

Umpire pulls up stumps on cricket plan

30 April 2024



A long-standing Surrey cricket club's ambitious plans to construct modern facilities has sparked controversy in the local community, leading to a tense planning decision.

Banstead Cricket Club's plans to modernise its ground have been rejected, by the narrowest of margins. The club, which has been in the village for more than a century and a half, had hoped to update its dilapidated changing rooms and clubhouse to give it a home ground fit for the 21st century.

Residents living near the ground objected over the harm it would do to the character of the green belt. In a nail-biting finish it hinged on whether there were exceptional circumstances to build on the green belt. In the end it came down to the chairman to cast the deciding vote after members were split down the middle.

In an unusual turn of events the planning chair voted against officer recommendations and the cricket club's plans were refused. Councillor Simon Parnall said: "I knew this was going to happen. You have your name on the block sometimes."

He added: "Given the weight of the meeting, and the way that people have their feelings quite openly expressed, I, contrary to my normal position which is to support officers, I think now I ought to stand and vote for the reason for refusal because this is so controversial and it would need another go."

Reasons the club had wanted new facilities included money gained by renting out the space for events. It was also in part due to the massive growth of the game among girls and women, and therefore the need for changing rooms for women.

Martin Long said he was representing the 107 objectors who had written in against the development, where he claims the vast majority live in Banstead Village. He said: "The report does not mention that of the 157 letters of support only 10 per cent are from addresses within the borough.

He said there are three other community venues in the borough, all with better access, and questioned why a fourth was needed. He told the meeting that the Lady Neville park was given to the people of Banstead, not the Banstead Cricket Club.

Opposition focused on the scale of the development and not the club's need to modernise. He added: "A vast two-storey development would be an appalling blot on the green belt, the surrounding treeline and the view from the park itself.

"A single storey cricket club house is all that is needed not a vast function venue with an all round terrace. The impact of noise and traffic that this new facility will have on residents is unimaginable."

The Thursday, April 24, meeting of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council's planning committee heard the primary focus of the club was the provision of cricket but it needed revenue for other activities to survive financially. The club wanted to demolish its current clubhouse and replace it with a new modern facility to conform with "Sport England and the sports governing body standards".

It also wanted to refurbish its pavilion to create a dedicated changing space for women and girls. The plans had been recommended for approval and received more letters of support than opposition during the consultation stage, although it was argued the majority if this came from outside the borough.

Ray Smythe, a resident of De Burgh Park which backs on to the grounds, spoke against the plans. He said they were inappropriate for the green belt and should only be approved if there were very special circumstances.

He said: "The positioning of the new premises will eliminate the only distinct view from the recreation ground that is not currently obscured by buildings in the area." He added that clubhouse's second floor was not needed for cricket and the financial implications were not a planning matter. He said they could also reduce the cost of the project by scaling back the clubhouse.

Arguing for the plans was Ian Thorpe who told the meeting the club had been in Banstead since 1850 and that its facilities were no longer fit for purpose. The new proposals, which had already been scaled back and revised, was needed to fit in with the latest guidelines for sport.

He said the clubhouse was no longer compliant for all players regardless of gender or age and that the site would operate under its current licensing hours with no desire to extend them further. He said: "Its hoped that the facility will be more than just a cricket club to the local community. With this proposal Banstead Cricket Club is seeking to offer its members and the local community a clubhouse to be proud of."

Related reports:

Just not cricket to replace Banstead pavilion?

Image - visualisation of new pavilion and current inset.

Should Nonsuch Park go to the dogs?

30 April 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will launch a six-week consultation on commercial dog walking in Nonsuch Park from Monday 29 April.

The consultation was commissioned by Nonsuch Park Joint Management Committee following concerns raised by visitors about the increase in dog walkers with multiple dogs in the park.

Ahead of implementing any measures to control commercial dog walking, the Committee is keen to consult with the public and stakeholders about this issue to help inform any future decisions.

Officers from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will also be at Nonsuch Park on the following dates and times to answer any questions the public may have:

- 29/04/2024 - Cheam Gate, 8:30am-10:30am
- 15/05/2024 - London Road Gate, 10:30am-12:30pm
- 22/05/2024 - Sparrow Farm Road Gate, 12:30pm-2:30pm.

Councillor **Julian Freeman**, (Lib Dem College) Chair of the Nonsuch Park Joint Management Committee, said: “We are aware that Nonsuch Park is hugely popular with dog walkers and while most dog walkers are responsible, concerns have been raised about the growth of commercial walkers with multiple dogs.

“It is important that as many people as possible engage with the consultation, so the Committee can understand park visitors’ thoughts, concerns and suggestions about dog control and commercial dog walking. Their input will help us make informed decisions that balance the needs of both dog walkers and the broader park community.”

The consultation survey is available on the Epsom & Ewell consultations webpage - Consultations | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (epsom-ewell.gov.uk).

The survey will close on 3 June 2023.

Nonsuch Park is managed and maintained by a Joint Management Committee, comprising an equal number of Councillors from Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and the London Borough of Sutton. The committee Chair rotates between the two councils annually. The two councils fund, on an equal basis, the running of the park, after taking income into account. The committee is covered by the political balance arrangements.

One flat season in Epsom ends as another begins

30 April 2024



Our season concluded in appropriate fashion on Saturday as we laboured to a 1-1 draw against Guildford City at the Spectrum.

Five days prior to this match, Tadley Calleva’s win over Colliers Wood United ensured that our two recent wins over Fleet Town and Abbey Rangers had given us enough points to secure our safety, although for some reason our club never made the effort to inform our “Dear supporters” (as they recently called them) of this fact. Either way, Salts players and supporters alike were able to relax a little going into this contest, and I have to say it showed, as we started well but tailed off. Throw in the usual defensive error that confirmed we have to wait until at least August 2024 before we can record our first clean sheet of the calendar year and it meant that the point was enough for our hosts to be certain of confirming their own safety, although as it turned out, results elsewhere meant that they would have survived even had they lost.

We went into this match chasing a third straight win, which would have been the first time all season we had managed

this, but it's hard to know how bothered we were about it. Our Manager Warren Burton was absent and we only named thirteen players in our line up; one of whom, Jaevon Dyer, only arrived ten minutes before kick off. There may have been some valid reasons for the absences and delays, but the question has to be asked about how many players we would have been able to name, if we had still required any points from this match.

Our regular supporters were there in decent numbers, including the returning Alex McKay Senior who appears on the mend after being away for much of 2024. The home side were also well supported at the Spectrum, leading to an attendance of 151 and a well-stocked viewing area on what is realistically the only real open side of the ground.

We had the first opportunity of the match in the sixth minute when a square ball from Thompson Adeyemi reached Sirak Negassi on the edge of the penalty area, but the ball bobbed on him and he skied it well over the bar. Our Captain Ethan Nelson-Roberts was flattened by a late challenge that ought to have earned a yellow card, but didn't, before Zach Ingham-Wright saw his strike on goal tipped over the bar by Adam Longman. However, Negassi then received a similar opportunity to his previous one in the 16th minute when an Adam Green corner missed everyone at the near post and found our winger, who curled the ball first time into the far corner of the goal to put us ahead. Negassi has been unfortunate in my opinion to find himself as a substitute so often, and his 21 appearances (from 48 matches) from the bench are the second most in club history, trailing only Dale Marvell's 22 in 2000/01 (from 56 matches) and he turned out to be a very good player!

We may have had a poor season, but it has been our opponents that have been in the worst form of all teams with only eight points collected since the end of September. The only way that they could have gone down was with a four goal defeat here and a Colliers Wood United win against Sheerwater, so it was always an unlikely outcome, but our early goal may well have caused a bit of concern within the home support at that point. However, what we didn't realise was that we had already seen the sum total of our attacking threat for the day. Guildford picked up their level and started to threaten.

The big battle going on was between Reece Tierney and Guildford City's Ben Mitchell and Tierney was lucky to escape without a card of any colour after bringing him down just as he appeared to break through on goal, albeit some 45 yards out. In the course of a normal match I'm sure he would have picked up a yellow card for this, but the referee clearly didn't want to hand any out and he escaped with a warning.

We had a half-chance on the thirty minute mark when Negassi's left wing cross was met by a low header by Carl Oblitey, but Longman kept it out fairly comfortably and in fact things were much more precarious at the other end as a close range header clipped our cross bar, only for a corner to be awarded, much to the dismay of our keeper Dan O'Donovan. The corner then struck the frame of the goal before being fed to the far post where our keeper had to be down quickly to turn a low shot around his post, but from the next corner, another Guildford header smacked against our bar again before being headed up in the air by Ayran Kugathas and into the arms of O'Donovan for a lucky escape.

The second half started with a couple of substitutes for the home team and a third would follow soon after. Negassi struck a corner at goal on the volley, but the contact wasn't quite right and the ball dribbled through to Longman. However, the second half belonged mostly to the team that needed the points more and a far post header by James Glover from a corner was only just wide.

A Luke Miller strike went harmlessly past the post, but Guildford were looking the more likely to score and in the 72nd minute that's what happened, although in typical Epsom and Ewell style, we were the authors of our own misfortune as Tierney went to head a goal kick back up the field, only for the ball to fly backwards off his head and into the path of Mitchell. Nelson-Roberts tried to close him down, but the damage was done and he clipped the ball over the advancing O'Donovan from eight yards for the equaliser. We had another scare in the closing moments as a long ball nearly bounced straight over O'Donovan. Fortunately, he got a slight hand to the ball and Tierney was just able to get the ball clear of the menacing Mitchell, who certainly looked as though he should be playing for a team higher up the League.

We just had time in the 89th minute to see our substitute keeper Toby Colwell come on as an outfield player. Whilst it was a novelty to see and a reward for Colwell's loyalty; sitting on the bench for most of the year, it highlighted the dysfunctional nature of our season which started so poorly under James Scott, before we recovered under Steve Springett to a position of relative safety, only for Warren Burton and Gwynne Berry to take over in January and record just four wins. We close the chapter on 2023/24 in a rather surprising 16th place, which was higher than we had been at any time since August, although it really just provides an indication of how poor the bottom five clubs have been this season! It is assumed that our Management team will be back for next term, which would be the first time for three years and it will be interesting to see what new faces appear, as I'll be honest, we need quite a few if we are not to endure another difficult season; one where it must be remembered, two clubs will be relegated, not just one.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Ethan Nelson-Roberts (c), Adam Green, Reece Tierney, Ayran Kugathas, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Carl Oblitey, Zach Ingham-Wright, Sirak Negassi

Subs: Jaevon Dyer for Kugathas (67), Toby Colwell for Ingham-Wright (89)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom UCA alum praised by Taiwan President

30 April 2024



Leo Tsao graduated from UCA in 2017 with a BA (Hons) in Fashion Atelier.

He has just won season 16 of **RuPaul's Drag Race** as his banana-themed glamazon Nymphia Wind.

Chip Harris, Programme Director in Fashion at UCA, who taught Leo for the entirety of the course and helped manage his final collection, said: "Leo developed a great range of skills on the course and as a very conceptual thinker, he was always ambitious and individual in his approach. Leo's graduate collection epitomised this, which demonstrated an exceptional technical and creative skillset that was also selected to show at Graduate Fashion Week.

"I am not surprised to see his ascension within the RuPaul's Drag Race universe, and it is good to see that he used his skills to showcase amazing costumes, styling and visual narratives."

UCA President & Vice-Chancellor, **Professor Jane Roscoe**, added: "The whole of UCA, and especially our School of Fashion and Textiles, is celebrating the unique and incredible talent of Nymphia, and her victory in RuPaul's Drag Race. As 'America's Next Drag Superstar', we are so excited to see what she does next!"



Among the high-profile people congratulating Nymphia on her win, was the **President of Taiwan, Tsai ing-wen**, who said: "Congratulations to you, Nymphia Wind, for being so accomplished in the difficult art form of drag, and for being the first Taiwanese to take the stage and win on RuPaul's Drag Race. Right after being crowned queen, you said 'Taiwan, this is for you'. Taiwan thanks you for living fearlessly."

Top Image: *Nymphia Wind in her finale outfit. Credit: Entertainment Weekly/Mettie Ostrowski*

Left image: *Leo Tsao, pictured for his final collection shoot at UCA in 2017.*

Surrey County Council's new CEO defends "unlawful" email

30 April 2024



Surrey County Council's soon to be in post Chief Executive and current Wiltshire Council's CEO has insisted that an email he sent to staff in November 2022, which was recently judged unlawful, was to correct a GMB (General, Municipal and Boilermakers) Union lie.

Terrence Herbert, who is preparing to leave his Chief Executive role to transfer to Surrey County Council, has gone on the record to speak about the events surrounding the case.

GMB, the union for Wiltshire Council staff, claims the email intended to deter its traffic wardens from voting for industrial action. The vote was part of a long-running dispute in which Wiltshire Council is seeking to remove contractual out-of-hours pay enhancement.

Written by Mr Herbert, the email claimed that GMB's representation of the proposals as a "10% pay cut" was "really misleading", and urged staff to "consider carefully" whether further strikes would support a resolution.

Bristol Employment Tribunal ruled that the correspondence broke industrial relations law.

The leader of the council, Richard Clewer, has reported that £21,395 was spent on defending the case.

Wiltshire Council is currently seeking legal advice as to whether there are grounds to appeal the decision.

Mr Herbert said: "We entered into all of our negotiations in good faith and professionally, with all three of our recognised unions - UNISON, Unite and the GMB. Unfortunately, from the outset, GMB's behaviour and actions were in sharp contrast to that of UNISON and Unite, and they seemed to have set their course not to agree."

He described the pay policies which Wiltshire Council is seeking to change as "historical" and "no longer fit for purpose." Mr Herbert said it was "very hard to justify" - to residents and staff who do not receive the same entitlement - policies that amounts to "£800,000 per year in extra payments."

He noted: "The only other way that you can make those savings are through redundancies and the position that I took from the outset, and it's one that I stand by now and do not regret, is that I didn't want to make people redundant." He added: "There are considerably more requirements on local government than there were before, but there isn't the money. Therefore, we have to make savings."

Following negotiations, the council offered a four-year pay protection for concerned staff, which was accepted by UNISON and Unite the Union, but rejected by GMB.

Regarding his email, Mr Terence said: "There had been a number of announcements or media statements made by GMB in the run up to another ballot. In those statements, they had said that we had reneged on a promise to offer lifetime pay protection. We were very clear that that was a lie, that we had never offered lifetime pay protection."

Referencing his staff, he also said: "I didn't intend for them to feel threatened, I intended for them to be informed. I genuinely believed that what I was doing was informing my staff."

"Whenever you see an organisation like GMB openly misrepresenting what has happened, you think that there is a duty for you to correct the record, and that's what I was doing."

Reflecting on the impact of the case, Mr Herbert concluded: "It is stressful, it takes a personal toll, but at the end of the day, I go home and try to switch off. But the personal attacks, which then lead to offensive comments, as a direct result of inflammatory, incorrect statements that have been made by supposedly professional organisations, that takes a toll."

When approached for comment, a spokesperson for GMB said: "The findings of the tribunal are clear that his arguments are unconvincing. For him to attack the findings of the tribunal is disingenuous and I'm sure residents of Wiltshire will find it equally concerning."

Jessica Moriarty

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Image credit: Wiltshire Council

Antiques Roadshow's poor sign of value?

30 April 2024



In my article of 30 July 2023, I reported on the sale of a 4-inch high Japanese cloisonne vase at auction after it had been purchased for only a couple of pounds in an Epsom High Street charity shop.

Readers may recall that the charity shop find referred to sold for many thousands of pounds, so when I discovered that one of my own charity shop finds was identical to a bronze wild boar that featured in an episode of the BBC's Antiques Roadshow TV programme, I became very excited.

Upon discovering that my **porcine** statuette was Roman and potentially worth ten thousand pounds, I positioned it away from Dobby, my cat on a much higher shelf so it would not get knocked over and damaged.

The Antiques Roadshow expert advised the young man who dug up his bronze Roman wild boar as a child to report his find, but who should anyone in Surrey report similar finds to?

Dr Simon Maslin FSA ACIfA is the Finds Liaison Officer for Surrey who works on behalf of the Portable Antiquities Scheme for Surrey County Council at the Surrey History Centre in Woking, Surrey.

The role of Dr Maslin is to identify archaeological finds in England and Wales, but this does not include charity shop finds with no secure provenance like my bronze boar.

Dr Maslin is unable to consider finds unless they are archaeological items found (not bought) locally and he cannot provide assistance with valuations.



The items considered therefore include my metal detecting finds eg the medieval cruciform pendants shown in the photo because Dr Maslin is the point of contact for items that people may find when metal detecting, gardening or out walking etc which may be part of the local archaeological record. He is also the person to contact for any finds which need reporting under the 1996 Treasure Act.

If Dr Simon Maslin had appeared on the BBC's Antiques Roadshow TV programme, he would have been quick to tell the millions of people watching at home that the bronze boar identical to the one I found in a charity shop was not Roman and that it was in fact of far eastern origin, most probably Javanese and a modern reproduction that is only worth a few pounds - not ten thousand pounds as claimed by the Antiques Roadshow expert (pigs may fly).

If nothing else, my miniature, bronze Javanese wild boar figure has become a conversation piece that has enabled me to

write this article about who to contact when real Roman artifacts are dug up in a garden.

My bronze wild boar has now been returned to its original position on a lower shelf, as I no longer live in fear of Dobby the cat knocking it over.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme website and database can be accessed through the British Museum's website at www.finds.org.uk.

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30 April 2024



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Police post taken down before election

30 April 2024



The Surrey Police and Crime Commission social media team were made to remove a graphic from Twitter, now X and Facebook after a complaint it could influence the May 2 elections.

The post was made during the run up to the election when public bodies are supposed to remain completely impartial to avoid favouring any one candidate or using taxpayer money to look to influence voters.

The message said it had re-opened funding for local services that promote community safety, support children and young people and help reduce reoffending in Surrey. It was accompanied by an image that showed more than £2m had been provided to support local services in the last financial year.

The complainant, the Liberal Democrat Councillor for Bagshot and North Windlesham Richard Wilson, felt this was a breach of pre-election publicity rules.

Writing to the Monitoring Officer, he said: "Any reasonable person would conclude that the post, in particular its use of the graphics, is likely to improve the electorate's opinion of the incumbent PCC (Police and Crime Commissioner). This constitutes a breach of the guidance and, therefore, of the rules laid out in the Acts.

"It would be possible to direct readers to the funding website without publicising the £2m which has already been provided. This piece of information is wholly unnecessary and its purpose is clearly to promote the PCC. This is a use of public resources to influence an election."

After receiving the complaint, Alison Bolton, chief executive and monitoring officer of the Police and Crime Commission, told the communication team to delete the images but felt the text was fine to be republished – and did not merit an apology.

Media policies had been reviewed ahead of the pre-election period and the use of social media and their website has been "significantly" limited, she added.

The posts were scheduled, she said, as the funding process opened on April 1 and they wanted to give organisations the greatest amount of time possible to apply. She said: "Your view that the posts are "likely to improve the electorate's opinion of the incumbent PCC" is arguably a subjective one. I can assure you that the posts were made in good faith by comms colleagues with the intention of promoting a funding opportunity and not, as you suggest, to "promote the PCC. "We had purposefully not made reference to the incumbent PCC or included any images of her.

"That said, I recognise that the aim of promoting the funds could have been achieved with a simpler post and as such, I have asked my colleagues to remove the posts that include the 'graphic'. We will re-issue the link, but I don't believe that issuing an apology is necessary."

A spokesperson for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner said it restricted its output to some "business-as-usual work" in line with pre-election guidelines.

They said: "On April 3, the Communications Team posted a message on social media highlighting the process for which organisations and services can apply to our funding streams which opened for the new financial year two days earlier on April 1.

"These streams provide vital support for some of the most vulnerable people in our communities including victims of crime, young people and domestic abuse survivors as well as funding important projects that enhance community safety across Surrey.

"Allocating these funds and commissioning these important services is a significant role that the OPCC undertakes and we

wanted to give local organisations the greatest amount of time possible to apply. The message posted did not name or reference the current PCC or contain any image of her. However the message did have an accompanying graphic which highlighted the amount of funding the office had provided to support local services during the last financial year.

“The post was created in good faith with the intention of promoting the funding opportunity and was not designed to promote the current Commissioner. However upon review by the OPCC Monitoring Officer, the decision was taken to remove the graphic and replace it with one that had removed the reference to the amount of funding given last year to avoid any inference during the pre-election period.

“The current commissioner was not aware and did not have any involvement in the creation of the original message.”

The elections for the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner take place countywide on Thursday May 2. Counting takes place the following day with the results expected around 2pm.

The vote takes place across Surrey with the count taking place the following day with the result expected to be announced between 3pm and 4pm.

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Excellence in aging for LGBTQ+

30 April 2024



More can be done to make sure LGBTQ+ adults age with dignity and their needs are met in the UK, say researchers from the **University of Surrey**. Together with Tonic Housing, the UK’s first LGBTQ+ affirmative retirement community, researchers from Surrey are launching The Life House Project – a participatory theatre-based initiative to explore the unique housing and care needs of the LGBTQ+ community in London.

Many LGBTQ+ individuals face anxieties about housing and care as they age. The Life House Project aims to address these concerns by providing a platform for older adults to share their experiences and explore solutions collaboratively.

Through seven workshops and one-on-one interviews, the project will create a space for participants to use creative expression through theatre, scriptwriting, and poetry. This approach will help participants tell their stories and highlight their specific needs and desired forms of support.

Dr **Georgia Bowers**, Lecturer and Programme Leader of Applied and Contemporary Theatre BA (Hons) at the Guildford School of Acting and lead researcher, said:

“We are particularly interested in how creative methods can support LGBTQ+ older adults to not only share their own experiences but also become advocates for themselves and the wider LGBTQ+ community. By communicating their concerns and aspirations through theatre and creative expression, we hope to ignite a conversation that leads to a more inclusive future for individuals in terms of housing and care.”

Dr **Richard Green**, Surrey Future Fellow at the University of Surrey, said:

“We are excited about the potential of theatre and creative expression to empower LGBTQ+ older adults to share their stories and advocate for better care and housing options.

“This project goes beyond simply collecting data; it’s about creating a space for authentic expression and collaboration. By working together with participants to explore their needs through creative mediums, we aim to amplify their voices and create a lasting impact on how LGBTQ+ care is approached.”

Professor **Andrew King**, Head of Sociology and Co-Director of Surrey’s Centre of Excellence on Ageing at the University of Surrey, said:

“The Life House Project can make a significant contribution to creating more inclusive and supportive housing and care environments for LGBTQ+ people. It provides a new interdisciplinary and creative approach to highlight often hidden inequalities and issues and we hope it will influence policy changes and inspire service providers to create spaces where individuals can truly feel safe, valued, and supported as they age.”

A celebratory event will also be held on Monday 24 June, to coincide with London Pride week. This event will showcase a

project film documenting the journey of The Life House Project and its impact on participants. The event will also serve as an opportunity to connect the project's findings with the broader LGBTQ+ community and discuss potential solutions for creating more inclusive and supportive housing and care environments.

Bob Green OBE, Head of Operations at Tonic Housing said:

"Tonic is very excited to take part in the University of Surrey's Life House Research Project. The use of theatre and drama to examine the themes of housing and care in later life has piqued the interest of many residents and it has attracted other older LGBT people from outside Tonic.

"We are particularly interested to learn about residents' experience of living in the UK's first LGBT+ Retirement Community as well as how housing and care services for older LGBT people can be improved.

"Some older LGBT people have had terrible experiences in the past but having worked with University of Surrey researchers, we value their inclusive approach and supportive attitude, so we look forward to exploring challenging incidents safely and positively."

Leatherhead residents call for more policing

30 April 2024



A serious assault that left a man fighting for his life has left a community in shock - with some saying there aren't enough police officers and others calling for greater CCTV provision.

On Sunday night (April 21) a man was attacked near a Leatherhead nursery by up to four teenagers.

Surrey Police has said an 18-year-old man and a 17-year-old boy have been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder with enquiries ongoing to identify and locate two other people.

Surrey Police say they do not anticipate a wider risk to the public at this time.

The violent attack, in Cleeve Road, comes on the eve of the May 2 Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner elections. with people able to cast their vote on how crime is tackled and to make sure the police provide a good service.

The Local Democracy Service visited the town to get people's views on whether they felt safe, and if they planned to vote in the upcoming ballot.

If the 2021 election is a fair guide then the candidates have their work cut out to get their message to the public with the winning candidate getting 155,116 total votes, out of a Surrey population of 1.19 million,

As a percentage that figure is low but overall it makes them the individual with the highest single vote total in the county, more than any MP.

Leatherhead is one of the main towns in Mole Valley and lies near the M25. This good connectivity has brought its own issues, particularly transient crime.

One shopper in the town felt the area was no different to anywhere else, saying: "It's the same as in most towns. You get young kids. There was a robbery the other day at Leatherhead Station which is worrying, especially if you get a train on your own."

She added that she wasn't aware that elections for the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner were due to take place on May 2.

After the Cleeve Road attack, residents took to social media calling for better CCTV, an issue that has taken greater prominence after it emerged that 77 public-space cameras in Mole Valley were left unmonitored when Reigate Police Station closed due to dangerous RAAC.

Jen Royal said she wouldn't be voting in the elections as she was unaware of who was running or what they stood for, but was not happy with the direction of travel the force was going.

She said: "Policing on the whole....People call them out and it doesn't matter if it's small crimes or big crimes and they don't appear to get a lot of response."

One shopper who has lived in Leatherhead for 50 years was more aware of the four candidates standing for the position.

She told the LDRS: "It's not safe to go out in the evening. That's why I take a stick".

She says the area has changed a lot in that time with many of the smaller shops disappearing, adding "it's like a ghost town...you never see any police officers.

“We used to see them walking down the road and quite a few cars going by, but now nothing. It’s a shame. There should be more police on the streets.”

Asked if she had heard of the upcoming elections, she said she already voted before suddenly opening her bag saying “thank you for reminding me, I need to post it, I’m carrying it here in my bag.”

The Sunday assault happened at night in the north of the town and the victim was taken to hospital and is in serious condition.

According to the most recent published data there were 41 crimes reported in February in Leatherhead, including 11 instances of violence and sexual offences, eight for anti-social behaviour and six for public disorder.

Olive Lee was on her way to the Fairfield Centre in Leatherhead, somewhere she sees as a real asset to the town and where she visits regularly. Some of the people the LDRS spoke with wished north Leatherhead had similar facilities for younger people.

Olive said: “Some of my friends in the centre are worried about going out in the evening but I like Leatherhead as a place.

“I moved in with my daughter about six or seven years ago, I had retired to Cornwall, or so I thought, and I am quite happy here as a place. But I don’t go out in the evening.”

She said she was undecided about voting though as the polling station was too far from home, though she admitted it was an important election.

Olive added: “I think it makes a difference, who is running the police, but I don’t know too much about the candidates.”

The Police and Crime Commissioner is responsible for holding the Chief Constable and Surrey Police to account – on the public’s behalf. They are also tasked with overseeing how crime is tackled and ensuring Surrey Police provides a good service.

All British, Irish or EU citizens, as well as qualifying Commonwealth citizens with permission to enter or stay in the UK, can vote so long as they are over 18 and registered in Surrey can vote, unless legally excluded.

The general feeling in the town is one where it feels safe, particularly compared with London, but Leatherhead is not without its issues.

A woman said: “It feels safe in the town and you don’t hear about too many of these things bar a few very serious incidents and they are very few and far between.

“I don’t know about the Police and Crime Commissioner elections but I will vote, I just need to find out (about the candidates and what they stand for).

“Another worry is always anti-social behaviour but I don’t see it. If you come in in the evening it’s fine.”

The vote takes place across Surrey with the count taking place the following day with the result expected to be announced between 3pm and 4pm.

Related reports:

Surrey’s next Police and Crime Commissioner will be?

Epsom and Ewell candidates dominate Police Commissioner election

Jen Royal Leatherhead (Image Chris Caulfield)

Prairie dogs ‘cock a snook’ at planning

30 April 2024



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Planning Committee grappled 18th April with the prairie dogs enclosure at Hobbledown Farm in Epsom.

The proprietors of this animal amusement park had established the enclosure without prior permission and were seeking retrospective permission from the Council.

There were several other developments on the site for which retrospective permission was being sought. A number of residents of the adjacent Clarendon Park housing estate objected, being particularly fearful of an increased risk of flooding arising from these unauthorised developments.

The debate began with Councillors complaining of insufficient time to process numerous emails supplied to the committee

just minutes before the meeting started.

Cllr **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) protested “I really wouldn’t want to consider these applications this evening. I can’t even say if the information is relevant to the application or not. It was too much information and it came too late.” Later she accepted assurances that the emails did not materially change the application.

Cllr **Julian Freeman** (Lib Dem College) declined to read the emails in question stating: “I made a specific point of not going through all the email exchange, because it doesn’t form part of the papers for this meeting. I can understand that there is ambiguity, and there are questions to be asked and answered, and the place to do that is here and now, not by an email exchange.”

Cllr **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley) gave her opinion “I’ve got a question. And probably everyone sitting here will agree, I hope, but I’m heartily fed up. I want to know how many retrospective blooming applications we’ve had to sit here and go through, only to be told “it’s already there, they’ve done it”. So why do we bother to have a planning committee?”

The Chairman, Cllr **Humphrey Reynolds** (RA West Ewell) responded that her question was not a matter for the Planning Committee.

Later in a further forthright statement Councillor Mason said: “I don’t think there’s anything we can do. This firm knew perfectly well what they were going to do. And they’ve cocked a snook at us. It’s our land. It is on the green belt. They’ve made it like Disney World. That’s what they want. And I’m just angry that we keep doing these little bits of drip, drip, drip. So in the end they get what they want. We’ll all say, “Oh we can’t pull it down”. Me, I’d pull everything down that they’ve put in.”

The applications had come before the committee in February and been deferred for more information about flood risks. The ward Councillor for Horton, Cllr **Kieran Persand** (Conservative) was invited to speak. He argued: “I do not believe any substantial additional information or clarity has been provided. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out strict tests to protect people and property from flooding, which all local planning authorities are expected to follow. Where these tests are not met new developments should not be allowed. One of these tests the NPPF requires is the application of a “sequential test”. Where the test is not performed or not met, development should not be allowed.”

A local resident, **Alexander Duval**, was invited to address the meeting and he said: “As the majority of committee members and planning officers will be aware, the residents of Clarendon Park have objected to a significant number of the planning applications submitted by Hobbledown over recent years. The majority of these have been retrospective: build first, get permission later. Numerous compelling planning reasons have been put forward by residents for refusing planning permission. Where the developments have not complied with national planning guidance, local planning policies and precedents set by case law. Despite this, all planning applications have been recommended for approval by officers. The residents, those directly affected by the applications, are at a loss as to why this should be the case. Hobbledown is located within the green belt. According to national planning guidance and local development policies, this is supposed to afford protection against development and seems to elsewhere, but not on this site.”

There was controversy as to whether Mr Duval’s several other written objections had been made available to Councillors to consider. Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Horton) “The planning committee should, when considering an application, take into account all views on material and planning considerations that are expressed in a way that is openly heard and fairly considered. I’m really worried about this process. This happened last time. Mr. Duval repeatedly asked where his comments were on the website, and they weren’t there. They were posted by the council on the day of the meeting. Twelve minutes [the time allotted to Mr Duval to speak at the meeting] is not the same as articulating point by point. You’ve presumed that every councillor here has received something from Alex Duval.”

She added: “To be told something is being received, but it is not uploaded to the website, so we can’t see it. That’s not acceptable.”

Discussions continued long into the night with references to planning policies, flood risk assessments, conditions and other details.

The marathon three and a half hour meeting concluded with a series of votes. Generally, permissions were granted across the board of hitherto unauthorised changes at Hobbledown, some on the casting vote of the Chair.

Image: PictureWendy

The Bucknill plan stops here....

30 April 2024



A plan to cram 5 three-bedroomed houses on a single bungalow plot in Bucknills Close, Epsom did not meet Councillors’

approval.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Planning Committee met 18th April and refused an application by Nuro Homes Ltd despite their agent's plea to the meeting to allow it.

Plain speaking Cllr **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley) gave her reasons for refusal and her own strong sentiments on the application in saying to her committee colleagues: "Right, here we go again. Same old "Back Land". Call it what you like: "Development". And as my grandma would say, trying to put a pint into a half pint pot.... They could have designed it so that they weren't in Outer Hebrides with their bins to try and take to the front. Ridiculous." [A reference to challenges to the Council collection of domestic refuse.]

She added: "I think this is not well thought out, any of this. And I put it down to the fact that you're trying to cram too much in. It makes money. We all know the story. I'm not convinced about the flooding,, if there's slight flooding around, this will get it. It's just all too much. So I'm sorry, but as far as I'm concerned, this is ill designed. So for my part, I'm not happy."

During the meeting it was argued that children would use the short-cut the development would create. Cllr **Neil Dallen** (RA Town) was for refusal on the grounds of highway safety and the distance that residents would have to take their bins for collection. Commenting on a varied application he said "It's fine moving the bins another few yards towards the road, but there is still a huge distance for those to go. The waste manager has said it's unacceptable."

Cllr. **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) observed: "If we were proposing a refusal on highways grounds, we have to take into account that we're flying solo because Surrey County Council aren't behind us on this, and they are the highway authority."

Cllr. **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) was concerned about routine refusal of new housing developments and said: "It is providing for homes for people in Epsom and Ewell and we know how dire the housing situation is in the borough. I don't think any committee with a response to its residents can continue to refuse every single application that comes in front of it."

The application was refused by five votes to four, the Chair Cllr. **Humphrey Reynolds** (RA West Ewell) not voting.