **Nina Kaye** and **Jo Sherring** and all in the **Epsom Refugee Network**, that they lead, for the relief they have brought to their lives.

If you wish to be informed of future Ukraine cultural evenings please contact the organiser Lionel Blackman at

epsommusicsoc@gmail.com

# **Bonkers about bunkers in Epsom**

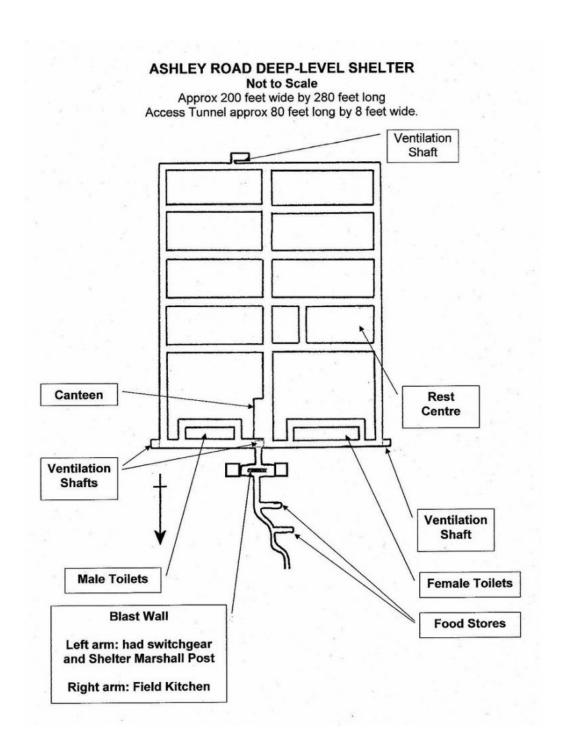
The Epsom and Ewell Times joined a group of bunker-busters to explore the little known World War 2 underground complex.

Located in 5 acres of private woodland on the west side of Ashley Road, Epsom can be found one of Epsom's largest, but least known historic buildings which needs to be preserved for the future due to its local and national importance.

The development was capable of accommodating 1500 people and included staff offices, a medical treatment area, a kitchen, toilet facilities and a small bathroom.

Although built at a cost of £1.3 million in today's money between 1941 and 1942, one visitor to the development left after 2 nights because he considered it to be "damp, chill and dismal" inside.

According to The Epsom and Ewell History Explorer, in 1942 people entering the development were advised to bring wraps or thick overcoats and lighting was by 12V bulkhead filament fittings served by metal conduited electric cables. The Epsom and Ewell History Explorer also states that 40 stand-by paraffin hurricane lamps along with fresh drinking water were supplied by the Epsom and Ewell Borough.



The Ashley Road Deep-level Shelter is an underground World War 2 air-raid shelter that has 17,000 square feet of tunnels ranging from 10-20 metres in depth (see plan kindly provided by Bourne Hall Museum) which sadly relatively few of the borough's residents know exists.

The spoil from the digging of the tunnels was piled up on top of them to increase the effectiveness of the shelter.

According to a report prepared in 1992 by Building Management South East, "The shelter is formed of a grid of tunnels bored and cut into the chalk and flint sub-strata and variously lined with brickwork and metalwork.

There are two main ventilation/access shafts, one at the north-east and another at the north-west corner of the shelter and a further shaft rises centrally from the north end"

"The entrance tunnel and all tunnel intersections are brick lined and the remaining tunnels are lined with either open mesh or galvanised corrugated iron sheeting, supported on various types of steel-sectioned portal frames."

The speed with which the WW2 air-raid shelter was built and the documented costs associated with its construction have given rise to a lot of speculation about what may have existed on the site prior to any building work commencing and talk of a Northern Line tube tunnel extension, a place for the dead as well as an earlier air-raid shelter funded by Lady Sybil Grant the daughter of Lord Rosebery is not uncommon on the internet.

Mr Jeremy Harte, the curator at Bourne Hall Museum does not believe, however that there is any evidence to suggest the Ashley Road Deep-level Shelter has any mysterious origins and has written to me stating that the land in question was requisitioned by Surrey County Council for a deep air raid shelter on 8 February 1941 and the tunnels were dug in undisturbed native chalk in the same year.

Perhaps the speed with which the underground air raid shelter was constructed should not come as a surprise to anyone, after all our country was at war with Germany and the threat of bombing and a German invasion were very real.

Whilst the Ashley Road Deep-level Shelter was not completed until after the blitz, no one knew how the war would develop, so it is comforting to know the people of Epsom and Ewell were prepared and would have had somewhere to seek refuge if the threat posed by Hitler's V1 and V2 rockets had escalated.

The Ashley Road Deep-level Shelter is now privately owned, but Hidden History Tours offer guided tours around the complex and can be contacted via their website.

The air-raid shelter serves as a lasting reminder of the devastating impact war has on communities.

# **Epsom & Ewell FC imperious victory in Imperial Fields**

Tooting & Mitcham 0-3 Epsom & Ewell. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 11th November 2023.

Cast your mind back to the 4th March 2003. Some young lad by the name of Justin Timberlake was at number 1 with Cry Me A River, Tony Blair was Prime Minister and our Manager was Adrian Hill, who was approaching the end of a club record thirteen year tenure in his second spell in charge. Oh yes, and we defeated Tooting & Mitcham United by four goals to three in an Isthmian League victory on our first ever visit to Imperial Fields.

Just over twenty years on, it was great to see our former Manager, now aged 78, amongst the crowd as we achieved our first victory over the Terrors since that date and it has to be said that this 3-0 win; our best since 1934, probably flattered us a little, as the match was very even for a large part of the contest. However, a second half sending off for the home side followed by a crazy own goal enabled us to cruise home comfortably by the time the final whistle blew.

There were five players in our starting eleven who had taken the field in Epsom colours last season, yet there were also three in the Tooting & Mitcham team! We renewed acquaintances with Tom Theobald, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, and Warren Colman, not to mention another former Salt Kieron Campbell who was with us in three earlier spells and this wasn't even including Captain Alex Penfold who was an unused substitute and their Manager Jamie Byatt who was not in the playing line up on this occasion.

For our part, we made just the two changes from our defeat against Sutton United with Tijani Eshilokun coming in for George Owusu, while Jaan Stanley played ahead of Luke Miller, although both of the replaced players were on the bench and would come on later in the contest.

The home side were in decent form and the match programme referred to their aim of reaching for the playoffs. Arguably they were, and remain under more pressure to achieve this season than our club does, and much of that pressure is centred on their Centre-forward Shay Brennan who had a number of goals already this season. However, one feature of this match was that he was kept very quiet throughout and it could be argued that this was our best defensive performance of the season as a result, as Harvey Keogh didn't have a massive amount to do in this match, certainly compared to the recent games we have played.

The first half probably should have finished 0-0 as neither team created a vast amount. Both keepers made the occasional save; Theobald, the hero in our penalty shoot out win over Selsey last season was down well to save from Rory Edwards, while Keogh made a couple of decent blocks too, but nothing too taxing. Despite the lack of real chances for either side, we took the lead in the 34th minute from a well directed Edwards corner that was challenged for by a number of players from both sides, but the ball looped up off them and was heading towards goal. Fortunately Eshilokun got a toe to the ball on its way down to get it over the line from close range and save me from trying to work out who the scorer would have been otherwise!

In reality, neither team probably deserved to be ahead to that point, but this is sometimes where expectation and pressure tells. A 0-0 draw would have been fine for us, but totally unacceptable to the home side who would have been well aware of our recent defeats to Knaphill and Farnham Town and aiming to replicate them. However, they were severely hampered in that target just two minutes into the second half when Edwards played a nice pass towards Stanley, only to then be taken out by a challenge from behind. It looked a naughty challenge, but was still a surprise to me when a straight red card was shown in the direction of Jayden Hutchings, although other people who saw the challenge from another angle said it was deserving of a straight red.

Ironically, the home side then had their best spell of the match, but they were struggling to find Brennan and Keogh kept out a good volley from the edge of the penalty area with his feet. He was then down well to make a low save that came from a decent move down the right and a near post strike, but the threat from the home side completely evaporated in the 81st minute when we scored our second goal. It's hard to say exactly how much credit we deserve for this one as it was mostly down to the home side as Sam Orisatoki sent the ball twenty yards back to Theobald who then missed the ball with his kick completely and despite rushing back to try and repair the damage, the ball had crossed the goal line by the time he was able to clear it and the Assistant flagged accordingly.

The goal knocked the stuffing out of the home side and the match was all over as a contest. Five minutes later we had a third as Edwards, arguably playing his best game for our club, got down the left wing and pulled the ball back to substitute Luke Miller in the vicinity of the penalty spot and he drilled the ball first time into Theobald's bottom right hand corner to seal the points. We had further chances in the closing minutes as Tommy Williams played a one-two with Ade Batula but dragged his shot beyond the far post, while Batula's shot was deflected over the bar, although no corner was awarded. In the end it didn't really matter and whilst the scoreline may have been slightly generous, I have bemoaned the fact that we were unlucky to lose by so many in recent weeks, so it's swings and roundabouts really!

I wrote last week that good, hard-working performances like those at Farnham and Knaphill were great, as long as we could take that on and get something from our next games, and I'm happy to report that we did exactly that at Imperial Fields with a performance that was very similar to the one at Spelthorne Sports three weeks previously, but was also our first three goal haul away from home in any competition since winning 3-1 at Billingshurst back in April and our largest away win since we scored five at Oakwood back in August 2022. We go to Sandhurst on Tuesday in good form and are now up to third from bottom of the table with games in hand. A good weekend!

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Tommy Williams, Nick Inwugwu, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Rory Edwards, Tijani Eshilokun, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Luke Miller for Stanley (59), Ade Batula for Eshilokun (77), George Owusu for Nelson-Roberts (87), Tino Carpene for Springett (93)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

# Surrey set for the first ever Festival of Skills

Hundreds of young people are set to be fired up about their futures at Surrey's first ever Festival of Skills.

The free one-day careers event will provide local students with the chance to connect with and learn more about some of the county's brightest businesses and training providers.

Up to 1,500 young people from schools and colleges across Surrey are expected to attend the event later this month (23 November 2023) at Sandown Park Racecourse.

The Festival of Skills will feature more than 60 exhibitors, including Samsung, British Airways, Pfizer, Haleon, and BAE Systems.

Public sector institutions will also be represented with the Animal & Plant Health Agency, NHS, armed forces and Surrey Fire & Rescue among those attending.

The event has been organised and funded by Surrey County Council, with support from the Association of Learning Providers Surrey (ALPS) and Surrey Event Professionals.

Cllr Matt Furniss, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport & Economic Growth, said: "The first-ever Festival of Skills is set to be a day to remember – providing young people with the chance to rub shoulders with major employers and be inspired about their futures.

"Such interactions can change people's paths for the rest of their lives, which is why we are delighted to have so many

businesses, public bodies and training providers exhibiting at the event.

"Providing opportunities for employers to connect with the county's future workforce is integral to our wider Skills agenda and achieving our mission to ensure No One is Left Behind."

The Festival of Skills is open to young people in education aged 14 to 18. Those attending will have access to inspirational talks and interactive displays, while also learning about potential career opportunities.

Sectors represented include the creative arts, construction, cyber security, health and social care, technology, engineering, public sector, and hospitality.

The event will also host the official launch of the new **Surrey Careers Hub**, which will work with the county's secondary schools, special schools and colleges to ensure every young person can find their best next step.

Schools and colleges are still able to **sign up to the Festival of Skills for the remaining afternoon slots**, but pre-booking is essential.

A small number of exhibitor stands are also available. Employers interested in attending must **register their interest via the Festival of Skills website**.

For further information visit www.surreyfestivalofskills.co.uk.

# **Local NHS Trust slow to respond to complaint**

A complaint lodged against **Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust** regarding the care provided to the late **Doreen Pepper**, a Parkinson's patient, has raised concerns about medication management and now delayed complaint response times, leaving her family in distress.

Mrs. Pepper, a former Head Teacher at Merland Rise First School, Banstead, Surrey, lived an active, independent life despite battling Parkinson's for approximately 16 years. However, her experience at St Helier Hospital took a distressing turn after a fall resulted in a broken hip and subsequent admission.

The family's complaint, submitted on April 26, 2023, outlines a series of lapses in medication administration during Mrs. Pepper's five-week stay. Despite the hospital's policy allowing Parkinson's patients to self-administer their medication, A & E staff allegedly denied Mrs. Pepper access to her medication upon admission.

The hospital reportedly lacked an accurate record of Mrs. Pepper's medication until October 27, 2022, causing considerable concern for the family. Instances of incorrect medication administration persisted, despite interventions from senior staff members and the family's visual aids.

The family created an A4 poster with medication times, but Mrs. Pepper was still given medication at inappropriate hours, impacting her ability to participate in crucial physiotherapy sessions for her recovery.

The hospital deemed Mrs. Pepper fit for discharge, intending to send her home with carer visits four times a day. The family questioned the adequacy of supervision between visits and the absence of overnight support, receiving little guidance from the hospital regarding future care options.

Furthermore, a delayed referral for physiotherapy post-discharge resulted in a significant setback to Mrs. Pepper's mobility, exacerbating her condition.

In response to the family's complaint, a spokesperson for Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust expressed regret over the extended response time. They assured a thorough investigation, led by senior clinical and management staff, and pledged to keep the family updated as they work towards a resolution.

The family, while acknowledging the strain on the NHS, urges hospitals to enhance complaint-handling processes to prevent prolonged distress for patients and their families awaiting answers on critical matters of care and accountability.

### Veteran lives celebrated at Epsom's Comrades Club

With funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, Surrey County Council has captured the life stories of four veterans and presented the booklets to them and their families in a special ceremony at **The Comrades Club, Epsom** in The Parade, Epsom

Part of the Force for Change project, the funding provided was to identify former service personnel living in Surrey who were not already known to the council, document their life stories and look at how veterans can be further supported.

The project focused on three areas of Surrey – Epsom & Ewell, Guildford and Surrey Heath. Activities organised to engage veterans included canal boat trips, basketball sessions, outdoors and indoor archery, fire skills and model-making sessions.

Alongside this, newly trained volunteers from **Bourne Hall museum in Ewell**, supported by trained staff from the Surrey History Centre worked with the veterans to document and record their life stories. The booklets created will be stored in the Surrey History Centre for future generations, and copies have been presented to the veterans and their families.

Chair of the Council, Saj Hussain is the Armed Forces Champion for Surrey County Council. He said: "Preserving the life stories of our veterans is not just a responsibility; it's a tribute to their sacrifices. Through the Force for Change project, we've had the privilege of documenting and sharing these remarkable journeys. These booklets serve as a testament to their dedication and resilience, ensuring that their legacy lives on for future generations and their families to learn from and be inspired by."

**Councillor Kevin Deanus, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue, and Resilience, said:** "Time is running out for us to capture these important stories and ensure they are documented for future generations. We are delighted to have been able to support this project, to be able to connect with and provide support for more veterans in Surrey."

One of the volunteers, Phil Read, documented Tegwyn Bryn Lloyd's story. Sadly, Tegwyn passed away last year shortly after completing his life story. **Phil said:** "He [Tegwyn] came across as a very gentle soul to me, God fearing and that. Very gentle but yet did his duty and that overrode everything else and that came across to me more than anything."

Throughout the project veterans were connected to the veteran hubs across Surrey for ongoing social activities and support.

If you or a family member is serving, has served, or if you support members of the Armed Forces community, you can download the free Forces Connect app from Apple or Google stores. The app signposts to a wide range of support services.