



Downs payment from EU for Epsom

The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, **Councillor Clive Woodbridge**, has officially unveiled the first phase of an exciting programme of improvements on **Epsom & Walton Downs**.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) secured a grant of £132,000 from the **European Agricultural Fund** for Rural Development to support the rural economy by encouraging visitors. The EAFRD grant was boosted by a further £18,000 from **The Jockey Club** and £20,000 from the **Epsom & Walton Downs Conservators**.

Image: Simon Durrant Jockey Club, Cllr Liz Frost (RA Woocote and Chair Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators and Mayor Clive Woodbridge unveiling

The improvements, which includes new benches, bins, picnic tables, waymarkers, information boards and counting posts, have been three years in the planning and began earlier this year after funding was secured.

The new infrastructure will enhance the visitor experience and allow tourists and residents to enjoy the panoramic views, discover the role of the Downs in the Borough's equestrian history and learn about the unique flora and fauna of the area. It also improves safety for both visitors and the horses by directing people away from training grounds.

The benches, bins, counting posts, picnic tables and waymarkers are now in place, and the information boards will be completed in the coming weeks. Further developments such as a brass rubbing trail are also planned for the future.

Councillor **Liz Frost**, Chair of the Epsom & Walton Downs Conservators, stated "I am delighted to see the improvements being made to this much-loved part of our Borough. We had three aims at the start of this project; to increase rural tourism; to improve safety for visitors and for both the horses and staff involved in racehorse training on the Downs; and to educate people about the area. I think this initiative will help us to achieve those goals. I love the nods to our equestrian history on the benches and bins. The information boards will be a great asset in sharing the unique history and ecosystem of the area with visitors, and the counting posts will be able to tell the difference between walkers, cyclists and riders, so we can tailor facilities in the future. We hope that visitors to the Downs will enjoy these new resources."

Simon Durrant, General Manager at Epsom Downs Racecourse, said, "The contribution to improving the Epsom & Walton Downs is something The Jockey Club is very passionate about. The work being carried out contributes to preserving the history of the area, along with improving the experience of all visitors, be that walkers, riders or cyclists. We look forward to the continued development throughout the next phase of improvements."

While open to the public, the Downs is privately owned by The Jockey Club and managed by the Epsom & Walton Downs Conservators. Membership of the Conservators is prescribed by the Epsom & Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984, and is made up of Borough councillors, The Jockey Club and the **Betting Levy Board**.

The Council is committed to supporting the Conservators in maintaining the Downs.

The Council was able to secure the EAFRD funding before the UK becomes ineligible for such grants following Brexit.

Joust in Lancing drawn

Montpelier Villa **0-0 Epsom & Ewell FC**. Southern Combination League - Division One. Saturday 15th October 2022. Last January, we witnessed a mad encounter at **Culver Road, Lancing**, West Sussex, that ended 5-4 to the home side. Fast forward nine months and we witnessed a goalless draw instead as our hosts took everything that we could throw at them and held on for a well-earned point that also ends our winning league match run at eight; a mark only beaten three times in the last seventy years, and our joint seventh best run in club history.

We had some changes from our win over Hailsham seven days previously. Ricardo Fernandes started a two match suspension, while from last week's starting eleven Jaevon Dyer was ill, and Athan Smith-Joseph and Steve Springett were moved onto the bench. Jubril "Jibs" Adamson, Josh Alder and Aaron Bogle took their places.

We nearly had a stunning start to the match with little more than five minutes on the clock when Ryan "Butch" Smith tried a shot from nearly forty yards with the wind at his back and it just glanced the post just under the height of the crossbar. It would have been quite an amazing opener.

I don't know who won the toss of the coin but I have always maintained that it is better to go with the wind in the second half



because by the time you have got used to playing with it in the first period, you are often quite a long way through it. This was the case here as through ball after through ball just ran out for a goal kick or straight to the keeper and it was disappointing that we didn't find a way to do something else with the ball while we had the advantage. As a result our best threats came from deliveries from wider angles and from one of those, Nick Wilson's free kick found Josh Owen at the far post, although his shot from an angle was well saved by the home keeper after 19 minutes.

Josh Alder then saw a similar result when the ball was fed into him from the right wing and then just before half time Gideon Acheampong put a good ball over to Owen who saw his shot well blocked by the keeper. And that was it! For almost 45 minutes of possession and a strong wind behind us, these were the only moments of real threat. Clearly the wind was a factor, but we have played at far more windy venues in the past and we should have adapted our plan earlier. Strangely enough, against the wind in the second half, we appeared to do this less, just when it looked like that would be the best time to do it, as passes would have held up more!

The Villa managed a long shot on target at the start of the second half but Kane Charles fielded it comfortably and we were back on attack soon after. And Adamson fed the ball back to Gavin Quintyne, whose shot from the edge of the area was kept out but not held by the keeper, although as Owen ran in for the loose ball he was flagged offside.

For all our attack, it is fair to argue that Montpelier Villa's only real chance was probably the best one of the match. Brad Peters lost the ball around the half way line and the striker moved in on goal before squaring it to their number nine, but he sliced his shot well wide from inside the penalty area. In response Athan Smith-Joseph and Warren Colman came on, with the latter particularly looking quite dangerous, but Alder's shot was blocked again on the hour and then Smith thought he had been fouled and said something to the referee who immediately sent him to the sin-bin, which reduced us to ten men from the 71st minute.

I've no idea what he said, but we have now had a few visits to the sin-bin in addition to four red cards and this indiscipline threatens to hamper our league title hopes. Fortunately we were so much on top on this match, that the ten minute absence passed quickly and without alarm. With only ten minutes of normal time remaining though, we were struggling to break through. A punch clear from the keeper went as far as another sub in Springett, who tried to head the ball back from where it had come, but was wide of the target.

As we approached the end of the ninety minutes the home side sent a free kick just over our bar, but the final moments and nearly ten minutes of injury time were almost all played out around the Villa penalty area, and in the 99th minute Smith's full blooded strike from the edge of the area was superbly turned away by the keeper's left hand, and another close range save from a header moments later ensured it was not going to be our day. I'd like to advise their keeper's name and give him proper credit, but the opposition never even advised their line up and that was a pity, as the Villa side clearly belied their league position, defended extremely well and deserve credit.

I've said all season that we have enormous strength in depth and if one person isn't available then their replacement would be of a similar standard, but we really missed our young striker Dyer in this match. It is clear to me that with him in the side, we have more of a cutting edge and without him we failed to break down a committed and organised team. I'm sure our Management will be well aware of this, as both Hailsham and East Preston before them appeared to play us with one eye on damage limitation too.

It wasn't due to a shortage of effort either. In fact, our full backs Acheampong and Zach Powell got forward more in this contest than in any other match this season, so we definitely put the yardage in and also monopolised the ball for most of the ninety minutes. We just found ourselves going sideways far too frequently and ultimately our failure to score came down to an inability to adapt to the conditions better.

We will no doubt face a similar situation on Tuesday when we re-visit Forest Row in our next League match, but for now we must still take heart from the fact that we remain top of the table and have dropped less points than any other team. We would have taken that at this stage of the season had it been offered to us.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Gideon Acheampong, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Aaron Bogle, Nick Wilson, Josh Owen, Josh Alder, Jubril "Jibs" Adamson, Gavin Quintyne

Subs: Athan Smith-Joseph for Adamson (61), Warren Colman for Owen (61), Eldi Baze for Alder (70), Steve Springett for Powell (70)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk



Murderer who blew himself up in the effort...

Shortly after 11.pm on the night of 21 December 1869, **Thomas O' Brien**, the stationmaster on **Ewell West Railway Station** prepared to turn the gas lights off as he awaited the last train of the night - the 10.40 pm from Waterloo. A single passenger alighted who Mr O' Brien would later describe as wearing a 'villainous expression of countenance'. He was so alarmed at the man's appearance and odd manner he ordered him from his pristine new station.

The man, **Thomas Huggett**, had no intention of hanging around as he had murder in his heart and he set off, following the course of the **River Hogsmill**, to the gunpowder mills owned by Sharp & Company and that were situated by the river in the areas leading up to what is now **Ewell Court Park**. He knew the mills well as he had delivered and collected from there in the past. Breaking into an outhouse he stole 25lb of gunpowder and feeling in his pocket to ensure he also had his knife he headed back towards Ewell Village and the house in West Street where his former lover, Lizzie Richardson, was now living.

Huggett worked in a warehouse at Rotherhithe and had been living with Lizzie Richardson for six months after she had left her husband for him. They had never married and the relationship had quickly broken down and Lizzie had moved away from him to live with her sister Eliza and her husband George Spooner and was acting as housekeeper as Eliza had been ill for some months. Also living in the cottage, which stood close to the newly opened Ewell Boy's School in West Street, was a man called William Smith, a porter with the railway company, and another lodger George Mason, as well as the Spooners' two young children Ellen and Frederick. It was rumoured later in the many pubs of Ewell that Huggett believed that Lizzie and William Smith were romantically attached.

Hiding in the Spooner's coal house he watched as the lights of the Hop Pole Inn opposite (now the site of John Gale Court) were turned down and waited quietly. At 3.40 am Lizzie rose from her bed to begin to prepare George Spooner's breakfast as he was due to make a delivery to London early that morning. She went outside to fetch coal to top up the fire she had lit and was shocked to be faced with Huggett sitting on the coals with a bag between his legs. Screaming she ran back into the house followed by Huggett who was shouting that he would kill her and himself. He was also brandishing his knife and tipping gunpowder on to the floor. By this time George Spooner had jumped from his bed and ran down the stairs to restrain Huggett from following Lizzie Richardson who had taken refuge in her bedroom. A struggle ensued and Huggett managed to break free and throw the bag of powder on to the fire. The house exploded demolishing the adjoining wall of the cottage next door and Huggett was blown through it.

Huggett was dead either from the blast or a knife-wound to his heart which had been inflicted with his own weapon. It was possible that George Spooner may have wrestled it from him but he was in no fit state to tell as he had been carried across to the Hop Pole pub with horrendous burns. Witnesses said that his 'outer skin had come off'. William Smith was also less seriously injured and he was taken to Guy's Hospital.

The explosion would have rocked the village but would have been no great surprise as accidents emanating from the gunpowder mills were not uncommon. Only six years earlier Ewell resident James Baker had been blown to bits by one such 'accident'. Messrs Sharp & Co. were moved by the Spooner tragedy to write to the Times not to express sympathy but to assure readers that their premises were not unmanned at nights. George Spooner, 38 years of age, lingered a few days but died from his injuries and a subsequent inquest recorded wilful murder by Thomas Huggett whose own inquest had concluded suicide.

When Thomas O'Brien, the stationmaster at Ewell West station, heard of the incident when he rose on the morning of 22 December he immediately said, "That man I saw last night did it." He marched across the Gibraltar area to West Street to view the body which still lay in the half-standing house and confirmed that Huggett was indeed the man that had got off the train the previous night. He had to be steadied though when he realised that the lodger that had been taken to Guy's Hospital (and would later recover from his injuries) was his new employee, porter, William Smith.

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Epsom's Rugby Lane draws a crowd

SUTTON & EPSOM 15 - LONDON WELSH 15. Saturday 15th October. It had been many years since **London Welsh** had visited Rugby Lane. In fact, it was 1958 and their side despite containing four full internationals only narrowly won a highly entertaining contest by 13-8. Fast forward to Saturday afternoon and both sides arrived with a meagre one win from five league matches and were much in need of a morale boosting victory. The visitors would argue that the fixture computer had not been



kind as they had already faced four of the top five and perhaps their lowly status in the bottom three did not reflect their potential. At the final whistle the sides could not be separated, and it ended 15-15.



Freddy Bunting initiated proceedings as the Black & Whites kicked off in bright sunshine with a notable crosswind and ominous clouds looming on the horizon. From the outset London Welsh's intentions were clear as they spread the ball wide and all their backs got their hands on the ball. Sutton and Epsom held firm and demonstrated a steely defensive reserve. Not surprisingly in the wind played havoc with many of the early line-outs. There were many early scrums from the throws blown awry. In the scrummage the hosts were encouraged by early dominance as they shunted the Welsh pack, depleted by injuries and absentees, into reverse. Despite their dominance in the set-piece scrums twice Sutton and Epsom were penalised for driving upwards, much to the irritation of the front row triumvirate of Mount, Craig and Boaden. In contrast in the loose the visitors were in control providing their backs a stream of possession as the back row trio of Davies, George and Williams burrowed and scavenged to great effect.

London Welsh had the first scoring opportunity but their endeavours were scuppered when they were penalised for crossing near the Sutton line. A swift riposte by Sutton and Epsom saw them take quick tap penalty with the ever-alert Ross Parsons breaking downfield. This led to a series of attacks with James Caddy prominent but the visitors' defence was resolute and organised and the crowd continued to wait patiently for an opening score. The Old Deer Park XV sought to convert their favourable possession statistics into points. First of all their pack's relentless advance to the line was halted as they were held up over the line. Freddy Bunting's drop out from the Sutton line was a temporary respite. A moment later it required a superb collective effort to bundle the speeding Jonathan Ilori into touch by the corner flag. There followed relentless red shirts besieging the Sutton line. Finally, the Welsh dropped the ball in the left-hand corner stretching for the line. Sutton's heroic defence was rewarded with a 5-metre scrum and the siege was lifted by a magnificent kick to halfway.

In the last ten minutes of the half the hosts found their rhythm and gained some possession. Kyren Ghumra had a run, Archie Fitzgerald muscled his way through and Robbie Martey continued to impress in his new role at 15. The best opportunity came from a wonderful break by Ross Parsons but a couple of phases later a very unforgiving long pass led to a knock on. The half ended with a penalty awarded to the visitors that was within kicking range. Dafydd Manley's effort was blown wide. There was time for one last Welsh flurry as Elliot Hopkin jinked down the touchline before finally being bundled into touch. The first period finished 0-0 but the game was anything but boring as both defences had found immense reserves of resilience and defiance to prevent any score.

The match resumed with Robbie Martey prominent in defence and attack for the hosts. Sutton & Epsom opened the scoring in spectacular fashion after five minutes. Stealing the line out ball in their 22 they ran the ball from defence, wonderfully timed passes saw them break into the Welsh half where the ball was transferred to Ollie Baptiste-Wilson who finished in style evading all challengers in a 40-metre burst. The redoubtable Bunting added the conversion from the flank for a 7-0 lead. Ten minutes later, roared on by their numerous supporters, London Welsh levelled the score. From a line out on the S&E 22 the Welsh pack advanced remorselessly towards the posts, finally halted on the line the ball was released and scrum half Hywel Williams scored.



Dafydd Manley added the simplest of conversions for 7-7.

The weather worsened as an initial drizzle transformed into driving rain in a ferocious wind. The more the weather deteriorated the more prominent the visitors became. The talismanic Rohan Pixley was introduced on the hour by London Welsh as S&E switched props with Will Lloyd replacing Alex Mount. The visitors were awarded a penalty that they kicked to the corner and the crowd anticipated another catch and drive score but the Sutton pack held firm to win a 5-metre scrum. Relief was short-lived as the Red shirts battered the Black & White line as viciously as the rain swept the pitch. Rohan Pixley was denied but passed to Tololima Savaiinaea who was held up near the line before Dafydd Manley popped over for the try. The centre failed to add the extras to his try but London Welsh led 12-7.

Sutton stormed back at once and encamped in the Welsh 22. Awarded a 5-metre penalty they battered the line but the forwards could not breach the defiant defence. The ball went wide and Archie Fitzgerald forced his way over in the corner. The conversion from the flank drifted wide but the scores were level, 12-12. The storm abated and the ground was bathed beneath a spectacular rainbow as the game entered its final 5 minutes. With the game in the last minute of normal time the hosts were awarded a penalty. Despite the 50-metre distance Freddy Bunting stepped up to put S&E into a 15-12 lead that was greeted with a deafening roar of approval. Joy turned to agony in time added on when London Welsh were awarded a penalty of their own in front of the uprights on the Sutton 22. A calm Dafydd Manley sent the Old Deer Park supporters into raptures levelling the game at 15-15 and a minute later it was all over. It had been a magnificent occasion, in no little part due to the wonderful and numerous London Welsh supporters, and a draw was a very fair result. The visitors will reflect on their first half dominance and multiple chances that were denied by the parsimonious S&E defence. The hosts will rue their naïve game management after taking the lead at the death. However, both teams can take great heart in immense defence in a contest where every yard had to be earned. For Sutton sporting their livewire back three, Robbie Martey was magnificent and Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, once again, scored a spectacular try. The hosts not only kept a clean sheet in the first period despite having so little ball but showed real character to retake the lead in the dying moments. Meanwhile, despite so many absentees, the visitors adapted to the situation with aplomb to put in a performance that would have swept aside a less cussed opponent. Their pack was tireless and particularly effective at the breakdown.

Next Saturday, **22nd October**, Sutton and Epsom play Royal **Wootton Bassett**. It will be the first time in the club's history that they will play the Wiltshire club. The kick off will be 3pm at Malmesbury Road and any supporters might like to avail themselves of the team coach.

Sutton & Epsom

Robbie Martey, Kyren Ghumra, Archie Fitzgerald, Freddie Bunting, Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, Jamie See, Ross Parsons, Alex Mount, James Craig, Tom Boaden, Matt Harwood, George Drye ©, Tom Brooker, Rob Hegarty, James Caddy.

Replacements: Will Lloyd & Chris Farrell. Austin Bell (not used)

London Welsh

Dylan Casella, Elliot Hopkin, Tololima Savaiinaea, Dafydd Manley, Jonathan Ilori, Osian McAvoy, Hywel Williams, Andrew Black, Jack Burnett, James Buncle, James Downing, Charlie Bramble, Ben Davies, Rhydian George & Tom Williams.

Replacements

Max Brewer, Rohan Pixley & Adam Nixon.

Epsom Councillor challenges County “community” funding

Questions have been raised about a community cash project and whether it is reaching those in Surrey who are most in need. **Surrey County Council** plans to allocate £100million over five years, with residents and community groups pitching for money for their areas. At its last cabinet meeting on September 22, £586,000 was allocated from the council's Your Fund Surrey community fund for the rebuilding of **Ripley Village Hall** and £982,000 was given to the **Old Woking and District Community Centre**.

Image: More than £500K was awarded for a community shop and cafe in Normandy from Your Fund Surrey. Credit Surrey County Council.



But a motion put forward at the authority's full council meeting on Tuesday (October 11) called for the fund to be paused in next year's budget, in a financial climate that is "very different" from when it was established. **Epsom** Councillor **Jan Mason** (Residents Association, West Ewell) said in her area she had two of the county's most deprived estates, and among the lowest car ownership, meaning people couldn't necessarily travel to community facilities elsewhere. She claimed the money had been "wasted", saying she was sure some councillors had "lovely clubs" for people in middle-income areas.

Cllr Mason added: "You've taken the money from the people in my area that are on low income, and they are paying their rates, they're not getting out of that. But they're actually paying for things that no one asked them do they want to have?" Cllr Mason took issue with councillors being told to work with their communities on getting the funding and has spoken out before on the lengthy application process to get the money. She added: "I know what it's like, so don't say to people like me: 'What you've got to do Jan, is work with your communities.' Yes I do, and I've always done for 20 years."

Cllr Denise Turner-Stewart (Conservative, Staines South and Ashford West), cabinet member for communities and community safety, said the fund had so far given 14 projects £4.5million, with another seven applications worth more than £3.75m which could be decided by the end of the year. She added: "Many of the projects funded have focused on early intervention and prevention by promoting the health and well being of residents. "Funded projects have provided residents with a safe space to exercise, socialise and learn new skills. Bringing communities together on projects has helped reduce social isolation and there are numerous examples where projects have led to new connections being build out in our communities."

She also announced that £50,000 would be allocated to each member for their area, aiming to simplify the fund from early 2023. **Cllr George Potter** (Liberal Democrat, Guildford East) called the announcement a "rabbit pulled out of the hat" and questioned if it should come in the middle of a debate and not via a leader's statement or at a select committee. He said he welcomed the simplification of the process, hoping it might help some of areas of high deprivation in his division, though he raised concerns about rising costs of borrowing on the fund.

Cllr Nick Darby (Dittons and Weston Green Residents, The Dittons), putting forward the failed motion to pause the funding, said it was a question of "affordability, pure and simple" and not a question of not wanting to support communities. He said: "We are borrowing £100m or would be if it goes all the way through, and we cannot afford at the moment to do this."

Council leader **Cllr Tim Oliver** (Conservative, Weybridge) called the "knee-jerk" move "premature at the very least", saying the next year's budget would be looked at over the coming weeks and a decision could be made. He said the council would continue to be prudent in budgeting, prioritising services to the most vulnerable children and families, but that the administration would not "abandon our residents and communities".

Cllr Oliver added: "We should be optimistic in our ability to overcome these challenges. We have a track record of facing up to issues and finding solutions."

Epsom's Mental Health Week

Epsom and Ewell based charities **Love Me Love My Mind** and **The Friends of Horton Cemetery** joined forces with Surrey County Council Youth Workers and others this week. In Epsom Market Square on Saturday 8th October local residents and visitors took part in the "**Out of Sight, Out of Mind**" Project. This **Historic England** supported project raises awareness of the **Horton Cemetery** in Epsom. There are buried 9000 patients of Epsom's five now closed psychiatric hospitals. The largest asylum cemetery in Europe.

Borough and County Councillor **Bernie Muir** joined in the Market Square painting of memorial flowers.



Cllr Bernie Muir paints a flower

The painting continued during a day of reflection and celebration on **World Mental Health Day** 10th October at **St Barnabas Church** in Temple Road, Epsom. Activities included a walk to Horton Cemetery beside Hook Road and a song and dance performance by students from Epsom's **Laine Theatre Arts School**.



Mayor Clive Woodbridge paints a flower

Mayor **Clive Woodbridge** joined the event and painted a flower. 900 ceramic flowers are being individually painted by young and old throughout the Borough over the year. Workshops will be held to discuss the significance of the Cemetery and the lives of those who ended up in this paupers' graveyard. The aim is to plant the flowers near the Cemetery on Mental Health Day 2023. The site was sold by the NHS to a property speculator in 1983 and has been neglected ever since.

Warnings of County bankruptcy?

Surrey County Council is calling on the government to delay **social care reforms** which it is claimed could "bankrupt" the authority. Plans for more generous means testing and an £86,000 cap on care costs are due to come in from October 2023, but councillors have raised serious concerns on the impact it could have on finances. Surrey County Council, which was last week called on to use its status as a "top Tory authority" in lobbying government for more funding ahead of winter pressures on the NHS, has voted to call for a delay to the social care changes.

A meeting of full council on Tuesday (October 11) approved a motion to ask for more time to prepare for the roll out of the plans, which could cost the council up to an additional £40million a year.



Cllr Bernie Muir - SCC

Calling adult social care “the key issue of our time” **Councillor Bernie Muir** (Conservative, Epsom West), putting forward the motion, said Surrey was an “outlier”, with nearly two thirds of residents funding their own care. Cllr Muir said many of those would qualify for funding under the new plans, therefore needing a detailed means test and said without government funding the plans “simply would not be financially viable”.

She called the numbers “staggering” and said the timescale was “not practical” because of needing to means test an additional 9,500 to 12,000 people, on top of already “extremely challenging” staffing problems. Cllr Muir said: “With the rapidly ageing population and increase in those who have complex needs, it is clear that we have to find a way to pay for social care needs and these need to change in order to help meet the challenge. Surrey County Council supports the government’s desire to tackle this long term issue. But for Surrey the current proposals would appear to be untenable.”

Seconding the motion, **Riasat Khan** (Conservative, Woking North) said it was estimated that the county council could face a funding gap of between £8-20m in 2023/24, rising to £25-40m in 2024/25. He also said somewhere between 85 to 300 extra trained social workers would be needed “within a very tight timescale”.

Cllr Khan said: “Given that we already have resourcing issues, this will be extremely challenging.” Cllr **Will Forster** (Liberal Democrat, Woking South) said the cumulative cost to the council by 2033 could be as high as £3.2billion, which he said “terrified” him. He said: “That is unsustainable. That would bankrupt this council, resulting in us abolishing all services to keep that bill going.”

The **County Councils Network**, which represents 36 English councils, also called for delays to the reforms, which it otherwise supports. The organisation said they could lead to longer waits for care packages, and would add to “a workforce crisis” being faced by authorities at the moment, with inflation also set to add £3.7bn in additional costs to existing services by 2023.

The motion, carried by members, said the council would continue to work with central government to get money to “fully fund reforms across the decade” and push for a delayed and phased introduction of the reforms. As well as this, the council will continue to develop the new Integrated Care Systems for a more joined up approach to health and social care and continue its commitment of tackling health inequalities across the county.

Fostering new parents

Surrey County Council and 56 Local Authorities across England have worked together to share ideas and jointly fund the creation of a short film to raise awareness of fostering. It is aimed at finding more people who may be interested in becoming foster carers and providing nurturing, positive homes for children and young people across the country who need them.

The new film, simply called ‘Childhood’, highlights the impact of neglect on children, particularly brothers and sisters who may be left at times to try and care for each other. It shows the journey of ‘Sophie’ and ‘Charlie’ who are in a very difficult home situation



where their needs are not being met, to being nurtured and supported through foster care to attend school and be able to enjoy their hobbies and interests. In other words, have a childhood.

Sinead Mooney, Cabinet Member for Children and Families at Surrey County Council said: "We have a critical need for more foster carers in Surrey, and we are calling on people to open their hearts and homes, to make sure that Surrey's children can be cared for in their local community. Fostering really can make a huge difference to children and young people, and we offer a strong carer network as a local authority, so I encourage people to find out more."

'Childhood' will be officially launched with a premiere at the Everyman cinema, Birmingham on 13th October, with an introduction from **Kevin Williams**, the Chief Executive of **The Fostering Network**, and Rachel Brown, project manager working with Council Advertising Network.

Kevin Williams said "We continue to value and support foster carers but we urgently need more foster carers to come forward to care for children within their local communities. Foster carers are the bedrock of children's social care; they are vital in our society and our young people rely on their care, dedication, passion and skills to support them when they need it most. Across the UK, around 9,265 more fostering families are needed, to make sure every child that can't live with their own family gets the care they need.

"Currently, there are over 70,000 children living with almost 56,000 foster families in the UK, and the number of children coming into care keeps rising. The reasons children become looked after vary widely. We need more people to come forward to foster, to stand by their side and to be there for them no matter what."

The film will then be published on all 56 participating council's social media platforms.

The film will be available to watch and share from all participating local authority platforms from noon on 13th October 2022 to help the message spread across the UK using the hashtags #FosterForYourCouncil and #Childhood

Find out more about Fostering in Surrey here: surreycc.gov.uk/fostering and follow on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Anyone can contact SCC today for a friendly and informal chat about fostering in Surrey: 0800 096 9626.

Surrey County Council news

"Sorry" is not such a hard word for Surrey

Surrey County Council's leader said the authority will "learn lessons" from problems which left 150 families without school transport. Issuing an apology on behalf of the council, **Councillor Tim Oliver** said the authority had to "hold its hands up" after children, many with additional needs, had to find alternative travel arrangements. The cabinet member for education and learning, **Councillor Clare Curran** (Conservative, Bookham and Fetcham West), echoed his apology to the "families who have had such anxiety and delays" since the start of term.

Image: Tim Oliver Surrey County Council leader - credit Surrey Live

In a full council meeting on Tuesday (October 11) Cllr Oliver (Conservative, Weybridge) said a change in policy, along with increased demand and driver shortages, led to a backlog in processing applications. He added: "This has been a very complex and difficult situation and we have to hold our hands up on occasions like this to say that we have let some people down. However, I know that the home to school transport team have been working day and night alongside our customer services team to help as many families as they can."

He committed to members that the authority would learn lessons from the beginning of the school year.

At the start of term, nearly 150 families were left without school transport as the authority attempted to work through more than 500 applications.

Parents came forward to the LDRS* with stories of long journeys on public transport and children who weren't able to stay for the whole school day because of sibling pick ups and drop offs. A council spokesperson at the time said there had been an increase in staffing as well as temporary financial allowances being given to families to make alternative arrangements.

Cllr Nick Darby (Dittons and Weston Green Residents, The Dittons) thanked local media for bringing attention to the issue and said there had been a "woeful lack of communication" with families when transport was withdrawn or delayed before the start of the school term. He added: "Lessons need to be learned, and quickly, to avoid any repetition. Sufficient resources in place well in



advance, regular communication. This year [there was] none of that, the problem could have been identified months ago. Sorry may be the hardest word but here it is entirely appropriate, as you have said leader, addressed to our numerous left-behind children, their left-behind and stressed parents, our left-behind officers doing their best to sort out the problems."

Cllr Curran said it was not the intention that a new policy, which said individual transport would only be agreed in extenuating circumstances, would push more parents through the appeals process.

Meeting documents also showed that no SEND (Special Education and Needs Disability) children had had their solo transport removed since the new policy was implemented. She said: "I repeat and reinforce the leader's apology to those families who have had such anxiety and delays in the recent weeks related to home to school travel assistance."

Saying the council chamber had been turned into a "political environment", Cllr Oliver admitted that though the authority's ambition was to ensure that no one in Surrey was left behind, "that isn't currently the case". He added: "But it is our ambition and it will remain our ambition to make sure that we do look after every vulnerable member of this county, whether that's a family or a child or any resident."

Cllr Curran confirmed a review was being carried out into what had gone wrong.

See our earlier report: Families 'in limbo' as SCC fails on school transport

*LDRS BBC's Local Democracy Reporting Service with which Epsom and Ewell Times is in partnership

Surrey Police tackling drug-dealers

Surrey Police marked **County Lines Intensification Week** (3-9 October) by targeting and disrupting violent county lines gangs and engaging with those most vulnerable to exploitation by these criminals.

The intensification week, which is run nationally, aims to make life as difficult as possible for members of county line gangs, who often use violence and intimidation to exploit children and the vulnerable and to force them to store and 'run' drugs for them.

Over the week, officers focused on visiting local communities to raise awareness of the signs of exploitation and what to do if you think a loved one is at risk. They carried out 31 cuckooing prevention visits, safeguarded 40 vulnerable adults, engaged with over 460 people at local community events, and completed almost 120 prevention and education visits at secondary schools, taxi firms, leisure centres and youth groups.

A total of 11 people were also arrested for various drugs offences, 76 people were proactively stopped and searched, over 250 wraps of heroin and crack cocaine were seized, and more than £2000 in cash and assets were confiscated.

This latest activity was carried out by the neighbourhood and proactive teams and is on top of the 119 county lines that Centurion, our dedicated county lines team, have successfully shut down since their creation in September 2020. This works out at just over one drugs line being closed per week.

DCI Debbie White said: "County lines gangs can cause untold misery to their victims as they often utilise violence (including sexual violence), and intimidation to exploit the most vulnerable in our society. Working closely with our partners in neighbouring forces and the South East Regional Crime Unit (SEROUCU), we have become very effective at using intelligence to identify and target those who may be involved in this criminal activity and bringing them to justice. Your information is vital in allowing us to keep on closing down these drug lines, so if you have any information regarding drug dealing or violent crime in your area, or you are worried that someone is being exploited, we need you to tell us. If you'd rather not speak to police, please reach out to the anonymous and fully independent charity Crimestoppers. Together we can stop the flow of drugs into our county."

Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey **Lisa Townsend** said: "Driving county lines gangs out of Surrey remains a key priority for me as your Commissioner and this kind of targeted police action is vital in helping take dangerous people and drugs off our streets. These networks are ruthless and actively groom young and vulnerable people in our communities to act as drug couriers or dealers. It is so important we all work together to prevent them falling into the clutches of these gangs. That is why I would ask everyone to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity to the police so they can take immediate action and disrupt this criminal activity in our county."

Surrey Police news