EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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22nd October 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Man wrongly labelled ‘vexatious complainant’ by Epsom and Ewell Council

1 August 2022

A man was paid £500 after **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** wrongly labelled him a “vexatious complainant” in a planning dispute. The **local government ombudsman**, which looks into complaints against councils, found Epsom and Ewell Borough Council at fault over its handling of contact from a man known as Mr X.

The authority was told to pay him £500 for the distress he suffered, made up of £300 for distress and £200 for his time and trouble in contacting the council and the ombudsman.

The authority was also told to apologise to Mr X for its “failure to deal properly with the planning enforcement investigation and its decision to apply the unacceptable behaviour policy to him”.

Mr X had been in contact with the council before an investigation was opened, in October 2020, into an alleged breach of planning control regarding his neighbour’s driveway. This report was added to an already open planning enforcement investigation, with Mr X saying the council had failed to act on his reports that his neighbour carried out development on a front driveway without planning permission.

A spokesperson for the council said they were unable to comment on enquiries relating to an individual case. According to the ombudsman’s report, the council claimed to have sent a report into Mr X’s complaints to him in December 2020, though he claims he was not informed of the decision not to take enforcement action. The council did not provide evidence to support its claim it had sent the report to Mr X, as part of the ombudsman’s investigation. It closed the enforcement investigation in February 2021, though the ombudsman noted that it appeared the council did act on the reports but did not provide evidence on its conclusions.

The report states: “Based on Mr X’s statement that he did not receive the report and the council’s failure to provide evidence that the report was sent to him, I conclude, on the balance of probabilities, that the report was not sent to Mr X. This is significant because Mr X’s further contacts with the council from January 2021 over the planning breaches were justified.”

Mr X had sent emails and photographs about the issue to the head of development management and had contacted the enforcement officer dealing with the case. He was concerned about the building of a wall, drainage systems, lack of screening, a failure to screen off the building site and raising of the height of the garden in relation to his neighbour. He also said an enforcement officer made a visit to the site, but did not inform him of it in order to meet with him afterwards.

He made a complaint about the enforcement officer to the head of development management.

The head of development management stopped working for the council in January 2021, and did not respond to the complaint he received from Mr X before he did. He also had contact with the authority’s chief legal officer, who he made a complaint about, saying the officer was “protecting his neighbour”.

He said the officer had repeatedly ignored his correspondence and threatened to block his emails while making an allegation of defamation against him.

Mr X continued to contact council officers up to summer 2021, until he received an email in August to say the council would restrict contact with him under its unreasonable behaviour policy.

The letter said most of Mr X’s correspondence did not fall within the definition of a complaint the council could deal with and that the context and nature of his correspondence threatened the welfare of council employees. It said said Mr X would be restricted to a single point of contact and the restriction would remain in place for six months.

The ombudsman found: “The chief legal officer triggered the policy even though the council had not dealt with Mr X’s reports of breaches of planning control properly and in line with relevant procedures and statutory guidelines.”

The council’s policy on “unreasonable behaviour” covers people who hinder council work on their, or other people’s complaints, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts. It says unreasonable behaviour may include one or two isolated incidents or persistent behaviour over a longer period.

The ombudsman concluded: “There was fault by the council because it did not inform Mr X of the outcome of its planning enforcement investigation. It consequently improperly applied its policy on vexatious complainants. The council agreed to apologise to Mr X and make a payment to him to address the injustice he suffered in consequence of its fault.”

A borough council spokesperson said: “We are unable to comment on enquiries relating to an individual case in the borough. “We can inform you that we work with the ombudsman regarding individual case work and its recommendations.”

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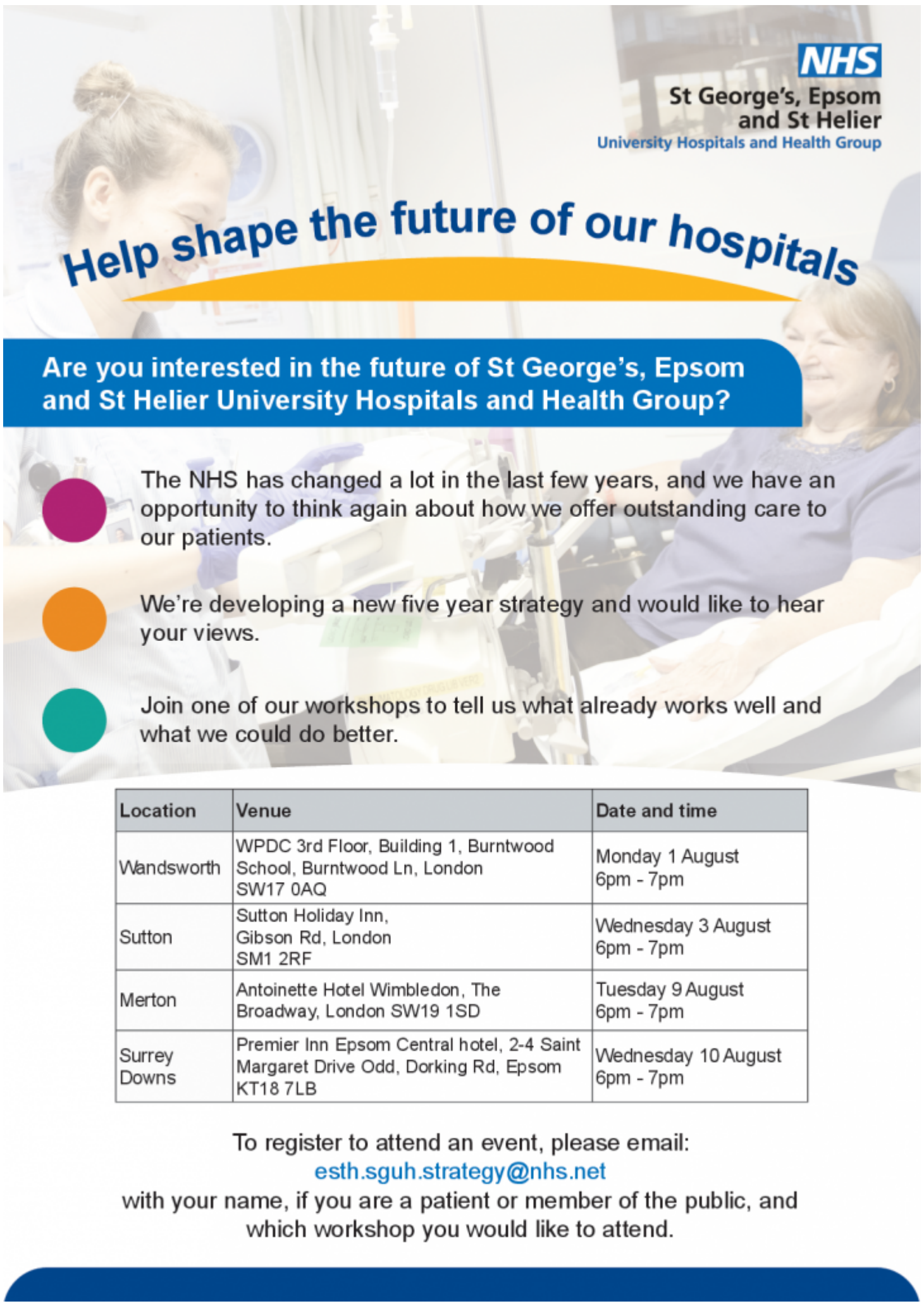
ISSN 2753-2771

The full report of the ombudsman is HERE

Another consultation during the holiday month....

1 August 2022

Epsom and St Helier and St George's Hospital are holding a series of workshops starting this week and next for patients and the public to attend. The workshop will involve shaping the new joint strategy for St George's and Epsom and St Helier Hospital. The workshops will be approximately 60-90mins long and facilitated by the hospital's transformation and strategy team. Teas and coffees will be served on the night. A full break down of the events, dates and times can be found below. **Epsom and Ewell's** will be held at the **Premier Inn Dorking Road** Epsom on Wednesday 10th August at 6.00pm RSVP via esth.sguh.strategy@nhs.net



Location	Venue	Date and time
Wandsworth	WPDC 3rd Floor, Building 1, Burntwood School, Burntwood Ln, London SW17 0AQ	Monday 1 August 6pm - 7pm
Sutton	Sutton Holiday Inn, Gibson Rd, London SM1 2RF	Wednesday 3 August 6pm - 7pm
Merton	Antoinette Hotel Wimbledon, The Broadway, London SW19 1SD	Tuesday 9 August 6pm - 7pm
Surrey Downs	Premier Inn Epsom Central hotel, 2-4 Saint Margaret Drive Odd, Dorking Rd, Epsom KT18 7LB	Wednesday 10 August 6pm - 7pm

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August Police warn drink drivers in Surrey

1 August 2022

Surrey Police have launched their annual summer crackdown on drink and drug drivers in Surrey. Drink and drug-driving is one of the most common causes of collisions which result in death or serious injury, and in 2021 416 drink or drug drivers were arrested and charged on the roads of Surrey.

From 1 August to 1 September, Surrey and Sussex Police will have extra resources dedicated to preventing and detecting incidents of drink and drug-driving. This is in addition to the routine roads policing work carried out 24/7, 365 days a year, by their **Roads Policing Un**it and new **Vanguard Road Safety Team**.

The Vanguard Team are a new and dedicated police resource focusing solely on the 'fatal 5' – the leading contributory factors in collisions, to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on Surrey's roads.

In line with their previous campaigns, anyone arrested during this period and then convicted will be identified on their website and social media channels as a deterrent.

Chief Inspector Michael Hodder, of the Surrey and Sussex Roads Policing Unit, said: "It cannot be said enough how much drink and drug-driving can ruin lives.

"Drink-driving is something that is becoming more socially unacceptable but unfortunately, we are seeing more and more drug-driving on Surrey roads. This is something we are working hard to tackle, and these dedicated campaigns are crucial in raising awareness, deterring would-be offenders, and keeping as many people as possible, safe on the roads.

"As always, we will deal extremely robustly with these offenders through a combination of measures including education, engineering, and enforcement, with a special emphasis on reducing casualty rates of vulnerable users like motorcyclists and young drivers.

"Technology now allows us to test drivers at the roadside there and then for drugs, which allows us to be more effective in how we tackle drug driving and means that drivers who are breaking the law, will be caught.

"Alcohol and drugs affect everyone differently, so do the right thing, don't risk it and arrange alternative ways home if you are planning on going out."

The consequences of drink or drug-driving could include:

• Killing or seriously injuring yourself or someone else;
• A minimum 12-month ban;
• An unlimited fine;
• A possible prison sentence;
• A criminal record, which could affect your current and future employment;
• An increase in your car insurance costs;
• Trouble travelling to countries such as the USA.
• If you know someone is driving while over the limit or after taking drugs, call 999.

You can also contact the independent charity Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or report it online. www.crimestoppers-uk.org

The campaign is being run in conjunction with the **DriveSmart in Surrey and Sussex Safer Roads Partnership.**

Swans glide past Salts – Walton & Hersham 3 Epsom & Ewell 0

1 August 2022

Pre-season Friendly Friday 29th July 2022 Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk Reporter: Richard Lambert

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Our pre-season has been a good one so far, and there were many positives to take from this match, despite the scoreline that just confirmed there is a large gap between Step Four and Step Six football, which we all knew anyway!

On the artificial surface at the Xcel Sports Hub; a venue where we had conceded ten goals in two previous visits, this match ended with another three goals against us, but for large periods of the match we gave as good as our opponents and the work rate was also impressive.

We conceded an early penalty after Jahobi Maher dragged down the winger, but the hosts tried to get clever, with one of those “Henry/Pires style penalties, but our keeper was alert to the danger and made a fine save from the eventual shot in the 12th minute.

We had a long range effort from new signing Tiago Andrade that wasn’t far away, before Jubril “Jibs” Adamson fired a half volley just over the bar as the hosts failed to deal with a Ryan “Butch” Smith free kick, but our keeper was back in action soon after, making a fine save from an angle after a good advantage from the referee. We then trailed in the 35th minute after a near post corner was headed in from close range by Joe Hicks.

Two more saves were made by our keeper before a Smith strike from 25 yards tested the gloves of the Walton keeper, but we also saw a recent new signing, the re-joining Hakim Griffiths, knocked to the ground and he required replacement just before the break.

We were caught out at the start of the second half as a low ball in from the left was tapped in at the far post by Eddie Simon for Walton and Hersham’s second goal in the 48th minute, and soon after this we made six changes, in addition to the two made either side of half time, although despite the disruption to our side the match remained competitive throughout. We clearly have a number of players fighting for places right now and all are contributing. It’s a nice problem for our Management to have!

A third goal for the hosts on the hour was ruled out for offside after the Assistant’s flag was raised, although much discussion ensued between the officials before the decision was finally confirmed. Six minutes later our substitute striker pinged a shot against the Walton post from 20 yards and was unlucky to see the ball fly off it across the face of the goal instead of into the net. This led to our best spell of the game with some decent football and we looked like we may get the score back to 2-1 at any moment, but as we chased the match, we unfortunately gave away another penalty in the 89th minute and by the time it was taken a minute later, Mills chose to stick with a more orthodox spot kick this time and scored their third and final goal.

Despite the scoreline it is sometimes good to lose a friendly as you can learn a lot about players in adversity. Another tough challenge awaits on Wednesday as we face Leatherhead at Fetcham Grove, but this result hasn’t dented my belief in any way that we will be competing for the title this season. In fact, it might have even enhanced it a little!

Council’s last minute opposition to ULEZ extension.

1 August 2022

With just one day to go before the end of the consultation period, **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** agreed on 28th July a response to Transport for London’s (TFL’s) proposed plan to extend the **Ultra Low Emissions Zone** (ULEZ) to all London boroughs, including neighbouring Kingston and Sutton. See Epsom and Ewell Times report 17th June on ULEZ extension.

ULEZ is a charge, currently £12.50 a day, imposed on the most polluting vehicles that enter the zone. Most petrol cars manufactured after January 2006, most diesel cars manufactured after September 2016 and all electric cars are exempt from the ULEZ charge.

In a special motion to the Council meeting on 28th July, Councillor **Phil Neale** (RA, Cuddington Ward) proposed a response to the consultation arguing for a significant increase in the number of exempt routes and an extension of any scrappage scheme to include Epsom and Ewell. The motion also called for an extension of the consultation period to allow more careful analysis of the cause and effect to the welfare and economy of the boroughs neighbouring London. “We support the move to reduce the high level of air pollution caused by congestion and high-emission vehicles,” he said. “However, in this time of economic pressure, the scheme needs to consider the economic, social and mental health needs of all communities affected by the scheme, not just London boroughs. It is going to hit lower income families more. I’m not asking for ULEZ to be dropped, I’m asking for TFL to consider what will happen in the boroughs surrounding London.”

“There seems to be no thought by TFL whatsoever of the impact this will have on the borough and our residents” said **Cllr. John Beckett** (RA, Auriol Ward, Chair of the Environment and Safe Communities Committee). “I welcome the travel corridors that have been put in, but I do have to question why I can drive 98% of the way to the new hospital site, but the

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road I need to use to get into the hospital site is in the proposed ULEZ."

"If we get public transport sorted, that would be the time to get people moving out of their cars" said **Cllr. Neil Dallen** (RA, Town Ward, Chair of the Strategy and Resource Committee).

Cllr Kate Chinn (Labour, Court Ward) provided the solitary voice opposing the motion. "It is only the oldest and most polluting vehicles that apply – these need to be taken off the roads…let's give people help to do that and let's look after this world for ourselves and the people who come after us."

The motion was passed by a considerable majority. Exact voting figures were not announced by the Mayor who chaired the meeting.

"Statement of community involvement" involves what about what?

1 August 2022

Following a 4-week public consultation, **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** unveiled its new draft **Statement of Community Involvement** (SCI) at a meeting of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee on 28th July. This describes how local residents, businesses and other organisations can be involved in the planning process in Epsom and Ewell.

It is a legal requirement for the Council to have an SCI and to review it every five years as the way in which communities and the Council interact changes.

Planning decisions affect us all so, if you are interested in your area and would like to be involved in shaping future planning policy in Epsom & Ewell, you can:

- Sign up to receive notifications about local plan consultations.
- Read the council's Local Development Scheme to find out what documents are going to be produced and when.
- Monitor the council's Planning Policy webpages for updates and latest news.
- Check if a Neighbourhood Forum has been established in your area to prepare a neighbourhood plan.

The draft SCI can be read in the Agenda Reports Pack of the committee meeting, but please be aware that it is subject to some small amendments as a result of questions and suggestions raised by councillors at the meeting.

Abstaining from responsibility?

1 August 2022

As exclusively reported by Epsom and Ewell Times today 10 Borough Councillors sat on 26th July's all-powerful budget setting Strategy and Resources Committee. On a crucial vote to establish a savings target of nearly £1/4 m from the "homelessness budget" for the next financial year, half the committee abstained, including one Councillor who spoke against the proposal.

Pressures on the Council's budget continue to mount with the projected deficit rising in the current financial year from £1.5m to £2m. The Council's ability to raise Council tax is strictly limited. Any increase above £4.95 on a Band D property (mid-range in value) requires a local referendum to authorise. Moreover, on the horizon for the Borough are the dark clouds of further Central Government redistribution of local tax revenues that is likely to see a diminishing proportion of business rates revenue being kept by Epsom and Ewell in favour of the County and poorer parts of the country. Epsom and Ewell is to receive the minimum grant from central Government under its "levelling up" agenda.

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The Councillors had been provided with a detailed report by hard working Council officers setting out the figures and financial projections. Granted, Councillors do not have a crystal ball and as the committee's chair, Neil Dallen implies: "You're damned if you do (make hurtful savings) and you're damned if you don't (setting aside funds that could have been spent elsewhere)". All depends on the future demands on the homelessness budget which in turn depends on the unpredictable lives of people.

These hard decisions have to be made. This is what we elect our Councillors to do. To take ultimate responsibility. By local convention rather than rule the Chairs of the Council committees do not vote. So, on a minority participating tied vote of 2:2 the Chair took that hard decision and voted in favour of the target savings. Should he alone carry the burden of that decision? Was the abstention of the majority of the usual voting number an acceptable response to the financial dilemmas the Borough faces?

Council targeting the homeless

1 August 2022

In a vote dominated by abstentionism, a service-specific savings target of £243k to offset this year's potential overspending for homelessness, was approved by **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** last Tuesday.

The measure was discussed at the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee of 26th July, chaired by **Cllr. Neil Dallen** (RA Town Ward), as part of the strategic financial planning for 2023/24 to balance the books, following the unprecedented impact that the pandemic has had on different Council service areas.

"We have to take an educated guess as to how many people/families will be homeless in Epsom and Ewell next year," said Dallen. "If we underestimate the issue, the budget is not enough; if we overestimate it, we underspend the budget, but that means we will have unnecessarily reduced other budgets and therefore services for our residents."

The decision was only achieved with the vote of the Chair. Two Councillors voted against, two voted in favour and five abstained, after a string of concerns over the target were raised. [See today's editorial.]

"I don't believe our homelessness problem will improve," said the substitute for Cllr. Monica Coleman (RA West Ewell Ward), **Cllr. Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley Ward), who abstained from the vote as he disagreed with the cut. "The after effects of the pandemic and the unfolding cost of living crisis" can't be ignored.

According to a report presented to the Committee, the proposed target considers a neutral scenario ahead, but current projections might be short-sighted at a time when rising inflation and the consequences of other major international events might hold significant sway on those residents at risk of becoming homeless and requiring immediate assistance.

"I think the numbers will continue to rise for a long time," said **Cllr. Kate Chinn** (Labour Court Ward), who voted against the proposal. "It will put officers under pressure."

Other councillors saw the target too important to be rejected. The savings would cover the further £243k funding that would be required in the neutral scenario to support an average of 82 families in temporary accommodation throughout 2022/23. Should the pessimistic situation materialise, officers would need to sort out compensating underspends or additional income, or 'ringfence' an additional £250k as a contingency, funded from the Council's General Use Reserve that now holds a balance of £2.672m.

"I don't have to vote on the basis targets will be kept under review," said **Cllr. Eber Kington** (RA Ewell Court). "We have a team here, who year on year have found new ways to look after our residents, find properties and do different things."

Every five years, the Council is required to conduct a review to assess the nature and extent of homelessness in the borough, after which a strategy is developed to address the ongoing issues and prevent future episodes of homelessness and rough sleeping. A consultation will be open until 23 August 2022 to share views and suggestions with officers who are now drafting an **Action Plan**.

In documents seen by Epsom and Ewell Times, councillors' doubts might prove well-founded, as official data for the last three quarters seem to depict a gloomy picture. In 2022, already 314 approaches for advice and assistance regarding homelessness have been conducted by the borough's **Housing Options Service**. The total number of last year's actions was 316.

In a draft from the Action Plan, the Council shared six objectives to achieve by 2027. Among them, officers aim at early identifying homelessness, so as to intervene on and prevent it. Rough sleeping must be reduced, through the development of a Delivery Plan, the exploration of a 'Housing First' model and the collaboration with external partners to maintain the provision of effective services. The health and wellbeing of homeless people ought to be corrected, with a **Make Every Contact Matter** ethos and a close relationship with local health services. Accommodation options are also to be

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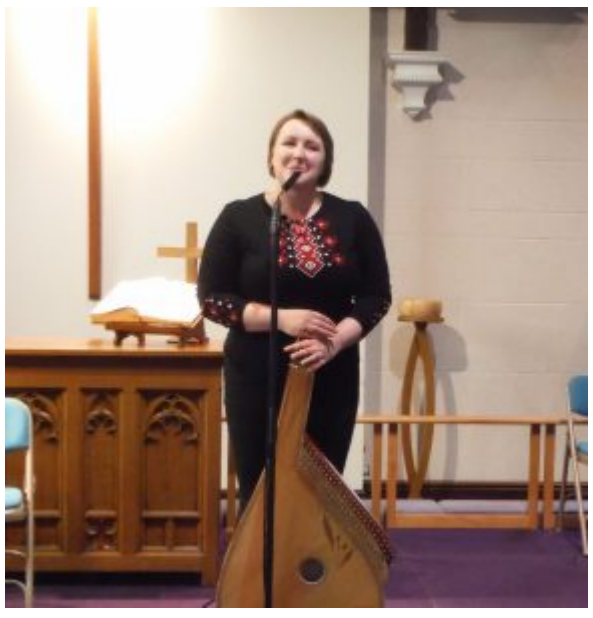
considered. Their number must be increased via social rented housing, private rented accommodation or supported and in-borough temporary lodging.

“Homelessness is one of the Council’s greatest risks; we don’t want anyone to be homeless.” It is “a lose:lose scenario” for both the people becoming homeless and the Council, said **Dallen**. But “we don’t have unlimited money.”

Blues on a bandura blow minds in Epsom

1 August 2022



Ukrainian refugee musicians delighted a packed audience in the Epsom Methodist Church Saturday 30th July. On behalf of the local community **Mayor of Epsom and Ewell Cllr Clive Woodbridge** extended a warm welcome to all Ukrainian refugees and thanked the sacrifices of local hosts who have taken them into their homes.

Organised by **Lionel Blackman** with **Nina Kaye of Epsom Refugee Network** and **Surrey Stands With Ukraine,** the evening was compered by **Darina Dvorinchenko,** a refugee from Odessa, who also conducted all the required interpretation.

In response to the Mayor professional pianist **Natalia Zadorizhna** expressed the deep gratitude to our community for all we are doing in standing with her country in the “evil time”. And that gratitude was demonstrated by fine performances also from her young daughter **Diana**, who played the piano and recited from memory and in English the Ukrainian poem “**Love Ukraine**” by **Volodymyr Sosiura**.

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Packed audience at Epsom Methodist Church

Young **Liza Pryiemska** played piano, recited the poem in Ukrainian and sang beautifully. 21 year old **Tetiana Zheliba** at short notice replacing an artist who fell sick, took to the fine grand piano at EMC for two compositions.

Young 16 year old **Nika Vlasova** played **Schubert's "The Bee"** solo on violin.

Like a winged harp carrying angel **Yulia Komyshan**, recently arrived from Ukraine, had heard about the event on a social network and simply turned up unannounced, **Bandura** in hand. She crowned the night with the audience standing to the national song and included in her performance was a remarkable rendition of a blues number. She certainly blew the blues away. The audience all rose to their feet in a sustained ovation for these remarkably talented and brave Ukrainians.

Darina Dvorinchenko, Mayor of Epsom and Ewell Cllr Clive Woodbridge, Natalia and Diana Zadorizhna, Liza Pryiemska, Tetiana Zheliba, Nika Vlasova and Yuliya Komyshan with her Ukrainian bandura.

Did the Inspector get to the Bottom of this?

1 August 2022

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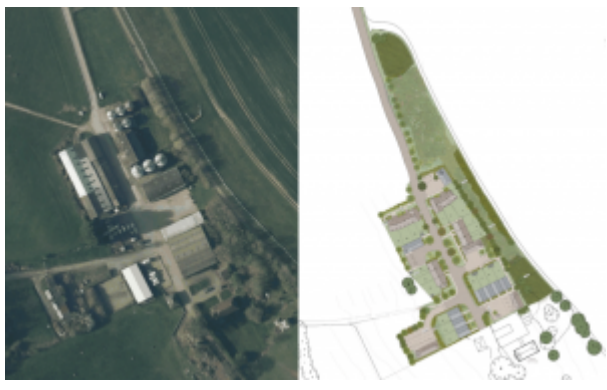

Langley Bottom Farm in Epsom is to become a small housing estate following the decision of Planning Inspector **D Hartley** dated 14th July 2022. Overturning a refusal of the **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** and against overwhelming objections of the public in the 168 recorded submissions the Inspector allowed the appeal of **Fairfax Properties**, despite the location being in **Green Belt land**.

The Inspector made the following controversial observations:

“One of the purposes of Green Belt is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The site includes a number of existing buildings and areas of hardstanding. The latter has the continued potential to be used for the parking of vehicles. Overall, and taking into account the existing use, characteristics and extent of development on the site, I am satisfied that subject to the imposition of planning conditions the proposal would not lead to countryside encroachment and hence there would be no conflict with this Green Belt purpose.”

Concerning **local facilities** for the future occupants he stated “Langley Vale is within reasonable walking and cycling distance of the appeal site. It contains a limited number of facilities and amenities such as the ‘Park and Shop’ petrol filling station convenience store, ‘The Shop on the Corner’, garage, village hall, pre-school and primary school. I acknowledge the Council’s comment that ‘The Shop on the Corner’ appears to have ceased trading. There is of course some possibility that the property could be used again as a shop but, in any event, ‘The Park and Shop’ does provide some food and drink provision albeit that I acknowledge that it would likely only be used on the basis of day to day ‘topping up’.”

On **public transport, walking and cycling** he observed with optimism: “The site is located in close proximity to bus stops within Langley Vale and includes bus service E5 every two hours to Epsom (Monday to Saturday) and school service 618 (Monday to Friday). Furthermore, three mainline railway stations are located nearby (Epsom, Epsom Downs and Tattenham Corner) providing commuting services to London and access to destinations further afield. There is also bus service 408 from Epsom to Cobham and stopping at Leatherhead and which runs Monday to Friday calling at Langley Vale once a day. I acknowledge that services are not very frequent but nevertheless I find that some of the proposed residents would use them on occasion. The evidence is that the site is served well by a number of public footpath and cycle routes where some limited opportunities would be available, primarily in the day time and when there is no inclement weather. These could be used to visit services and amenities both locally and further afield.”

The Inspector did observe that **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** had allowed arguably unauthorised uses of the land to continue unchallenged for so many years that the “developed uses” became lawful. The claims of threats to the Green Belt were thereby undermined.

40% of the houses are to be “affordable”. Time will tell how affordable they will be.

Safer nights ahead in Epsom with funding boost

1 August 2022

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will receive £271,712 in government funding for a project to improve safety for Epsom town centre’s night-time economy.

The Home Office’s Safer Streets funding was secured in partnership with Surrey Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Business Improvement District, Go Epsom.

These improvements are aimed specifically at supporting the safety and vitality of the night-time economy, including reducing violence against women and girls.

The funding will help the following items:

- Upgrade of CCTV in Epsom town centre
- Support businesses operating in the evening with training and accreditation
- Support the existing Street Pastors with equipment and training

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- Develop a further night-time presence to build on the work of the Street Pastors
- Provide anti drink spiking equipment to licensed premises and customers
- Deliver a communications package promoting the safety of patrons in the town centre and promote personal safety

In response to ongoing issues in and around Epsom town centre, Surrey Police worked closely with Epsom & Ewell Borough Council to draw up an application for Safer Streets funding.

A survey was sent out into the community and the results were closely consulted when drafting the application. Among the concerns raised were drug use, threatening behaviour, extreme drunkenness, and violence within Epsom town centre, closely linked to the night-time economy.

The survey highlighted a desire for better signposting to help and support, and a need for increased confidence in the police response to issues within the town centre.

The application was drafted by the police and council, then approved and submitted by Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend. Other areas in Surrey to benefit from successful funding bids are Sunbury Cross and the Surrey Towers development in Addlestone.

The money will be used, among other measures, to modernise CCTV use, deliver training packages for licensed premises, and to provide free anti-drink spiking and spiking detection devices within Epsom town centre.

Councillor John Beckett, Chair of the Environment and Safe Communities Committee, said, “It’s great to hear Epsom has received the Safer Streets funding, we are particularly proud of the partnership working that took place to bring this resource together for the benefit of local residents and businesses.

“Supporting the night-time economy while ensuring the safety of residents, particularly female ones, is an important priority and we will continue to work with everyone involved to ensure this money is spent effectively. Epsom town centre is a vibrant evening economy and we are delighted to enhance safety and boost confidence for every business and visitor.”

Inspector Jon Vale, Borough Commander, said, “This is fantastic news. Surrey Police and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council have worked tirelessly as a partnership in the submission of this bid.

“The community have told us their concerns, and we have listened. The funding made available will allow the partnership to implement numerous measures that would not otherwise been a possibility.

“This will help to make Epsom town centre an even safer place for users of the night-time economy, in particular women and girls. Tackling violence against women and girls is a specific priority for the Epsom & Ewell Community Safety Partnership and this work demonstrates our shared commitment in this respect.”

Rod Brown, Chair of the Epsom and Ewell Community Safety Partnership, said, “We know from speaking with residents that the safety of their environment is of great importance. I am delighted that this award will allow us to deliver lasting benefits to the late-night economy in Epsom to allow business to invest with confidence and secure safety improvements for the town.”

Adam Kick the Chairman of Epsom and Ewell’s **Pubwatch** enthuses: “This is amazing news for the borough and has most certainly been achieved as a result of tireless work by all parties involved in the proposal. This funding will most certainly help towards supporting the aim of providing a vibrant nightlife where customer safety is paramount.”

Karen Pengelly, BID Manager at Go Epsom, said, “Since Epsom’s businesses reopened after Covid lockdowns, the BID has been doing lots of groundwork on safety and security, engaging with our local licensed premises and retailers and working with security experts to reduce offending.

“This fresh investment in a modern and much improved CCTV system provides Epsom with the tools that are needed to reduce theft and anti-social behaviour. It’s wonderful news.”

Surrey Police fight dog theft forensically

1 August 2022

Surrey Police are turning to DNA technology to tackle dog thefts in the county.

Wednesday 27th July **Surrey Police** officially launched its partnership with **DNA Protected**, a UK-wide dog DNA

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ISSN 2753-2771

database service designed to deter theft and help ensure a stolen dog's safe return to its owner.

Over the past two years there has been a national increase in demand for dogs and puppies as we all spent a lot more time at home during the pandemic. Unfortunately, this demand also created a gap in the market for dog thieves and illegal breeders.

DNA Protected is a service from **Cellmark Forensic Services**, who hope that their innovative technology and partnership with police forces across the UK will be a game-changer when it comes to the prevention and investigation of dog thefts.

Much like a property register database, DNA Protected securely stores a profile of your dog's unique DNA, produced from a simple mouth swab, on the forensic database. Police forces across the country can swab a dog they believe to be stolen and send the sample off for analysis and comparison against the database.

Like ours, a dog's DNA cannot be changed or removed. If the swab comes back with a match, it can be used to reunite you with your beloved pet and provide valuable evidence in dog theft investigations.

Wildlife Crime Officer, **PC Hollie Iribar**, said, "Surrey Police are excited to support this unique opportunity to get ahead of the game when it comes to tackling dog thefts. These investigations are complex and can be emotionally fraught. We often see and feel that a dog clearly has a connection with its owner but trying to put that to paper and prove it beyond doubt in a courtroom is challenging. Our hope is that our partnership with DNA Protected will help us prove beyond dispute who the rightful owner of a stolen dog is, so we can focus our attention on prosecuting those responsible."

Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey, **Ellie Vesey-Thompson**, said, "Over the last year we have heard from Surrey residents who are worried about dog theft and recognise the deep emotional impact that this crime has on individuals in our communities. In many cases, dogs feel like part of the family, and I understand how distressing it can be when they are stolen.

"Working to ensure that our residents across Surrey are safe and feel safe in our communities is a key priority of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Plan and supporting those concerned about dog theft is important to us.

"That's why we welcome this new partnership with Surrey Police. Not only will this provide a powerful deterrent to those involved in these thefts, but it will also give residents who sign up to the scheme more peace of mind that if they are a victim of a dog theft there is a much better chance of them being reunited with their dog."

David Hartshorne, Managing Director at Cellmark Forensic Services said, "We developed the DNA Protected service with the police to assist with crime prevention and to help reunite stolen or lost dogs with their owners. The powerful forensic DNA tools we use to identify people and investigate crime are now being used to help combat dog theft."

Dog owners can purchase a sampling kit by visiting the DNA Protected website at https://www.dnaprotected.co.uk/. The payment is a one-off fee which includes the cost of DNA profiling, storage of your dog's profile on the database for at least ten years, and a dog tag and window sticker to let people know that your dog is on the forensic database. The site also sells branded collars, leads, and other accessories to show you have DNA protected your dog.

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