

County council set to propose two unitary councils for Surrey

1 May 2025



Subject to Cabinet approval, Surrey County Council plans to submit to government a proposal for two unitary councils for local government reorganisation in the county. These two councils, arranged by East and West, would replace the existing 12 councils and unlock further devolution in Surrey.

In council papers published today, the county council outlines detailed analysis to evidence that two councils would be the most beneficial model for Surrey's future. The proposal, which sets out a robust plan for local community engagement, also includes letters of support from key partners, business and community leaders, as well as Elmbridge Borough Council.

Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council said: *"Our analysis shows that two unitary councils would bring the greatest benefit to Surrey's residents. Two councils, in partnership with a Mayor for Surrey, would save money, strengthen and simplify local government and with an East and West arrangement both councils would be in a strong position to continue to deliver high quality services to all Surrey residents. Of course, consideration must be given to the differing levels of debt that the authorities would potentially inherit, and we're in talks with government about our request that the stranded debt be written off as well as providing financial support to those borough councils that need it."*

"Most importantly, this proposal strengthens local community engagement. We know that residents want high quality services that are easy to access, and they want a real say in services and decisions that affect them. That's why we're proposing the creation of community-level boards across Surrey."

"These community boards will be locally determined but we would expect them to include representation from health partners, Surrey Police, voluntary groups, councillors, council staff, local Town and Parish Councils and Residents Associations. We plan to pilot these boards over the coming months, and residents will have a say in how they are set up and delivered."

"We're in a strong position as a county council, with good quality services and an excellent track record of stable finances after years of successful transformation. And working together with our residents and partners, we are well placed to deliver this important reorganisation. Ultimately, this work will unlock further devolution, meaning Surrey can elect a mayor which will bring more power, flexibility and funding closer to communities."

Cllr Mike Rollings, Leader of Elmbridge Borough Council said: *"While Elmbridge, like other districts and boroughs, is not overly enamoured with the government's local government reorganisation, throughout this process, we have maintained an open-minded stance regarding the optimal number of new unitary authorities. Our primary goal is to ensure the best interests of Elmbridge, as well as Surrey as a whole. We have always said that our decision will be grounded in robust evidence and data and we will continue to analyse, research, and scrutinise all options until we are confident that the best solution for unitarisation in Surrey has been identified."*

"Based on the proposals we have seen, we think an East/West split could make the most sense for Elmbridge both in terms of financial stability, increased flexibility to meet housing needs and the potential to minimise the impact on the character and appearance of Elmbridge."

"We will continue to work across the county to support the development of proposals that lead to the best results for our residents, and we will debate these at extraordinary meetings of our Council and Cabinet on 6 May."

The proposal includes a recommended geographical model for the two councils, by East and West, using current District Council geographies with Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Runnymede, Woking, Guildford and Waverley residents in the West of Surrey, and Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Epsom & Ewell, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge residents in the East.

This model has similar levels of population, land area, total household numbers, homelessness, house building targets, waste collection, business activity, pupil distribution, number of birth and death registrations, and total miles of public highways. Demand and budget requirements would also be similar for Adult Social Care and Children Social Services across both councils and this geography makes use of the neighbouring economic benefits of London, Heathrow airport, and Gatwick airport, with a similar mix of the urban and rural landscape that makes Surrey a fantastic place to live and work.

The overall populations of each new council would exceed the government's minimum size of 500,000 residents.



Notes:

- In February, government asked Surrey to submit plans for local government reorganisation. Once this proposal has been approved by Surrey County Council's Cabinet on 7th May, it will be submitted to government by the 9th May deadline. A final decision is expected from government in the Autumn. The full council paper can be accessed here: <https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=121&MId=9715&Ver=4>
- District and borough councils in Surrey are also discussing options for reorganisation at respective council meetings.
- Details of an online resident engagement event, due to be held in May, will be shared soon

£500 award for artistic contribution

1 May 2025



The Epsom and Ewell Town-Twinning Association is delighted to invite applications for this year's **Cyril Frazer Award**.

The Cyril Frazer Award is a legacy set up as a memorial to Cyril Frazer, who died in 2016. He was Mayor of Epsom and Ewell when it was first twinned with Chantilly in 1995 and was a founding member of the association. As well as Twinning, one of his other great passions was singing, and he was a keen member of the Epsom Male Voice Choir.

Both are reflected in the requirements for the award of **£500**, which is available to individuals and groups within the Borough and will be awarded to qualified applicants who meet some or all of the following agreed criteria:

- Applicants live or study in the Borough
- The award meets a special need, such as mental or physical health
- It benefits young people
- It has cultural/educational value
- It is music or performing arts related
- It furthers friendships or links with Chantilly
- It supports a key twinning or community event

The prize will be awarded at the Twinning Association's AGM in June, and the deadline for applications is **May 31st 2025**.

For further information and to apply, please contact: diana@epsomtwinning.com.

Surrey Housing protocol agreed for people with mental health needs

1 May 2025

An agreement between councils and NHS services in Surrey will help people with mental health needs find housing and avoid delays in leaving hospital.

The Surrey Mental Health and Housing Protocol sets out how services will work together to support people who find it difficult to secure long-term housing because of the mental health challenges they face.

By strengthening coordination between health, social care and housing, the protocol aims to help people find accommodation to aid their recovery and reduce the risk of becoming homeless.

The protocol, which sets out step-by-step guidance to services, will also help prevent delays in people leaving hospital, freeing up space for others in need.

Housing difficulties are a key factor in people having to stay in hospital longer than necessary. The protocol outlines clear processes for making sure that people have access to suitable housing when they are ready to be discharged.

The protocol also aims to help prevent evictions from tenancies and reduce incidents of cuckooing, where criminals exploit vulnerable people by taking over their homes for illegal activities such as drug-dealing.

Detailing a number of possible scenarios and the approaches to follow for each, the agreement encourages services to identify early warning signs of housing problems and work together to intervene proactively and find tailored solutions. This is especially important for people with complex needs or who face multiple disadvantages, such as unemployment, poor health, domestic abuse and trauma.

An earlier version of the protocol was introduced in 2016 but it has now been strengthened, updated and expanded, with a sharper focus on supporting people at the right time. Surrey organisations renewed their commitment by signing up to the updated protocol in March.

Partners who have agreed the relaunched protocol are Surrey's 11 borough and district councils, Surrey County Council, Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, as the county's mental health NHS provider, and the five acute care hospitals in Surrey (Royal Surrey, Epsom, East Surrey, St Peter's and Frimley Park). The protocol can be found on the **Healthy Surrey website**.

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said: *"We know that safe and stable housing promotes good mental health, and this relaunched protocol is an important step forward in helping people stay in their homes or find suitable new ones at a time when they most need support."*

"By strengthening the way that services work together, we can help people earlier, supporting their recovery, independence and overall wellbeing, and making sure no one is left behind. With local government reorganisation on the horizon, this protocol will also support partners in getting ready for the changes ahead."

Jo Lynch, Chief Nursing Officer at Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, said: *"I am delighted we are jointly working with our partners in social care and housing to ensure people have access to suitable accommodation when they are ready to be discharged from hospital."*

"It can be complicated to understand how best to support people to get the housing they need. The joint protocol guides us on who we need talk to and the conversations we need to have to help people more quickly find housing that can support them with their recovery and which then frees up hospital beds for others in need."

The boroughs of Reigate & Banstead and Runnymede represented Surrey's 11 borough and district councils on a multi-agency group which worked on updating and strengthening the protocol.

Cllr Mus Tary, Executive Member for Housing and Support at Reigate & Banstead Borough Council, said: *"Officers from our Housing Team have been involved in the co-design of the updated protocol, alongside other partners, bringing their expertise on some of the housing challenges faced by those with mental health needs. We hope this protocol will ensure consistency across the partnership and lead to improved housing outcomes for some of our most vulnerable residents."*

Cllr Mike Smith, Chair of Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Committee said: *"Homelessness affects people from all walks of life, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. For those facing mental health challenges, securing and maintaining stable accommodation can be even more difficult. This updated and vital protocol prioritises early intervention and strengthens collaboration between housing, health, social care, and many other agencies to ensure no one falls through the cracks. By identifying housing issues early and providing tailored support, we can help people transition from hospital into housing—giving them stability and the best chance to recover and rebuild their lives."*

Waverley not waiving planning fees spark protests

1 May 2025



Angry homeowners hit with hefty planning bills and court threats gathered outside Waverley Borough Council to protest against levies that have left some at risk of losing their homes, or going to jail.

About 20 people have so far come forward with what they say are huge and unexpected infrastructure levies for work done to their homes.

They have been shocked by the short notice to come up with, in some cases, £70,000 for work they would have been expected to be exempt from - and would have been if they'd filled out a form.

Instead they have been pursued and threatened with court action if they do not pay.

On Tuesday April 1, those affected protested outside the council's executive meeting and challenged the authority on whether it had any "genuine intent" to review its Community Infrastructure Levy process.

Community Infrastructure Levies are payable on developments of more than 100 square metres, unless homeowners actively apply for an exemption. Large developers expect there to be an infrastructure charge, which can often take the form of community buildings such as a doctor's surgery or hall. Where these are not suitable money can be paid.

The levy is used to offset the impact development has on an area and can be bid for by public bodies or community groups for projects.

The problem has been some people feel they are being wrongly hit with the fees - and the heavy handed approach the council has taken in chasing the money.

In most cases the council says it has been correct in issuing the bills -despite anger from those who feel wronged.

The exception, it said, was the highest profile case so far, of Steve and Caroline Dally who were stung with a £70,000 bill for a home extension and given no opportunity to argue their case.

The rest, the council argues are not as straightforward – with any long-term solutions not expected until at least May,

Councillor Liz Townsend, portfolio holder for planning said: “I can assure members here and residents that the council is committed to carrying out a discretionary review where householders previously subject to CIL liability can request a discretionary review.”

She added: “There have been a number of extremely speculative and scaremongering comments about the nature of this review by some councillors which is very concerning.

“However I would like to assure residents again that we are committed to investigating and assessing each individual case that is submitted to the council and the process for undertaking this will be fully disclosed in the report coming to the executive at the beginning of May.”

However, asked if the council had powers to withdraw liability notices for “whatever reasons it sees appropriate” the leader, Cllr Paul Follows, responded: “I think we are comfortable to acknowledge that’s what the regulation says. Yes. I don’t think there is anything else I can add to that but I am sure what the regulation says.”

Asked “For whatever reason you deem fit?”

Cllr Follows replied: “Yes – but at the same time I do think you have to recognise we can’t in ourselves act unlawfully in the withdrawal of the CIL liability – there are things we have to do here.

“This is not a straightforward process. If anybody has been advising you that it is a straightforward process I would consider widening your advice.

“One of the problems here – we’ve effectively got three categories of individuals in this process.

“Individuals who may have had some fault of the council, and although we’re still checking the details, for example would be Mr Dally who we’ve looked at – and most of us have concluded he was told something in error and I think there will probably be some remediation that takes place there.

“There are individuals who have been advised poorly...as part of their building project. Yes I can understand their frustration with the council but actually their issue is with the private advice which has been inaccurate and their first course of resolution would be through the liability insurance of the private advisor.

“And thirdly there are individuals that disagree with the concept of homeowner CIL but have been charged legally for it at this point of time and that’s subject to a different discussion of whether we should charge homeowners or not.

“It broadly falls into those three camps.”

The council said it would be taking this final group into consideration in May when it is due to discuss potential changes to CIL.

A longer term solution is not likely to be finalised until the council’s local plan – effectively the planning rules it must abide by – is signed off in 2027.

Image: Waverley CIL protests (image Waverley Conservative Council Group)

A towering decision by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

1 May 2025



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has approved plans for hundreds of new homes. The former SGN Gasworks site on East Street in Epsom will see all of its buildings and infrastructure demolished to make way for new homes. The town’s “biggest planning application in years” has been approved. Members of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council planning committee agreed to the outline scheme for 456 homes by a majority vote on April 24. The development will see five high rise blocks, ranging from eight to twelve storeys tall. A performing arts centre, educational buildings and an open public garden are also included in the plans. Of the proposed 456 homes, according to planning documents, 210 will be one-bedroom, 180 will be two-bedroom, and 66 will be three-bedroom units. A further 46 of the 456 homes will be social rent units and 21 wheelchair accessible, according to planning documents.

“You cannot build a nine-storey building behind someone’s back door,” said Richard Coles, an Epsom resident speaking against the scheme. He explained it would be “60 metres from my back door to someone’s balcony, for some hundred or so properties”. Mr Coles argued the new builds will make life significantly worse for those living immediately around the blocks. “We’re not delivering for Epsom if we’re not delivering for all our residents,” Cllr Kim Spickett said. “We’re not talking about overlooking buildings, we’re talking about human beings.” Responding to concerns, council planners said fears of overlooking is not such an issue in practice because neither resident can really make out the features or activities of a person that far away. Officers accepted sunlight would be reduced for six neighbouring homes and 23 student rooms but said the benefits of the scheme would outweigh the impact.

Wrestling with the application, Cllr Julian Freeman appreciated the residents’ concerns but said “fear is often much worse than the reality”. He added the borough is in a “housing crisis” and “for the greater good” the development will provide new homes for 600 or more people. Cllr Kate Chinn slammed the council for not building enough homes or social housing over the last five years. “We’re now asking residents to pay the price for the failures of the past,” she said. With only 68 car parking spaces for 456 homes, councillors urged for something to be done. Members worried about tradesmen needing to use cars for work or families driving to school. Around 21 spaces would be designated for wheelchair users which Cllr Freeman challenged as “excessive”. Cllr Jan Mason said: “People living there actually will be defranchised.” She claimed future residents might not be able to have people visiting the house or getting the work men round.

Officers said fewer parking bays would help “champion a change in attitude” to using cars and support the council’s “ambitious target” of becoming carbon neutral by 2035. But some councillors said it was “unrealistic” to demand people to change their motor habits by restricting parking spaces. Just a 10 minute walk from Epsom train station, the applicants argued the development would be an immensely sustainable location. People can get to London Waterloo station in around 35 minutes. Members agreed conditions to the car management plan so it could come back to committee for further approval if needed.

Also included in the scheme, Laine Theatre Arts College will be replaced by a modern building. The development will be further detailed in separate planning applications, the report said. The site has been used as gas works for more than 150 years, according to documents, while a separate application for the same site has stated the storage facility for natural gas “has been permanently decommissioned and purged”.

Image: Site Masterplan (Aerial) Formation Architects

McDonalds run out of Loch Fyne, Cobham

1 May 2025



Plans for a McDonald's in Cobham have been thrown out.

McDonald's had hoped to find a new home on the former Loch Fyne Restaurant in Portsmouth Road on the outskirts of Cobham. Members of Elmbridge Borough Council's planning committee rejected the application by majority vote on April 24, against officer's recommendations to approve.

Councillors were unhappy that the new McDonald's would be within walking distance of schools and near an area of high social and economic deprivation. "McDonald's isn't a proper choice," Cllr Lawrence Wells said, "most of it is ultra-processed food."

The Liberal Democrat councillor for Cobham and Downside argued: "To young people and families who have very little access to healthy food or treats, a McDonald's will be like the witch's candy house to Hansel and Gretel."

North of the potential McDonald's site, argued Cllr Wells, there is a socially and economically deprived area between River View Gardens and Northfield Road. He claimed the 650-odd houses come in the fifth most underprivileged sub-ward in the whole of Surrey.

But Cllr Ashley Tilling accused groups of "middle class snobbery" in opposing the scheme. He said it was unlikely there would be such opposition if a Gail's or a Megan's decided to open there.

Councillors debated whether it was appropriate for a fast food restaurant and take away should be in walking distance from schools, parks and a children's home. Surrey County Council had also raised concerns about the potential health impacts the new burger branch could have, being so close to areas where children congregate.

"You have a duty to protect the most vulnerable, you have the duty to protect the health and wellbeing of your constituents," Mr Sabi said, speaking for residents against the scheme at the meeting. He argued the council was using a London yardstick for walking distance to fast food places for a Surrey borough.

Fearing the chicken nugget chain would exacerbate issues of obesity and not promote healthy living, planning members refused the scheme. Officers said it was a matter of judgement and there was no evidence to suggest the American burger branch would make people less healthy.

Other councillors warned "we don't live in a totalitarian state where people are told what they must and mustn't eat" or that it is even their role on the planning committee to "combat obesity".

Ward councillor Katerina Lusk acknowledged the old Loch Fyne Restaurant is in "disrepair" and no other use has been found. Cllr Tilling also supported bringing the locally listed building "back to life" and re-using it in the community.

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.

But Cllr Lusk highlighted the limited indoor dining options (60 covers) and proposed opening hours until midnight, which could mean it would be primarily used for takeaway. "More noise, more traffic and constant delivery movements- all spilling into an area already burdened with congestion and frequent flooding," Cllr Lusk said.

Submitted last year, the application has been hugely contentious. Hundreds of objections flooded in from residents, including an online petition reaching over 34,000 signatures. A similar strength of feeling was also boosted from those who want to see a closer Happy Meal in Cobham.

McDonald's has been approached for comment.

Related report:

Global fast-food giant targets Surrey village

What is Buddy-Up?

1 May 2025



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

1 May 2025



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

1 May 2025



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

1 May 2025



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