



Ruse within a ruse?

Yesterday the full Council of Epsom and Ewell voted to pause the process of the Local Plan. Cllr **Eber Kington** (RA Ewell Court) proposed an emergency motion to delay the next stage for the Government's latest position on housing targets to be clarified. Expected some time after the local elections on 4th May.



Cllr Eber Kington

His arguments for the motion included the protection of the Green character of the Borough. He observed that the draft Local Plan conceded the need for using Green Belt to accommodate a proportion of the 5400 houses planned for. Yet, the Government's target is over 10,000. Therefore, Green Belt encroachment for the lower figure is a Green Light for Green Belt development for the higher figure.

He said that more work needed to be done on how brownfield sites could be used to provide the housing requirements.

In an unusual intervention Cllr **Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley) described the proceedings of the Council meeting as a pantomime. He argued that the timetabling of the Local Plan process is one for managerial direction and that Councillors were playing politics. Fitting his description of the proceedings he then made a somewhat dramatic exit stage left in a bit of a huff.

Cllr **Peter O'Donovan** (RA Ewell Court) opposed his ward colleague. He stressed the need for a new Local Plan. Delay would mean the Borough's resistance to inappropriate planning applications would be weakened.

All opposition Councillors (Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Labour) spoke for the motion. After Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Stamford) called for the ruling Residents Association to be "kicked out", she and her Party were targetted in responses by RA Councillors. Firstly, Cllr **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley) suggested Cllr Muir had not long lived in the borough "just five years". On a dubious "point of order" Cllr Muir corrected this: "12 years actually".

Cllr Mason struggled on to make her point. A journey into a time nearly 50 years ago when the Council bought Longrove hospital land, thus preventing a 5000 housing development from taking place. Cllr Muir would not have known that, she said. Cllr Mason relied on this 1974 purchase to prove that the RA ruled Council do care about the Green Belt.

This brief spat passed and it was Cllr Kington in his reply to the debate who said that the Conservative Government should be "kicked out". This was because the Government insist on using 2014 figures to determine housing need when much lower numbers are yielded by a 2018 analysis.

Cllr **Steve McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Chair of the Licensing, Planning and Policy Committee) opposed the motion. He relied on the ability of the Council to respond to the public's views and amend the draft during the next 5 of the processes's 7 stages.

There were a significant number of empty chairs in the Council Chamber for this important meeting. Four Councillors voted against Cllr Kington's motion. It was carried by a large majority.

The motion passed is HERE in FULL.

This confusion in large part arises from Michael Gove MP and Secretary for Housing Development etc signaling an end to compulsory and centrally set housing targets. First indicated as long ago as May 2022. Then unstated when the Government



confirmed its targets remained and then reinstated just a few months later. But no regulations or legislation have been introduced that lift the compulsion of the targets from local government planning obligations.

Cynical observers suggest that Gove's manoeuvres are a ruse to quell the flames of rebellion in the Tory shires and avoid defeats in upcoming local elections. Will we see actual legal change after 4th May?

In Epsom and Ewell was walk-out man Cllr Coley right to hint that the pre-election motion to delay is also for political gain?

A ruse within a ruse?

"That which we call a ruse by any other name would smell as bad."

Time will tell if words are matched by action.

Sudden hike in Council room charges threatens community groups

Letters to the Editor from **Peter Prowse** and **Kevin Meager**.

From **Peter Prowse** - 22nd March 2023

For the past year, Epsom and Ewell French Club has been hiring a room (The Studio) at Bourne Hall for its monthly meetings. The Council had agreed a discounted hire rate of £20 per hour, so £40 for our two hours, on the third Tuesday of each month.

Without any prior consultation and with very little notice, the Council has just announced that from April (ie in 10 days' time) the Club will be charged a new 'discounted' rate of £35.36 per hour, so £70.72 for its two-hour booking, plus a new charge of £25 per session for use of the hot water urn (which has until now been provided free of charge).

Image: Bourne Hall Ewell Credit Bobulous - Own work. CC BY-SA 4.0

That would put the cost to the club up from £40 per booking to £95.72.

The club cannot possibly afford these prices. Other community groups who use Bourne Hall will be in the same position. Unless small, local clubs and societies can continue to use Bourne Hall for something very close to the 2022 prices, many will have to close.

Epsom & Ewell French Club is a non-commercial community group, provided for the benefit of its members and anybody else who want to come to its meetings. It is closely allied to the Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association, which is supported by the Borough Council.

The club almost folded during the Covid pandemic and its committee worked very hard to build it back up to the point where it is now attracting enough interest and support to keep going - provided it does not have to pay these new ridiculously expensive room hire costs. Bourne Hall exists for the benefit of local residents. This latest price hike means that many of them will no longer be able to use it.

Peter Prowse.

Letter from **Kevin Meager**

23rd March 2023

I would like to follow up on the letter to the editor regarding the hike in hire charges at Bourne Hall. I organise weekly dance classes in the main hall on Monday evenings through my organisation, Ceroc Surrey and we've been hit with similar charge increases with little to no notice. If this increase remains in place, we will have to stop running classes at Bourne Hall as the new hire charges are unaffordable. The vast majority of our dancers are local, many are of retirement age and this is either their main or only weekly social event. Apart from lockdown, we've been using the venue continuously for over 20 years!

Your faithfully,

Kevin Meager



Education assessment delays making parents sick

A mother claims Surrey County Council “makes her sick” as she says delays to assessing her son’s special educational needs are causing “a lot of stress”.

At a protest held outside the authority’s Reigate headquarters, the mother, along with others, called for change at the council in how Surrey’s children with additional needs are treated.

Image: Parents protesting outside Surrey County Council headquarters in Woodhatch Place, Reigate. Credit: Emily Coady-Stemp

Anna Sutherland, protesting for the fifth time outside the Woodhatch Place building, said parents being sent down the tribunal route, as they are if they want to appeal against a council’s assessment of their children, “put a lot on families”.

She claimed the education, health and care plan (EHCP) issued to her 11-year-old son by the county council was “unlawful” but that because she knew the law, and knew what he was entitled to, she would “get there in the end”. Ms Sutherland told the LDRS: “This makes me ill. Surrey council make me sick.”

With her 9-year-old daughter’s EHCP also up for an annual review soon, Ms Sutherland feared she may have two tribunals on her hands. On previous protests, cabinet members on Surrey County Council have come out to talk to the parents present, but did not on Tuesday (March 21).

When the group of parents decided to attend the council meeting taking place that morning, they were told they could only do so if they left their placards in the building’s reception downstairs.

Ms Sutherland said many families with children with additional needs had “a lot to deal with in the first place” and additional chasing of EHCPs, tribunals and school places was “a lot to put on families”. Saying many families also had to work, may also have neuro-diverse conditions themselves and the “huge impact” on a parent’s mental health of going through a child’s diagnoses she said the parents at the protest were representing a “much huger group”. She added: “On top of the stress they put on you, then having the additional strength or the additional drive to protest, a lot of families just can’t do that.”

Clare Powdrill said delays to the EHCP process for her son had led to her spending more than £30,000 in two tribunals, both conceded by the council the day before the hearing. She said: “I am protesting because Surrey County Council have seriously let my son down.” Another parent, **Charlotte Lewis**, also said EHCP processes had been delayed “at every step” and timelines not been met by Surrey County Council. She said: “Many parents are being forced into a lengthy and expensive appeals process which is usually won but can delay children’s access to an education by years in some cases.”

A council spokesperson said: “We are not able to comment on the details of any individual children, but we can confirm that all current EHCPs were updated in line with statutory timescales to enable children’s transition to the next phase of their education. If a parent is unhappy with the content of their child’s updated plan, we would urge them to contact their case officer as soon as possible, so that any issues can be resolved.

“We always aim to resolve disagreements without families needing to go through a tribunal process, however, they do have the right to do so, and if it remains the view of the local authority that the latest education health and care plan accurately reflects a child’s needs and the provision required to meet their needs, then, in these rare cases the tribunal is the appropriate route to resolve the dispute.”

Surrey Council’s ULEZ talks ongoing with TfL

Surrey councillors have confirmed written communications are ongoing with Transport for London over the impact of the ULEZ expansion. Surrey County Councillor **Robert Evans** (Labour, Stanwell and Stanwell Moor) asked cabinet members at a full council meeting on Tuesday (March 21) to confirm that the mitigations the council was calling for would be followed up with the chancellor.

He claimed previous attempts to extend the Transport for London (TfL) Oyster card zone 6 in several Surrey boroughs had “floundered” because central government would not underwrite potential losses to the train companies.

Image: Ultra Low Emission Zone, Stonebridge Park. Credit: Will Durrant/LDRS



Cllr Evans called on Surrey's cabinet to "work with TfL and the Mayor of London to make sure that Surrey residents get the health benefits of this, but don't get negative impacts if ULEZ comes into operation."

The zone, which sees drivers of older, more polluting cars charged £12.50 per day to enter it, is due to expand to cover all of greater London from August.

The ULEZ currently covers central London and its expansion will see it border several Surrey districts and boroughs including Spelthorne, Elmbridge and **Epsom**.

In response to TfL's plans to extend the zone, Elmbridge councillors previously called for the Oyster Card Zone 6 to be expanded further, highlighting the difference between public transport in London and in Surrey.

Cllr Evans said schemes in Bristol, Coventry, Birmingham and elsewhere had seen the government "pick up the bill for a scrappage scheme".

The council's cabinet member for transport, infrastructure and growth, Cllr **Matt Furniss**, (Conservative, Shalford) confirmed face-to-face meetings had been requested with TfL, but said he was "disappointed to say it only took the threat of legal action to get transport London to respond." He said the council did "ask the government regularly for additional funding" and would be talking to them about the impact of the planned extension.

Meeting documents showed a virtual meeting took place between with TfL, county council officers and Elmbridge Borough Council officers on February 21.

A written response was received from TfL as a follow up to the meeting on March 7, which was being looked at and a response drafted from the council. The documents said: "The council is committed to delivering a greener future, but it must be done in a practical and sustainable way.The impact of an expanded ULEZ on many Surrey residents and businesses will be significant, and we will not stand by and watch that happen with no mitigation offered."

During the meeting, Cllr Evans also reminded the scheme had been brought about by Boris Johnson, during his time as Mayor of London. Former Prime Minister Mr Johnson was London Mayor between 2008 and 2016, and announced the introduction of the world's first ULEZ in London in 2015. It was introduced from April 2019.

A written response was received from TfL as a follow up to the meeting on March 7, which was being looked at and a response drafted from the council.

Cllr **Buddhi Weerasinghe** (Conservative, Lower Sunbury and Halliford) said he was supporting a campaign by residents to get Ashford and Sunbury stations, among others in Spelthorne, added to Zone 6. He also highlighted the needs of the expanding Shepperton Studios that he said had been put in a letter to government regarding its work force needing to travel to and from the studios by train.

Life savers installed across the Borough

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council have worked in partnership with national charity **Community Heartbeat Trust** to install 12 new 24/7 defibrillators across the borough. The project was delivered with funding secured via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Defibrillators are designed to be used by members of the public with no previous experience in the event of someone going into cardiac arrest. They can, and do, save lives. The new defibrillators have been installed in the following locations:

- Market Place, Epsom
- Ebbisham Centre, Epsom Square, Epsom
- Town Hall (Rear entrance)
- Harold Bell Solicitors, 174 Kingston Road, Ewell
- St John's Parish Centre, Station Approach, Stoneleigh
- Auriol Park Café, Salisbury Road, Worcester Park
- The Parade Dental Practice, 177 Kingston Road, Ewell



- Ruxley Chemist, Ruxley Lane, Ewell Court
- Horton Pharmacy, Pelman Way, Epsom
- Horton Country Park, Horton Lane, Epsom
- Londis Convenience Store, Hollymoor Lane, Epsom
- NISA Convenience Store, Ruxley Lane

Councillor **Barry Nash**, who put forward the CIL bid, said, "After a lot of hard work by all involved, I am so pleased the defibrillator project has now been completed.

"I'd like to thank our partners from the Community Heartbeat Trust who shared their expertise with us, provided and installed all the defibrillators across the borough and will continue to provide a post-rescue counselling service."

Councillor **John Beckett**, Chair of the Environment and Safe Communities Committee, added, "You never know when a medical emergency may occur. Time can be extremely limited and having the right equipment on hand will save lives.

"The installation of these 12 new defibrillators will ensure the borough is prepared and our community is safer."

Image: Evacuachairs - Own work. CC BY-SA 4.0

We can help your school reunite.

Follow the example of a 50 year reunion for Ewell County Secondary School reported here. Epsom and Ewell Times can help your school reunion by putting the word out in these pages.

Former pupils of **Ewell County Secondary School** gathered at **The Station** pub in **Stoneleigh** on Saturday to reminisce and celebrate fifty years or more since they left and entered the working world.





The poster for the event borrowed from the **Rolling Stones** back catalogue to stress: "This Could Be The Last Time" and over a hundred schoolmates took heed and presented themselves for register. The reunion was aimed at those pupils that left the old schools then situated in Ruxley Lane and Danetree Road between 1971 and 1976. Organised by Ray and Bob Baxter, Tony Jones, Dave Reynolds, Martin Knight, Kevan McIlroy and Kevin Merchant the event was a huge success with only minimal corporal punishment and detentions administered. Friendships that were interrupted by leaving school and moving away in some cases were resumed after fifty years. Bob Baxter commented: "It was wonderful to lean our walking sticks against the wall, kick our zimmer frames away and boogie to T. Rex, Slade and The Rubettes again." By popular demand another reunion is being planned for 2025.

Epsom politician backs UK nuclear deterrent

Epsom & Ewell's LibDem prospective Parliamentary candidate and former Army Captain **Helen Maguire** supports a permanent at sea UK nuclear deterrent. Making a Party conference maiden speech in York she said that while LibDems supported a nuclear free world, the current actions by Vladimir Putin in Ukraine meant that the LibDems position had to change. She said:

"When we last considered the situation (in 2017), the world was in a very different place - there was war but there hadn't been the veiled threats around the use of nuclear weapons nor the potential for World War Three".

"We have now entered an age when a nation, Russia, believes it's ok to invade another country - completely defying the rule of International Law. It's not just Russia, in this volatile age, there are other countries whose intentions we don't yet fully understand - China.

"We want to deter any country/group/enemy from ever considering invading/attacking the UK. It sends a powerful message to those who would do us harm- don't you dare try!

"If we continued the course of medium responsiveness with no continuous deployment then this wouldn't achieve our mission to protect the UK. This would leave us exposed to very real threats and it would weaken our credibility amongst our allies.

"The continuous at sea deterrent provides a 24/7 365 days a year effective defence mechanism for the UK and we need it NOW more than ever before," said Helen Maguire.

The Liberal Democrat's York conference motion to maintain the current UK defence strategy of continuous at-sea deterrence was then passed by the delegates.

This is "offensive".

In our letters page today a Ewell resident rightly fulminates against the selfish habit of leaving dog poo bags for others to remove.

"To the person who tied a Dog Poo Bag to the fence between the NESOT Playing Fields and the College buildings yesterday (Thursday).

You said you would return to collect it later as you didn't want to carry it with you. You will have noticed it was not there on your return as I added it to my Litter picking bag.

Image - c. Bill Kasman - under licence illustrates the wider problem.

Had I come along 5 minutes later, when I wouldn't have heard your explanation, how would I have known you would collect it? How would I have known that the other (very similar) bag dropped 2 metres further on was not yours? Or the black bag on a branch in the hedge round the corner? Or another deposited in a popular dropping spot on the edge of the Rugby Grounds?

Would I have been sure that the 4 people who threw glass beer bottles into the hedge, or the cans along the roadside, or the fast food packaging etc would be collected later to be deposited in the bins on the route, or taken home to be put in their own bins? No.

Your bag probably weighed no more than 100 grams. The bag of rubbish I collected weighed about 8 kilos when I'd finished.



Approximately 2,000 items (I didn't count beyond 250); Fine potential of £200,000.

You're probably saying "mine's different". NO. It's Litter. It's Offensive; It's an Offence.

Jennifer Brzozowska

Ashted Choral Society celebrated Surrey's Vaughan Williams.

Andrew Storey conducts the **Ashted Choral Society** with enthusiasm and vigour, presenting them at their best in this delightful programme, showing off a range of music by Ralph Vaughan Williams in the 150th anniversary year of his birth. A review of the concert held on 25th February in Epsom.

Starting the evening with **Vaughan Williams'** Five Mystical songs, the choir began with a warm and harmonious sound, which remained well balanced and well blended throughout the evening. Accompanied solely by **Stephen Ridge** on the piano, the sound filled the wonderful acoustics of **St Martin's Church in Epsom**. The choir provided excellent support to the baritone soloist, Daniel Tate, who gave an especially commendable performance as a last minute stand-in, and whose tone and clarity propelled the storytelling of RVW's Mystical Songs. The choir especially shone as the focal point in the 3rd song, demonstrating a beautiful understanding of tonality, and picked up the pace for the 5th song - the well-known 'Let all the world' - with an injection of energy to finish off.

The second piece of the evening was The Lark Ascending, played by The Kent Sinfonia with Christian Halstead as lead and violin soloist. As one of Vaughan Williams' most famous pieces, and an award-winning performance behind Halstead, the audience had a lot to look forward to, and it was as outstanding as we could have imagined!

The orchestra crafted a full-bodied sound and yet took no attention away from the exquisite violin solo, which had the audience mesmerised.

The second half began the titular piece of the evening, Vaughan Williams' Sea Symphony. Demonstrating strong entries all round, the choir and orchestra provided a majestic sound, with especially impressive lone chorus entries standing up to the magnificent sound of the orchestra. We also had our first entry of the soprano soloist **Eleanor Pennell-Briggs**, who gave another sparkling performance. My own conductor often tells me that "Musicians must be actors!", which both soloists and ACS demonstrated beautifully this evening, conveying the power and emotion of the sea.

The symphony continues with some elegant call and response passages, well executed by both choir and orchestra, and it was especially pleasing when the main melody passes around the orchestra sections. The scherzo then starts, feeling energetic and urgent, with the chromatic passages handled with great skill and empathy by the choir. The dynamic contrasts by both parties provide drama, again echoing the feelings of the sea.

The final movement begins cinematic and sweeping, with precision by the chorus when they are left exposed. There is power when the basses sing alone, with a great contrast to the delicate female voices. The orchestra and soloists have a moment to shine on their own, with both soloists again demonstrating exceptional storytelling, before the chorus returns for the start of the finale. The regal fanfare from the horns and the vivid energy from the choir draws to a close to finish up the piece.

Overall both ACS and Kent Sinfonia provided a thoroughly enjoyable evening, showcasing a range of musical talent and shining a spotlight onto Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Lizzie McCaffrey

On the Hunt for pothole repairs

The Government will give an additional £3.7m for pothole repairs in Surrey. But one Surrey councillor is calling for ministers to "go further" and change the way road funding is allocated from Westminster.

Tuesday's budget, delivered by South West Surrey MP **Jeremy Hunt**, announced an additional £200million for 2023/24 across the



country for pothole repair.

Surrey County Council's deputy cabinet member for levelling up, Councillor **Rebecca Paul** (Conservative, Tadworth, Walton & Kingswood) said she was "delighted" the Government had recognised more funding was needed in Surrey for road repairs. She told the LDRS: "The recent spate of potholes across our county affects every single one of us, so this additional money is much welcomed." She called on the Government to "go further and give serious consideration" to changing how highways maintenance funding is allocated to take into account traffic volume.

Cllr Paul delivered a petition to Downing Street in June 2022 calling for funding for road repairs to be allocated by usage rather than the current formula which looks at the length of roads. She said: "This would result in a fairer allocation of funds so that Surrey Highways is better able to address the backlog."

Roads minister Richard Holden said the cash could mean another 75,000 potholes repaired. He also praised Surrey's lane rental scheme, which he said the county had been "at the forefront" of rolling out. The scheme, rolled out in 2021, charges companies for works which cause delay at peak times on the county's busiest roads.

Mr Holden said the scheme minimised delays from roadworks taking place because they were more often carried out at the same time, and this also reduced damage to roads. He told the LDRS he wanted to see that rolled out more across the country.

On Cllr Paul's calls for "fairer funding" from central government, Mr Holden said it was "swings and roundabouts" because a lot of the strategic road network, paid for out of national taxation, was in Surrey. He added: "I'm always willing to listen to local concerns about these issues. I think it's vitally important that we do get the balance right when it comes to road funding."

A motion will be brought to a meeting of Surrey County Council on Tuesday, calling for the adoption of a "Vision Zero Safe System" and setting a target date for zero fatalities and severe injuries on Surrey's roads. **Will Forster** (Lib Dem, Woking South) will bring forward a motion saying: "Road collision statistics in Surrey have hardly changed over the last ten years. In 2021 24 people were killed and 647 were seriously injured. The effects of a road traffic collision can have a physical, emotional, social and economic impact on everyone involved. In financial terms the cost of road collisions in Surrey was approximately £250 million in 2021."

A Surrey County Council spokesperson said: "While any additional funding for potholes is welcomed, as highlighted by the Annual Local Authority Roads Maintenance survey in 2022, the condition of roads across the UK would require a one-time catch up cost (over and above what authorities already receive) of £12.64bn. The current commitment from government for English roads funding prior to the announcement in this week's budget was £2.7bn in total between 2022 and 2025, therefore the funding allocations from government still fall far short of the needs of the UK roads.

"However Surrey County Council recognises the need to invest in our roads and so is investing additional funds beyond government grants and will be spending £188m on improving and maintaining our roads and pavements over the next five years."