Epsom Council Delivers Spinning Back Kick to Nam Yang Martial Arts Centre

In a contentious meeting on 12th November, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Strategy and Resources (S&R) Committee rejected a £161,250 funding bid for the **Nam Yang Martial Arts Centre**, reversing an earlier recommendation from the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC). The decision has drawn sharp criticism, particularly as it highlights inconsistencies in the Council's handling of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocations.

The Debate: A Promised Replacement Deferred

Nam Yang's facility, once a vibrant community hub in **Alexandra Recreation Ground**, was demolished by the Council three years ago after being deemed unsafe. The Council had promised a replacement, yet rising costs and funding delays have left the organisation without a home.

Councillor **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) spoke passionately at the meeting, sharing her personal connection to the project. "My son was a member of Nam Yang and thoroughly enjoyed it," she stated. "It's more than just a martial arts centre. It reduced antisocial behaviour in the park and made the area feel safer for the whole community."

Chinn added, "That building has been down for a long time, leaving a gap in what the park offers. The absence is felt by the community."

A Moral Obligation?

The debate underscored tensions between financial prudence and moral responsibility. Councillor **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington), who had seconded the motion to support Nam Yang at the LPPC meeting, expressed his continued belief in the project's value. "I felt a moral obligation for us to help," he said. "The existing building was condemned and taken down with the promise that it would be rebuilt. I believed it was the right thing to do to bring it forward for consideration at S&R."

However, Neale ultimately voted against the funding, explaining, "It's a difficult position. While I supported its inclusion for debate, the project didn't score high enough under the CIL spending protocol. I hope it will return for consideration in the next round."

Criticism of the Process

Councillor **Julie Morris**, (LibDem College) who had originally proposed Nam Yang's inclusion at the LPPC, has criticised the Council's approach. "The procedures for bidding for and spending CIL monies are unclear," she said. "The scoring process needs reviewing, as does the information required from applicants."

Morris has highlighted systemic issues, such as the fact that no CIL funding was allocated last year due to a protocol rewrite. "One scoring question asked if applicants had received CIL funding last year. Given none was awarded, the question was pointless."

A Divided Vote

Despite passionate arguments from some councillors, the vote to fund Nam Yang failed by a margin of 4 to 3. Chair **Neil Dallen** (RA Town) emphasised the importance of respecting the CIL Member Working Group's recommendations, stating, "The group spent a long time assessing bids. We should honour their decision."

Community Impact

The rejection leaves Nam Yang's future uncertain, and many in the community feel let down. "This isn't just about martial arts—it's about providing a safe and inclusive space for children, people with special educational needs, and older residents," said a local supporter.

Other strategic and community projects were approved as recommended previously. See Epsom and Ewell Times report below.

Related reports:

Epsom & Ewell Council Greenlights Local Projects

Pods off in bricks grant for Epsom homeless

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) will receive £1,493,250 in one-off funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to help tackle its spending on homeless families. The Council will use it to buy five properties and one to be used for helping Afghan families resettle.

The grant was initially hoped to be spent on Epsom and Ewell council's recently approved temporary housing pods but it was refused by the government. Cllr Hannah Dalton told the committee on November 12: "They turned us down because they want us to invest in bricks and mortar."

Council documents state the programme will reduce local housing pressures by providing better quality housing, reduce emergency accommodation costs and reduce the impact on those waiting for social housing. It adds that the initiative will also provide sustainable housing for Afghan citizens on the resettlement scheme so they can "build new lives in the UK, find employment and integrate into communities."

Following the unanimous approval of the scheme, EEBC will receive the first payment in January 2025, with three instalments spread out over two years.

EEBC is also contributing £75,000 from Section 106 contributions, contributions from developers, to pay for the scheme. Section 106 is put towards community and social infrastructure projects, this can include social housing.

The new scheme will still cost the taxpayer £35,000 a year for the maintenance of the properties. However, it is a smaller sum than the £115,000 the Council was spending on the equivalent accommodation costs. Saving an estimated £80,000 in total, it would take just over nine years for the council to be paid back from buying the properties.

Around £2.34m was forked out on temporary accommodation by the council last year alone. EEBC said the new funding to purchase houses will help it reduce the annual cost of expensive nightly accommodation with permanent homes.

The two-three bedroom houses would be owned by the council and located within the borough of Epsom and Ewell. Officers told the committee they had already identified a couple houses suitable for the scheme before they have been put on the market. Conditions set by the ministry mean that the properties have to be either freehold, or minimum leasehold of 125 years.

Bourne Hall's Christmas Supremacy

Visit Bourne Hall from 30 November - 21 December for a whole host of festivities this Christmas.

The celebrations kick off at 2pm on 30 November at the Christmas Lights Switch On, when Ewell Grove players will be hosting a special community panto 'A-Lad-In Ewell', raising money for Epsom & Ewell Foodbank. There will also be bookable wreath-making workshops from 2pm – 4pm and you can enjoy an array of market stalls with mulled wine, live music, carol singing from Heart & Soul Choir, and more from 4pm – 7pm.

The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Councillor Steve Bridger, will Switch the Bourne Hall Christmas Lights on at 4.30pm. Visitors can also meet Cinderella and Buttons from the upcoming Epsom Playhouse pantomime, and Father Christmas will even be flying in especially for the day to open the Christmas grotto, and will return every Saturday up until Christmas.

The Christmas Grotto is open Monday to Saturday every day until Christmas to post a letter to Father Christmas. Then why not pause for a moment to enjoy a hot drink and a delicious home-made cake chosen from the festive menu in the Flying Saucer Café?

A wreath-making workshop will be taking place on Saturday 7 December from 4pm - 6pm and you can enjoy live music from Andrew and Allan's Electric 80s on Saturday 14 December, as well as a Christmas magic show on Saturday 21 December.

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

"Bourne Hall is a fantastic meeting place and it's great to see so many people in the local community working together to bring us these celebrations this year.

The community panto promises a smashing start to the festive season and Bourne Hall is so pleased to welcome back Andrew and Allen's Electric 80s night which is great fun and the perfect opportunity to dance!

With a free Christmas Grotto and Christmas Lights Switch On, as well as the opportunity to buy tickets to the Electric 80s night and the Christmas Magic Show, there is something for everyone at Bourne Hall this Christmas.

Bourne Hall Christmas Lights Switch On.

Saturday 30 November, 4pm - 7pm. Free event.

- A day of festive fun including the community panto, 'A-Lad-In Ewell' at 2pm and 5pm.
- 4.30pm: The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell and Father Christmas switch on the Christmas lights at Bourne Hall.

To book 'A-Lad-in-Ewell' visit the links below:

 $2pm\ show:\ https://sessami.co/events/07573091-237e-4072-8e0f-404d979f3968\\ 5pm\ show:\ https://sessami.co/events/6616b0e2-eaa2-4861-bc56-28356fb677d3$

Wreath-making

Revel and Ribbon will be hosting a wreath-making workshop on Saturday 30 November from 2pm-4pm and Saturday 7 December 4pm-6pm. Tickets are priced at £45.

Book here: https://www.revelandribbon.com

Santa's Grotto.

Saturday 7, 14 and 21 December, 10am - 4pm. Free event, no pre-booking required.

■ Father Christmas will be in the Christmas Grotto on Saturday 7, 14 and 21 December. On other days, visit the beautiful grotto at Bourne Hall and post him a letter in the Bourne Hall post box.

Live music from 'Best of the 80s'.

Saturday 14 December, 7pm - 11pm. £10 a ticket.

If the 1980s was the fun decade, then there can only be one way to remember those great days and that's with the fun and entertaining 'Electric 80s'.

Andrew & Allan charge this show with AA power and will have everyone up and on their feet from the very first song!!! So, dust off those shoulder pads, get out your eyeliner and back-comb your hair to within an inch of its life and party with Andrew & Allan's "Electric 80s". Music includes greatest hits from 1980's legends including Spandau Ballet, Dead Or Alive, Erasure, Human League, Wham, Tears For Fears, The Jam and many more.

Book here: https://sessami.co/events/1a8f93c2-c3df-4ca7-a967-9ba9762bd2ad?utm mediu.

Christmas Magic Show starring Ritchie Rosson

Saturday 21 December, shows at 11am, 1pm and 3pm - each show is 45 minutes long.

Join us for a magical extravaganza with the one and only Ritchie Rosson. Ritchie will be doing 3 shows at Bourne Hall delivering 45 minutes of festive fun and amazement. Don't miss the best magic show in town, promised to bring pure entertainment!

Tickets are £6 each and bookable via: https://sessami.co/events/ritchierossonschristmasmagicshow

Mole Valley Bankruptcy warning

Mole Valley District Council is facing bankruptcy and must make "very difficult decisions" over the future of its services.

The bleak warning came during the Tuesday, November 12 scrutiny committee when the grim outlook was laid bare to councillors.

Unless the council makes significant savings then "in all scenarios" reserves would fall significantly below minimum levels required in 2026/27 and be exhausted between 2027 and 2029, officers said.

Councils must balance their budgets and failure to do so can lead to section 114 bankruptcy notices being issued. When this happens all new spending must stop.

Anything other than drastic cuts would put Mole Valley "at such significant financial risk" that the council's chief financial officer would likely be legally bound to consider using statutory powers – with commissioners brought in and the council losing day-to-day control of how it is run.

Mole Valley District Council's executive head of service (finance and strategy) Claire Morris said: "Essentially every local authority is facing very challenging savings targets.

"It is difficult. I think I need to be really honest and quite blunt with councillors, all the low hanging fruit, the easy wins, have been taken. We are now into making some very difficult decisions potentially. To achieve that savings target you will be asked to make some very difficult decisions.

"The alternative is equally less palatable. What we see by authorities that got into trouble and issued notices... is that they get taken over by commissioners and you lose control of your council. "So I can not give you any confidence that we will definitely achieve those savings targets. "What I can say is that we will all, councillors included, work very very hard to achieve those savings and identify them.

"We should be honest with our staff and what this might impact on our services. "It's the honesty we will now have to face up to."

The most high profile example of a council going effectively bankrupt locally is Woking Borough Council with debts approaching £2billion, with other Surrey councils also facing their own issues.

Mole Valley District Council must find £1.8m savings this year but has only managed to achieve £493,000 so far and is expected to fall short by about £1.2million.

Future years look even more challenging with costs expected to increase, and revenues fall.

The council currently makes enough money from its commercial investments to cover the annual interest rates and debt repayment costs, the meeting heard, but "is facing increased tenancy risks and additional costs as commercial leases are approaching break points or end dates and tenants are vacating the properties", council documents said.

The council also expects any new tenancy agreements to be at lower values than at present.

Additionally there is "the risk of the council needing to incur significant capital costs of refurbishing investment properties but without a commensurate increase in income".

Short term cash flows have been hit by a double whammy of the council failing to sell assets, and the being unable to find anyone willing to rent office space in its civic centre.

Claire Morris, the council's chief financial officer, said: "A key area was around the letting of vacant office space within this building

"We have not yet found a tenant. We are still marketing the property, so that is ongoing, but we are continuing to market and hopeful that we will get a tenant."

As it stands, the council then must find a further £760,000 of savings or income for the 2026/27 financial year.

"It is also recommended that the council starts to develop plans to deliver at least £1.3million of further transformation savings for 2027/28 and 2028/29."

During that time the council is forecasting its return on assets for decrease, while budgets had inflation forecasts at 2 per cent - adding pressure.

Councillor Gerry Sevenoaks, committee chair, added: "What is in front of us is undoubtedly some very high savings targets."

Surrey showing true grit for winter roads

Surrey's team of gritter drivers are now available 24/7 to help keep residents moving during the colder months.

Our 39 state-of-the art gritting vehicles are ready to grit the county's busiest routes before and during severe weather, using the 10,000 tonnes of salt stored at our four Surrey depots.

Winter arrangements typically begin in October and run until the end of March although this period can be extended depending on weather conditions.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said, "We're committed to keeping drivers safe here in Surrey and investing in our roads.

"When temperatures plummet, our highways teams across the county will be ready to work around the clock to keep traffic moving on our primary routes using our new, efficient gritters.

"Keeping our roads safe this winter is part of a series of highways improvements we'll be making across our busy network."

Let's think about Spring!

Residents of Cuddington ward held a community bulb plant on the 9th of November, thanks to fantastic local volunteers. Help from RA Surrey Councillor **Eber Kington** via an allocation from Your Fund Surrey, plus a generous crocus donation from Wandgas Sports and Social Club, enabled Councillor **Kim Spickett** (RA Cuddington) to obtain enough spring bulbs for three streets. "We have been planting bulbs in various locations in the ward for the last three years. The aim is to have spring colour and happy bees in every street, so we tackle a new area each Autumn. It is great exercise and a wonderful way to meet your neighbours".

The streetscape around Wandgas has been planted with Crocus tommasinianus Whitewell Purple, a good match for the club kit colours.

Kim said "All our pollinating insects are fans of Wandgas cricket and football – now they will have somewhere to enjoy half-time refreshments".

In the surrounding streets, Kim, volunteer residents of all ages, RA Surrey and EEBC Councillor **Steven McCormick** plus the Wandgas team planted "Tenby" daffodils and early snowdrops.

The bulbs will ensure a boost for wildlife and some neighbourhood cheer after a long winter.

MAIN PHOTO, LEFT TO RIGHT: Wandgas Club Secretary Gary, President Chris, Managers Alison and David, Paul. INSET PHOTOS: volunteer Nicky's snap of the volunteers in action and examples of the flowers to expect during Spring 2025

Kim is also chair of Surrey's Wildflowering Project. They have groups all over Surrey, bringing native planting and people together.

Epsom and Ewell Green Belt battle lines drawing near

The latest draft of the Local Plan has just been revealed. The headline news is that the housing target has been significantly reduced by omitting the Ewell East Station Green Belt site but the Horton Farm and Hook Road Arena Green Belt sites have been retained.

Decision time is coming with the key Council committee meeting to deliberate on the Local Plan on 20th November and Full Council due to meet on 10th December.

The campaigning group Epsom Green Belt has sent to the Epsom and Ewell Times a detailed analysis criticising delays, costs, and lack of transparency in the ongoing development of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Local Plan. The findings highlight that a six-month "pause" in 2023, frequently cited by the ruling Residents' Association councillors as the reason for the current tight schedule, didn't halt progress entirely. During this period, some work continued, including transport assessments, suggesting that time lost was minimal and that the pause alone doesn't fully explain the prolonged delays in the Local Plan's timeline.

The study notes that, after work resumed in December 2023, the Council extended the Local Plan timetable by 11 months, meaning there was effectively a five-month gain rather than a loss. Statements made by Councillors Peter O'Donovan (Chair of the Licensing Planning and Policy Committee) and Hannah Dalton (Leader of the RA Group) that the pause led to delays which prevent the Council from accelerating the current timetable to avoid higher housing targets are challenged.

The review shows that delays have, in fact, compounded over years: since 2017, the Local Plan timeline has stretched by an additional seven and a half years, while budget overruns now exceed £1.7 million. A portion of this funding, nearly £742,000, was reallocated from the New Homes Bonus Grant—intended to reflect community priorities—without consulting residents.

Meanwhile, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has issued a press release reaffirming its commitment to a comprehensive and balanced Local Plan, which will be discussed at the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC) meeting on 20 November. At this meeting, the LPPC will make its recommendation to Full Council, which is scheduled to vote in December. Councillor O'Donovan, Chair of the LPPC, described the Local Plan as a "vital and cross-cutting document" that will influence all areas of local development, from supporting the economy and creating affordable housing to protecting the environment and enhancing biodiversity.

Acknowledging that residents may have mixed reactions, Councillor O'Donovan stated, "There is now a full suite of Evidence Base reports to support the Proposed Submission Local Plan, including feedback from last year's Regulation 18 consultation." He encouraged residents to review these reports and attend the LPPC meeting, highlighting the council's aim to create a Local Plan that secures a "thriving future" for the borough.

The Epsom Green Belt analysis further reveals that reporting on Local Plan progress largely ceased after 2019, raising questions about accountability. A 2018 agreement to regularly update councillors on the Local Plan's status appears to have lapsed, leaving minimal scrutiny over the plan's extended timeline and growing costs. The Group urges the council to enhance transparency and engage more actively with the public, particularly on spending decisions like the New Homes Bonus Grant, which it is contended was reallocated without community input.

With the next public consultation (Regulation 19) anticipated to open following Full Council's approval, residents have another chance to voice their opinions. Councillor O'Donovan encourages those interested to register for updates on the Council's website

The coming weeks will be critical in determining the future development and preservation of Epsom and Ewell.

Related reports:

Call to Epsom and Ewell Council to speed plan denied

Epsom Local Plan controversy heats up

Time to press the gas on Epsom's Local Plan?

Epsom and Ewell Brace for Government Housing Targets

Has Epsom's new MP missed the bus to a new hospital?

Dear Editor,

Our new MP Helen Maguire has supported the construction of a new hospital, complete with an accident and emergency (A&E) department, near the Royal Marsden Hospital in the southern area of Sutton. [See Epsom and Ewell Times 12th October 2024 "Public meeting about Epsom Hospital future"].

While well-intentioned, her recommendation seems to miss a significant concern shared by residents in Epsom, Ewell, and much of Sutton: accessibility.

The current sites—Epsom Hospital and St Helier Hospital—are better served by public transport than the proposed location near the Royal Marsden, which lacks convenient train and bus links. Moving our local A&E services to this "public transport desert" would place a greater burden on people relying on public transport, particularly those without access to a car.

Epsom Hospital, for example, is within walking distance of Epsom Station (though it's still a 20-minute walk). It is served by several bus routes, including:

- **E5** (Langley Vale Epsom Watersedge): every 30 minutes from Epsom Clock Tower, though it only passes the hospital every two hours.
- 166 (Epsom Hospital Epsom Banstead West Croydon): an hourly service from Monday to Saturday, no service on Sunday.
- 293 (Epsom Hospital Epsom North Cheam Morden): every 20 minutes during peak times.
- 408 (Epsom Ashtead Leatherhead Cobham): runs approximately every hour on weekdays.

■ **479** (Epsom - Ashtead - Leatherhead - Guildford): every 30 minutes at peak times.

St Helier Hospital, also in Sutton, has additional connections:

- 151 (Wallington Sutton Worcester Park): every 10 minutes peak.
- 157 (Morden Croydon Crystal Palace): every 12 minutes peak.
- **S1** (Mitcham Sutton Banstead via Wrythe Lane): every 20 minutes peak.
- **S4** (Roundshaw Wallington Sutton St Helier): every 30 minutes peak.
- Other services such as the **154**, **164**, and **280** serve nearby areas, with buses stopping outside or near the hospital.

In contrast, public transportation from Epsom Clock Tower to the Royal Marsden site involves multiple transfers. A trip requires at least two or three buses, such as the S2, S4, 293, SL7, and S4, taking anywhere from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes depending on timings. For many, this could be inconvenient, time-consuming, and impractical—especially in emergencies.

For residents reliant on public transportation, moving A&E services to a poorly connected area would be disruptive. We should seek solutions that keep healthcare accessible and ensure that those who need urgent care can get there quickly. I urge our MP and local authorities to consider this reality as they deliberate on the future of our local healthcare services.

Yours faithfully,

Stuart Gosling

Epsom Resident

Surrey Uni to research mono-syllabic complexity

The University of Surrey is part of an international team of researchers that has been awarded £8.3 million to better understand human language by researching one of the world's most complex linguistic systems.

Thanks to a prestigious Synergy Grant from the European Research Council, the project will explore the West Nilotic languages of East Africa. These languages are able to pack more information into a single syllable than any other known language family. Exactly how such systems could have evolved remains a mystery.

The project brings together experts from the Surrey Morphology Group, the University of Edinburgh, and France's CNRS, in partnership with institutions in the USA, and will engage stakeholders in South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya to ensure wide-reaching impacts, including literacy initiatives.

Professor Matthew Baerman, who leads the project at the Surrey Morphology Group at the University of Surrey, said:

"Our aim is to discover how West Nilotic languages evolved structures of such complexity, and just as importantly, why other languages did not. It's a puzzle that could reshape how we think about the cognitive limits of human language."

The team's approach combines traditional fieldwork with cutting-edge experimental techniques to reconstruct the historical evolution of these languages. The findings promise to have far-reaching implications, offering new insights into the possible and impossible in human language evolution.

Professor Erich Round, Research Centre Leader of the Surrey Morphology Group. said:

"The Surrey Morphology Group has carried out world-leading research into the wonders of human language for over thirty years. We are delighted to have secured our second major grant from the European Research Council in two years, and our third since the Council's establishment in 2007. Most of all, we're thrilled to bring to the world's attention some of humanity's most astounding and illuminating linguistic systems."

Professor Baerman continued:

"The languages we find in the world today represent just a small fraction of what must have existed over the course of history, meaning much remains to be discovered about the full potential of human language. West Nilotic gives us the means to uncover this potential."

Faces and People (Sudan) a west-Nilotic language License details

Surrey school kids' country walk saving money

Children have been told they can walk 4.9km through fields and over an unguarded railway line by Surrey County Council bureaucrats who cancelled their free bus passes.

The decision has left their family feeling "let down" and "frustrated" after the vital service relied upon for years was cut because a 10 kilometre hike was found by county hall officials.

Joe Massey was sent the letter informing him of the council's decision after a "review" found the route was considered a safe walking route for children travelling from South Nutfield to Carrington School in Redhill.

The free bus service historically served the area but the so-called discovery of the new route means notice has been served on those who depended on the county council's travel assistance.

Normally, free bus access is only provided to those who live more than three miles from their chosen school.

South Nutfield is within that distance but the narrow lanes linking the village to the school are unsafe for young people to walk along.

Now the council has written to parents telling them that a new 4.95 kilometre route – across muddy fields and unprotected railway lines is a suitable alternative – but as a precaution children should wear suitable footwear as the farmer's field is prone to flooding.

The instructions, seen by the LDRS, on how the children should get to school read: "Follow the public right of way until you reach Mid Street.

"In places it is narrow, and it can be muddy with surface water, occasionally liable to flooding so appropriate footwear would be advisable after inclement weather.

"There are two stiles to climb over; these are easily scaled.

"The train track is an open crossing with no gates, barriers, attendant or traffic lights. The sightlines in both directions are long, straight and clear. It is a rural line, Redhill to Tonbridge, on average there are two trains per hour and occasionally a freight train making it safe to cross."

Adding: "The public right of way continues across a farmer's field which it can be muddy with surface water, occasionally liable to flooding."

The decision was taken by the Surrey Travel & Assessment team alongside the Safer Travel team who had reviewed a number of routes across the county previously been deemed unsafe.

They team wrote: "We understand that this may be disappointing news, however we have undertaken a thorough investigation into your child's current eligibility, applying the travel assistance policy robustly, and this is the resulting outcome."

Joe Massey, said they have two boys who will be impacted, one in year 10 the other in year 7.

He said: "We qualify for the council's assisted travel scheme because the nearest school to us is over three miles away but we've received a letter f saying that as of September next year they're going to be cancelling both passes - because they've found an alternative route that's less than three miles.

"A big chunk of it is cross country through cow fields and rail roads with no bridge. It's just open tracks.

"It's a public right of way. We did the walk, there's a cow field, you're wading through mud.

"The council says it's fine because its only 2.96 miles but the app says 3.06."

"Some of the roads are really uncomfortable to walk along and to expect anyone to do it, especially in winter, is just unsuitable.

"And the fields are not lit at all; it's just plain dangerous."

Mr Massey said: "I'm extremely frustrated by the situation. Obviously the money is a big thing but it's the principle.

"It took us an hour to do it, there's no way in hell you'd send your child on that route.

"To then expect your child to walk for an hour ,they're going to be exhausted.

"My wellies were caked in mud - they said in the letter to wear suitable footwear.

"It's traumatic enough at secondary school but to have to carry muddy wellies around all day....

"We just feel let down and the option they've given us is just unbelievable.

"If any normal human being would have looked at that route, I can't believe they would have sent the letter."

Clare Curran, SCC cabinet member for children, families and lifelong learning said: "This route has been established between South Nutfield and Carrington School following individual Safe Walking Route assessments that were carried out by the council.

"Safety of route assessments are carried out in line with Road Safety GB Guidelines. It is important to note that this is an assessment of the road safety of a walked route by an accompanied child – national guidance advises that the child should be "accompanied as necessary". It is the expectation that the child, and the accompanying adult, will wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the conditions underfoot.

"The current travel assistance provided by the council is an annual bus pass on a public bus service. This costs the Council £881 per year for each pupil. In line with statutory guidance, these pupils are no longer eligible to receive a free bus pass through the council. Amidst a set of challenging financial circumstances, the council is not in the position to continue to pay for transport for families where they are no longer eligible for assistance, due to a safe route being established.

"The council is not prescribing that children should walk to school via the safe route that has been established; the option is still available to use the bus service. Families will be able to purchase a bus pass directly from the operator to continue to use the bus. Families can appeal against the decision to withdraw travel assistance via the stage one safety of route appeal form, and a link to this was included in the initial correspondence with the family."

Image Joe Massey - on the new school walk