



What is Buddy-Up?

Buddy Up is an **award-winning charity** designed to offer **mentoring to young people** identified by schools as needing one-to-one support from an experienced youth worker and mentor.

It was set up in **August 2020**, after a need was identified in the community. Following the return to school after the pandemic, many schools reported:

- Increased **anxiety**
- Reduced **confidence**
- Struggles with **attendance**

While schools recognised the need for additional support, they lacked the time and funding to provide it.

Buddy Up has been delivering mentoring in schools across **Epsom and Ewell** for five years. To date, we have delivered **over 1,500 mentoring sessions** and still have a significant waiting list.

Our goal is to **support young people early**, believing that early intervention makes the biggest impact.

Who do we work with?

The young people we support may be dealing with:

- Anger
- Addiction
- Self-harm and suicidal ideation
- At risk of grooming
- At risk of county lines involvement
- Victims of domestic violence
- ADHD
- ASD
- ODD
- Bullying
- Low self-esteem
- Victims of abuse
- Trauma
- Disordered eating
- Suicidal inpatients
- Poor attendance
- At risk of exclusion
- Anxiety



Funding

Buddy Up is largely funded by **donations and grants**, allowing us to offer our services free to those in need.

However, in recent months, our **funding has decreased dramatically**. Like many charities, we are feeling the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

We are now in **urgent need of funding** to keep the charity running and continue supporting young people in Epsom and Ewell.

If you're able to donate, we would be incredibly grateful. Please use the link below:

□ <https://www.justgiving.com/buddyupcharity>

Contact Us

If you would like more information or to discuss anything further, please get in touch:

□ 07551 444 246

□ info@buddyupcharity.org

□ <https://buddyupcharity.org>

Registered charity number: 1190942

Surrey SEND parents owed money

Parents of children with special educational needs who were left with little choice but to use private educational psychologists may be due money back from Surrey County Council.

So far 27 families have been reimbursed for having to go private between the 2023 summer term and May 2024 due to a lack of qualified professionals able to create educational care plans.

This has resulted in £26,475 being returned to families – although it has not been a straightforward process for some parents.

The figures emerged following a recently published complaint against Surrey County Council.

The local government and social care ombudsman upheld that the authority refused to reimburse a mother who used a private educational psychologist in support of her son's education health and care (EHC) needs assessment.

The ombudsman also upheld the council delayed making payments for her son's tutor and that its communications were poor.

The ombudsman upheld further complaints about delays at Surrey County Council in completing needs assessments due to the national shortage of educational psychologists – but that it has since been satisfied with the steps being taken to resolve the issue.

Between the 2023 summer term and May 2024 Surrey County Council said it temporarily agreed to reimburse private reports due to its backlog.

The ombudsman said: "If we were to investigate this complaint it is likely that we would find fault.

"This is because the council accepted that a report from an educational psychologist was required and used the one obtained by Miss X.

"Therefore, it should have reimbursed her for the full costs. Also, when responding to Miss X's complaint, the council accepted there were delays making payments to (the child's) tutors.

"Whilst the council did apologise, this is likely to have caused Miss X distress in the form of uncertainty that wasn't remedied.

"I therefore asked the council to write to Miss X within one month to apologise and to make a payment to her for the full cost of the educational psychologist assessment she obtained and to offer a payment of £100 to remedy the distress its delayed payments to tutors caused her.

"To its credit, the council agreed."



Councillor Clare Curran, cabinet member for children, families and lifelong learning, said she was not able to comment on any individual children specifically, but the council accepted the findings from the ombudsman report and apologised to the family affected for any distress caused.

A spokesperson for the council added: "Where we used the private EP report as the sole advice during that time at the parent/carer's request we would cover the cost.

"However, if we did not use it as the sole advice then we would not reimburse."

They added that authority was now operating at over 90 per cent "timeliness" and able to meet demand.

Image: New Surrey County Council HQ, Woodhatch Place on Cockshot Hill, Reigate. Credit Surrey County Council

Epsom and Ewell Victory in Europe celebrations

A number of commemorative events are planned to be held across the borough to celebrate the 80th anniversary of VE Day on 8 May 2025.

VE Day marks the official surrender of Germany, the end of the hostilities in Europe and the beginning of the end of World War II. The war continued in the Pacific until September 1945, when Japan surrendered.

Celebrations will begin with a procession from the Town Hall led by the Mayor to Epsom Market Place at 8.45 followed by a proclamation led by Councillor Graham Jones MBE. To mark the occasion a specially designed VE Day 80 flag provided by the Royal British Legion will be raised. The clocktower will be lit up in tribute the evening of May 8th.

In the evening, there will be a beacon lighting event, hosted by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council in partnership with Go Epsom BID and the Jockey Club, taking place on Epsom Downs. Epsom Downs Racecourse will be open from 7pm. Food and refreshments will be on sale, and entertainment provided by a variety of local performers. The event is free to attend and will end at approximately 9.45pm.

At 9:30pm, visitors are invited to gather at the dedicated Beacon site on Grandstand Road, Epsom Downs where the Mayor will lead the Beacon Lighting Ceremony. Please note that there is limited on-site parking available, and the beacon site is on uneven ground.

Bourne Hall is planning to decorate their café and reception area with homemade bunting and is asking local schools to take part in designing and making the bunting. Any schools willing to take part need to hand their bunting in at Bourne Hall by Thursday 1 May.

A patriotic matinee show, Land of Hope and Glory from Neil Sands Productions, is coming to the Epsom Playhouse on Thursday 1 May. This unforgettable afternoon of nostalgia is filled with more than 60 all-time favourite songs, celebrating the best of British entertainment through the decades. Book tickets via the Epsom Playhouse website.

Finally, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's streetcare team have been working hard in recent months to plant patriotic blooms in time for VE day celebrations.

Councillor Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said:

"The celebrations that have been arranged to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day are an opportunity for the whole community to come together to commemorate the bravest generation, who fought for the freedom we enjoy today.

"I would encourage local schools to take part in creating bunting for Bourne Hall and I hope as many residents as possible are able to attend the proclamation and beacon lighting."

Jackie King, Chief Executive, said:

"EEBC are very proud of those who fought for our freedom and also of all those friends and family members who supported their efforts at home. On this 80th anniversary we are celebrating and commemorating this important day along with local residents who we hope will join us at the Beacon event and also with their own street parties and other activities".

Karen Pengelly, BID Manager at Go Epsom, said:

"It is an absolute honour and privilege to be part of this year's VE Day commemorations, it will be both a moving and celebratory event.



"Performances from the Show Choir, Laine Theatre Arts Choir and Epsom Silver Band will take place from 7pm and the Royal British Legion, Epsom & Ewell Branch will be leading the standard bearers at the Beacon – it should be a wonderful event for all to attend."

Jim Allen, General Manager at Epsom Downs Racecourse, said:

"Epsom Downs Racecourse is proud to be part of the borough's VE Day 80th anniversary commemorations. The beacon lighting will be a moving tribute to those who served and a special opportunity for the local community to come together in remembrance and celebration.

"We look forward to welcoming everyone to the racecourse for what promises to be a meaningful and memorable evening."

Image: *VE DAY CELEBRATIONS IN LONDON, 8 MAY 1945 (HU 41808)*

A truck of revellers passing through the Strand, London, 8 May 1945.

Copyright: © IWM. Original Source: <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205021981>

Look to your own party's dictatorship

Sir,

I reply to Cllr Ames' letter attacking Residents Association councillors in general and me in particular.

It is a pity that he chose to quote me selectively. I did say that the RA Group could put through anything it wished – that is a simple fact as we hold 25 of the 35 seats. However I went on to say that we value the contributions of members from other parties. .

A council may use either the cabinet or committee system of government. We use the committee system under which all councillors may partake in all decision making, as Cllr Ames has done. Unlike many other councils, all councillors are involved.

It is also a pity that Cllr Ames did not mention the subsequent meeting of the Standards and Constitution Committee on 16 April of which he is a member. This was a long but amicable meeting where much of the two and half hours was spent dealing with suggestions from Liberal Democrat leader Cllr James Lawrence. Some of his proposals were accepted. On all the motions, James was congratulated on the effort he had put in to serve the council and the constructive way he worked with RA members. This is hardly the attitude of a dictatorial ruling group.

In contrast, let us look at the Labour government of his party. Last year in the general election it got about a third of votes on a 60% turnout. This means that only one in five electors voted Labour. Another two voted for other parties, and the remaining two did not vote at all. Subsequent opinion polls suggest that Labour has lost support since the election.

On the basis of getting just 20% support from the electorate, the Labour government has dictatorially decreed that the borough should provide more than 800 new homes each year building on Green Belt, and that the borough council should be abolished in 2027. On neither of these issues has the government consulted anyone to ask if they want all this extra housing or if they want the council abolished. I have yet to meet any resident who supports either policy. The Labour government does not listen to any voices other than its own, and sometimes does not even listen to its own voices.

I like Cllr Ames as a person, and I respect his right to criticise me and RA councillors. However I believe that this should be done fairly, and not by selective quotation wrapped up in bluster. If Cllr Ames does not like dictatorial government, he would be better advised to direct such views to his own party.

Cllr Robert Leach

RA councillor

Nonsuch Ward



Surrey Police know where they're going with more of them

Surrey Police will have 'the highest number of officers in a generation' after locking up money for 40 more patrol cops. The estimated £2.5million in central government money is part of a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee and will add to the 222 extra officers who joined the force since March 2021 – and its March 2025 total of 2,336 officers. The new recruits will likely comprise 25 full time police officers and 15 special constables.

The programme is part of the government's plan to have at least one named, contactable, officer in each neighbourhood, as well as dedicated teams on patrol in town centres and other hotspots. There will also be dedicated antisocial behaviour leads in every force which Surrey Police said reflects the government's recognition of the public's crime and safety concerns.

Surrey Police Chief Constable, Tim De Meyer, said: "For us, the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee is a chance to strengthen our presence in the heart of our communities, with officers working alongside residents, identify local issues, and resolve problems before they escalate. It's about building lasting relationships and ensuring that we are seen as a trusted resource, not just an authority figure. The guarantee reinforces our commitment to community engagement, crime prevention, and proactive policing. With this initiative, we will be better equipped to build stronger relationships, deliver more targeted interventions through our hotspot policing efforts, and improve overall safety for the communities we serve. The promise of increased officer numbers will enable us to further tackle issues such as anti-social behaviour, theft, and drug-related crimes. While the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee presents several advantages, it also comes with challenges that we must address to ensure its success. The demand for resources across the Force must be managed effectively to ensure that neighbourhood policing remains a priority, even in times of high demand. Additionally, engaging with communities that have historically had strained relationships with the police can take time and require a sensitive, consistent and tailored approach. However, these challenges present an opportunity for us to demonstrate our commitment to transparency, community-focused policing, and problem-solving."

Assistant Chief Constable, Tanya Jones, added: "By staying true to the Force principles, and embracing the goals of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, we can strengthen our role as a trusted, proactive Force that works alongside local communities to tackle crime, improve public safety, and build a sense of community pride. As officers and staff, we must embrace opportunities to speak with local residents, build trust, and work collaboratively to prevent crime. We can create environments where residents feel heard, supported, and secure. It's more than just policing, it's about shaping communities in a way that promotes safety, confidence, and lasting social cohesion."

Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner, Lisa Townsend welcomed the additional funding. She said: "Based on the funding allocation provided, it is projected that Surrey Police will benefit from an additional 25 police officers, as well as 15 Special Constables." Adding: "Neighbourhood policing is a key commitment for Surrey Police, and residents are already benefiting from that focus, with an additional 3,500 charges and 2,500 more arrests across all crime types in 12 months. Initiatives such as the Safer Streets programme and hotspot policing have led to increased trust and greater intelligence gathering in our communities. However, forces across the country are also seeing a rise in 'hidden' crime types, such as fraud, domestic abuse and sextortion, and Surrey is no exception. These crimes have very real victims, and we must ensure those victims are getting support from specially-trained officers dedicated to pursuing justice for them. As part of the doctrine of operational independence, Surrey's Chief Constable Tim De Meyer decides where his officers and staff are best-deployed to tackle offending. Under his leadership, the Force is one of the fastest-improving in the country. Both Tim and I are determined to ensure this brilliant progress is sustained."

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Labour decries Residents' Associations' unfettered power on Epsom & Ewell Council

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your excellent reporting of last week's meeting of Epsom and Ewell Council's Standards and Constitution Committee, which highlighted some important and contentious issues about how councillors represent our residents.



Your analysis that public trust and democratic scrutiny hang in the balance is spot-on. In my two years so far as a councillor, I have frequently sought to highlight these issues, often in conjunction with other opposition councillors and sometimes with the support of more independent-minded Residents Association (RA) councillors.

In this light, I would like to highlight Cllr Robert Leach's comment concerning the committees that decide the bulk of what the council does, that "The RA group can put through anything it likes".

This shocking comment goes to the heart of issues of democratic scrutiny and appears to reflect the approach of the ruling party and many RA councillors to a situation where it has two-thirds of councillors. Despite its councillors purporting to represent residents at a very local level, the RA can often operate as a monolithic block.

One major change that the RA administration has attempted to implement is to neuter the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, of which I am also a member, which should play a key role in scrutinising what the council does in the name of residents.

Despite, or perhaps because of this, the administration has proposed to remove the committee's scrutiny function, on the grounds that scrutiny should take place on the committees that make policy and spending decisions.

Cllr Leach's blunt assessment that "The RA group can put through anything it likes" on such committees should represent the death knell for this proposal, which the administration has already had to "pause" in the face of fierce opposition.

While Cllr Leach's words represent the numerical reality, they neglect the role that opposition councillors can play in raising questions and challenges and, on occasion, influencing how other committee members vote.

Last month, for the second year running, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee amended its own annual report, as drafted by the administration, to record that it had carried out "limited scrutiny" over the past year.

While this is an unfortunate situation, to say the least, it does show that some RA councillors have an appetite for a stronger scrutiny role and, despite what Cllr Leach says, can vote according to their own individual judgement.

Democratic scrutiny of what the council does in the name of residents is essential to maintain the public's trust in it. We need more of it – and less of a ruling party that thinks it can put through anything it likes.

Councillor Chris Ames – Labour – Court Ward

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Faces Scrutiny Over Constitutional Reforms

The Standards and Constitution Committee meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council on 16th April was marked by heated exchanges and concerns over transparency, democratic participation, and officer-councillor relations.

The meeting, chaired by Councillor **Hannah Dalton** (RA Stoneleigh), dealt with contentious proposals affecting the structure of council committees, rules on public participation, and the delegation of powers to council officers. In the words of Councillor **Chris Ames**, (Labour Court) "There hasn't been a meeting of the Constitution Working Group for seven months," raising the stakes and intensity of the evening's debate.

A Push for Plurality Rejected

A major flashpoint was the proposal to increase the number of councillors on the influential Strategy and Resources (S&R) Committee from eight to ten. Liberal Democrat Councillor **James Lawrence** (LibDem College) introduced the motion, arguing that the change would reflect "the plurality on the council" following the expansion to five political groups. "Strategy and Resources is, of course, our most important committee... and particularly so with unitarisation occurring and property decisions," he said, asserting the need for broader representation.

Independent Councillor **Alex Coley** (Ruxley) added, "We should attempt to achieve the best plurality so that voices of smaller groups can also be heard and we can undertake proper, robust scrutiny."

Despite the support, the motion fell. Councillor **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch)) dismissed it as a matter of "*adiaphora* — decisions



that don't really matter," and declared, "The RA group can put through anything it likes... so I don't think this would make much difference."

Others expressed scepticism over inclusivity. Councillor **John Beckett** (RA Auriol) questioned the logic of the expansion: "We're only going to give a voice to four [groups] if we go with this enlargement, so not everybody's voice will be heard."

Clashes Over Public Participation Rules

The committee also reviewed proposed changes to public participation rules, particularly Standing Order 3.1.3, which would allow officers to reword public questions for clarity. Councillor **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Horton) condemned the change as "seriously open to abuse," warning it could "deny transparency, public accountability... and result in many issues and decisions being conducted without appropriate discussion."

Councillor Lawrence suggested a compromise, proposing that officers "may suggest rewording" questions, rather than having an absolute right to do so. This amendment was accepted.

More fiercely contested was Standing Order 3.1.4, which sought to restrict questions relating to past legal cases or complaints. Councillor Ames described it as "having a chilling effect on public participation," and stated bluntly, "We should not be trying to exclude members of the public... from participating at this meeting."

In the end, the committee voted unanimously to refer the contentious clause back to the Constitution Working Group (CWG), along with concerns about the reduced five-to-three day notice period for residents' questions.

Officer-Member Protocol Sparks Sharp Exchange

Perhaps the most contentious moment came with the debate on proposed additions to the officer-member protocol. Redrafted clauses sought to clarify officers' expectations of councillors' conduct.

Councillor Leach objected to the tone of the changes, declaring, "The council comprises councillors... not its officers... Officers are staff who are employed to do what we tell them to do." This drew a stern rebuke from the Monitoring Officer, who warned that such language failed to acknowledge officers' statutory duties: "If, in their professional opinion, something is unlawful or unconscionable, they have obligations."

Councillor Lawrence defended the need for balance: "I don't mind there being a look at the update of the officer-member protocol... but I would like it to be balanced."

Ultimately, the committee agreed to refer the proposed changes to CWG, with a review of the Surrey County Council protocol as a potential model for achieving parity between officers' and councillors' expectations.

Delegated Powers Under the Microscope

Another area of concern was the list of proposed delegations to officers. Councillor Lawrence warned that not all proposals were "minor service changes," pointing to one that would authorise officers to purchase properties for temporary accommodation.

"We should not delegate such significant capital decisions," he argued. The committee eventually agreed to amend the wording, allowing officers to "identify and negotiate" but not to "purchase" without committee approval.

A Question of Process

Underlying the evening was a shared frustration with procedural breakdowns. Several members criticised the administration for sidelining the Constitution Working Group. "This administration, under your leadership, has twice postponed or cancelled the CWG," Councillor Ames alleged, adding, "It would appear the CWG was not giving the answers that the administration wanted, so it's been done away with."

Chair Hannah Dalton acknowledged the delay, attributing it partly to the "devolution white paper" and pressures of local



government reorganisation. However, she also committed to convening a new CWG to consider unresolved matters, stating, "You'll probably need an extraordinary SNC and then bring it to the July meeting."

As public trust and democratic scrutiny hang in the balance, the committee's decisions to refer key changes back to the CWG suggest a desire to tread carefully. Whether this marks a course correction or a temporary pause in constitutional reform remains to be seen.

Image: The meeting from Epsom and Ewell Borough Council YouTube channel

How did Aldi arrive at this Epsom junction?

Plans for an Aldi store near an Epsom junction described as being "fraught with danger" have been green-lit after an appeal—but with conditions attached. For years, the budget superstore has been trying to get planning permission on the Former Dairy Crest Site on Alexandra Road in Epsom. The planning inspector recognised the road is "far from easy to navigate and potentially dangerous" but said mitigations to encourage people to walk to the store would help.

Members of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council had thrown out the German company's second application in July 2024 due to fears that increased traffic would have a severe impact on road safety. A previous application was rejected in 2015 over concerns about the site's location, car parking capacity, traffic levels, and the potential effect on the neighbourhood's character. The new £5 million development includes parking and some landscaping, but earlier plans for residential units have been dropped.

Residents and councillors had previously criticised the scheme for exacerbating an already 'challenging junction', often described as a "rat run" and "fraught with danger". Despite these objections, Surrey Highways raised no formal objection and concluded the development would not create unacceptable risks.

Although the planning inspector agreed that the Aldi store would "undoubtedly increase the potential for conflict between vehicles and pedestrians", they concluded that "additional measures to encourage drivers to slow down and take extra care would help to mitigate these increased risks." The decision statement noted: "At the end of the day, nearly all collisions are the result of human error. In this case, the lack of an obvious pattern of collisions suggests that there are not significant problems with the layout which could easily be addressed by engineering interventions."

The conditions imposed on Aldi's approved scheme include improving pedestrian access to the site, implementing slow-down measures, installing new junction signage, and laying anti-skid surfacing—all subject to full agreement by the Surrey Highways Authority. The inspector highlighted the Former Dairy Crest Site as a location with "good opportunities to encourage more customers to choose to walk to the store".

Improved pedestrian access was seen as an acceptable compromise, rather than simply accepting that peak times would bring queues and delays due to limited parking. Based on average data, the risk of excessive pressure on the Five Ways junction was considered small, though the inspector acknowledged that at exceptional times—such as Christmas—some delays would be inevitable. However, they concluded that seasonal stress is not sufficient justification for additional parking, "when the priority should be to promote increased numbers of visits to the store on foot."

Aldi now has three years to begin construction of their new bargain grocery store on Alexandra Road before planning permission expires.

Image: CGI visualisation of Aldi store on the Former Dairy Crest Site, on Alexandra Road, Epsom. (Credit: Aldi/ Epsom and Ewell Borough Council)

Global fast-food giant targets Surrey village

A global fast food giant could be coming to a Surrey village as a new McDonald's restaurant and takeaway might get the go ahead. Despite being famed for its 'Happy Meal', some residents fear the American icon will be 'detrimental to the health of Cobham'.



The popular burger and nugget chain is hoping to find a new home in the former Loch Fyne Restaurant on Portsmouth Road, Cobham. The fate of the application will be decided by Elmbridge Borough Council members at a planning meeting on April 24.

Planning officers have recommended McDonald's gets the green light to transform the disused fish restaurant. Residents have rallied against the scheme, with nearly 500 letters of objection sent to the council.

The village of Cobham was named as one of the most affluent communities in the county but the Northfield Estate, where the restaurant is proposed, is among Surrey's poorest socio-economic areas.

Significant concern has been raised about the proposed distance (or lack of) to local schools and playgrounds nearby. Opponents have claimed the new branch will "encourage children to form unhealthy habits", "exploit young people" who will eat at McDonald's and add to the country's obesity crisis.

People have said the new outlet will be "detrimental to the health of Cobham" and the impact "cannot be underestimated". Lots of residents pointed out there is already an outlet at the M25 services, so they do not need another one closer to the village.

Wyndham Avenue park and Hamilton Ave play area, both managed by PA Housing, are just a four-minute walk away (321m) from the potential McDonald's site. Felton Fleet Prep School, Cobham Free School and Cobham recreation ground are only a seven minute walk (482m) away from the fast food chain.

But planning officers said the nearest schools are not within a 400m radius walking distance to the site. The intervening A3 would be a "man-made barrier" to the fast food chain, officers reported, and the proposed restaurant is not on the main school route to Cobham Free School so children would be walking the opposite way.

Although the neighbouring petrol station has a Greggs, the proposed restaurant will not create a 'cluster' of takeaways. The nearest other takeaways are in Cobham's centre some 700m away, according to the report.

Despite recognising local public health concern, officers found there is no evidence the multi-million fast food chain will have a detrimental impact on health in the neighbouring areas. National planning guidance says local authorities should refuse plans for takeaways near schools and where young people hang out. Surrey County Council's public health team did not object to the new McDonald's in principle.

Cobham residents launched a petition in May 2024 against the plans to open a new restaurant and takeaway. The petition, which has garnered over 34,000 signatures, calls for the site to be turned into a community hub instead. Concerns raised include increased traffic, litter, and potential impacts on the area's health and well-being.

Despite the concerns, many people flagged the multi-million dollar company would bring huge financial benefits to the village, increasing visitors and supporting local business. Others said the new 'Happy Meal' site could provide up to £60k a year in business rates for the council.

Supporters of the proposed McDonald's slammed the listed building as an "eyesore" and in need of "restoration". The new fast food outlet would employ around 120 people, which the company hopes to recruit from the local area, as well as offering training and career development.

People said comments about the quality and 'wholesomeness' of the food is "irrelevant" as no one has to eat there. Those looking forward to the new branch said it would be a good place for young people to meet and socialise as well as providing more takeaway options.

According to the chain, the new restaurant would include both indoor and outdoor seating with space for 60 diners, 30 cars parking bays, two of which would be accessible and three with EV charging spaces. The American fast food branch is hoping to be open every day from 6am to 11pm.

McDonald's has been approached for further comment.

Volunteers Join Forces with Councillor to Give Epsom a Spring Clean

Epsom Town Centre was treated to a thorough spring clean on Sunday 6th April, as a team of around 40 volunteers from the international youth group ASEZ WAO UK joined local councillor **Arthur Abdulin** (RA, Town Ward) in a community litter pick.



Dressed in high-vis jackets and armed with litter grabbers and bin bags, the group covered key areas including the High Street, Epsom Square, and alleyways leading to the railway station — even tackling neglected corners of car parks and hotspots often used by the homeless. In total, the team collected an impressive 38 bags of rubbish, which were later gathered by council rangers.

The ASEZ WAO UK is a local volunteer group in Epsom that works to serve the Surry area and make it a better place for everyone. Mostly made up of young adults who are passionate about doing their bit to help the local community, they have been carrying out various volunteer activities in Surry since 2021.

The Epsom clean-up began with a presentation highlighting the dangers of plastic pollution — a growing threat to the environment and public health. The initiative aimed not only to tidy up the town centre but also to raise awareness about responsible waste disposal and inspire behavioural change among residents.

Councillor Abdulin, who frequently takes part in litter picks, joined volunteers in clearing a significant amount of long-neglected waste. “The greatest impact this kind of event has is sharing the message,” he said. “It will have a great impact on people so that they think before littering and get rid of it properly.”

The warm spring-like weather added to the atmosphere as locals strolled through the market and visited the Ashley Centre — perhaps unaware that just metres away, volunteers were working hard to ensure the town remained pleasant and welcoming for all.

Recent signage from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council reminds residents that dropping litter could lead to a £100 fine. But campaigners like ASEZ WAO UK hope that community-led efforts and education will play an even greater role in keeping the town clean.

Their message is clear: everyone can make a difference. Whether by using a bin, reducing plastic waste, or picking up just one piece of litter, every small action contributes to a cleaner, healthier Epsom — and a better world.

Image: L to R. A volunteer and Cllr Arthur Abdulin