

Building bridges across the Borough

26 May 2024



Epsom and Ewell Times welcomes the third Mayor to be appointed since we started. For the year 2024/2025 Councillor Steve Bridger (RA Stamford Ward) has the honour and burden of being the Borough's number one citizen. We wish him and his wife Carol, the Mayoress, a hard-working and enjoyable year. Here is our annual Mayoral interview.

Q. The main thing I want to discuss was charities, I see that you are championing 3 charities in your Mayoral year, could you expand upon why you chose these particular charities?

Mr. Mayor: I am supporting Epsom and Ewell Phab, Puffins and the Ruxley Foundation.

PHAB

We had a disabled son, Richard, who unfortunately was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy when he was 3 and sadly passed in 2018 aged 34. He and his brother Matthew both attended Phab and they thoroughly enjoyed the full integration and raising awareness of disability. This has made Matthew understand disability to become the person that he is by having time for everyone regardless of their position in life.

PUFFINS

Puffins helps disabled people swim and play games and unfortunately the equipment (hoists etc.) were not available in the Rainbow centre when Richard could have attended.

Ruxley Foundation

During our married life my wife, Carol, and I came upon extreme financial hardship and we are fully aware of the issues and stress that this can create within a family situation and the Ruxley Foundation can at least assist in one area to alleviate some of this.

Q. Next question I wanted to ask was what are your priorities for your year in office?

Mayor: Raise awareness of the Borough and the importance of the selfless roles that numerous residents play in supporting all the charities and associations. Without them the world would be a different place.

Q. What do you think could be improved about the Borough?

Mayor: Whoever you talk to then there is a story of what can be improved and why. Only by listening to the residents in my role as Mayor do you hear of the real areas of concern. I will pass these back to the Officers and Committees to hopefully be able to action some of them.

Q. What are you most looking forward to in your new role?

Mayor: Meeting the volunteers and local small business owners and seeing how these can work together in creating a better environment for everyone and show what a great place Epsom & Ewell is to live.

Q. If you were just named your favourite sport's team's manager, who is the first player you would sign?

Mayor: I do not follow any sports, teams etc. as do not have time!

Q. What hobbies of yours might suffer during your busy Mayoral year?

Mayor: All of them as I put my energy and time into the Mayoral role! – they are DIY, programming, designing web sites, electronics and recycling old items into something useable around the house and to help others. I will miss being part of the Epsom Repair Cafe which I attend every 3rd Saturday each month.

Q. Any other particular message to our readership?

Mayor: I hope that I can live up to and exceed their expectations in my role. I will be pleased if people just come up to me for a chat, I am an ordinary person and have been extremely fortunate to have been offered this position and for that I can thank the residents for showing their trust in the fact that I have shown that I am proud of where I live and will assist wherever and whenever I am able to – I am usually around most days in Epsom unless at an organised event, working at home or meeting!

Please support the many events that my charities have put together and to remember that all monies raised will be donated to charities within the borough. "Local Charities for Local People."

6 out of 11 Conservative MPs leaving Surrey

26 May 2024



Michael Gove MP for Surrey Heath has brought the total Conservative MP retirees in Surrey to **SIX** out of the **ELEVEN** all present Conservative held **Surrey** constituencies.

On 5th February **Kwasi Kwarteng** the Conservative MP for Spelthorne announced he will not stand at the upcoming General Election.

With Paul Beresford MP for Mole Valley, Dominic Raab MP for Esher and Walton, Crispin Blunt MP for Reigate and Banstead and our own **Chris Grayling** MP for **Epsom and Ewell**, all having confirmed they are not going to run, this leaves 5 Surrey Conservative MPs still standing.

One can expect Jeremy Hunt MP for South-West Surrey, who serves in the Cabinet, to seek re-election. Jonathan Lord MP for Woking, Ben Spencer MP for Runnymede and Weybridge, Angela Richardson MP for Guildford and Claire Coutinho MP for East Surrey are assumed to be still up for the fight.

Epsom and Ewell Conservatives have already put in place their new prospective Parliamentary Candidate, **Mhairi Fraser**, an anti-corruption lawyer.

She will be challenged by **Helen Maguire** of the Liberal Democrats, **Gina Miller** of the True and Fair Party and **Steve Mckenna** of the Green Party and **Mark Todd** for Labour. It is understood a Reform Party candidate will stand but despite asking one of the Party's street canvassers to get in touch with Epsom and Ewell Times, we have heard nothing to confirm.

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Every dog must have their day care centre

26 May 2024



A dog day care centre 'vital for the community' has been approved for retrospective planning permission despite officers recommending it for refusal. The application was judged by officers as inappropriate development as it would fail to preserve the openness of the Green Belt which prevents urban sprawl.

Duncan's Doggy Daycare, on Pointers Road in Cobham, was granted retrospective planning permission by a unanimous vote from Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC) on Wednesday night (May 22). Cheers erupted from the gallery from Duncan's family, friends and customers as the decision was confirmed, marking the end of an almost five year battle and three planning permission attempts.

Operating on the site since 2012, the centre is a family-run business which caters for approximately 120 dogs daily (licensed for up to 150 dogs). Employing 20 full and part time members of staff, the centre runs 24 hours a day and 360

days a year. Rather than renting a field like other dog day care centres, Duncan owns the land and facilities his business is built upon.

In a supporting statement to EBC, owner of the centre, Duncan MacBryde said planning approval is “critical”. He added his family’s “entire livelihoods are hinged on this planning decision” as they would be left without a home or income.

In the recommendation for denial, planning officials determined that fencing, exercise pens and the activity at the day care from dogs, staff and vehicles amounted to harm to the open Green Belt.

Chairing the meeting, Cllr Andrew Burley (Conservative/ Oxshott and Stoke D’Abernon) said there were a “raft of special circumstances” which could outweigh harm to the Green Belt. He commented on the economic benefit the business provided as well as the social service the popular day care was providing.

Speaking to the committee, the applicant’s representative Hugh Sowerby, said that Duncan had “done everything possible whilst maintaining a viable business” since the 2019 application. This included halving the size of the site, taking away two exercise pens, removing five unlawful buildings, removing all dog paraphernalia, and reprofiling and replanting part of the site.

Cllr Alistair Mann (Conservative/Cobham) said he was “struggling to find a better location” than on the site. He reasoned: “if this [business] does not exist here it will exist somewhere else [...] if it doesn’t exist on Green Belt, it will exist on Brownfield.” Moving the dog centre to Brownfield sites would prevent building “needed” houses.

The application marks the company’s third attempt for retrospective planning approval. Differences between the 2024 application and the 2023 refusal are that two containers, wooden pen structures and associated waste have all now been removed from the site.

The company has also reduced the site from 1.32 hectares to 0.6, as well as decreasing the number of pens from three to two. Officers acknowledged the impact had been reduced since the last proposal but it would still cause harm and restrict openness

Over 90 letters of support have been submitted to Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC), detailing why it should support a local business which is an “asset to the community”. No objections were received from the public, Surrey Wildlife Trust or Natural England.

Faithful customers of up to 10 years have praised the professionalism and care the company provides for their pets. Ms Tsvetanova said the dog daycare centre has “changed her [daily] life” and her dogs are so excited to come back to the centre.

Mrs Crosse said it would be “absolutely devastating” to her and her family if Duncan’s doggy daycare was no longer allowed to operate. Others commented that they may have to give up their pets if they could not find care for them.

One small business owner said the centre enables her to generate local income for Elmbridge. Another resident, Mrs Sheehan, said: “Duncans Dog Co provides a vital service to local working people to enable us to combine a hybrid working and dog ownership lifestyle...enabling [her] to go back to work and contribute to a wider society.”

Not only local residents, but patrons from South West London have also commented to support the application. Some expressed they “cannot do their job” without the daycare centre as it allows them to work full-time in central London.

Grayling bids farewell....

26 May 2024



With the date of the General Election confirmed to be the 4th of July 2024 Epsom and Ewell’s Member of Parliament since 7th June 2001, **Chris Grayling**, who is not standing for Parliament this time, writes to his constituents.

Dear constituent

As you will know, the Prime Minister has called a general election for 4th July. All Parliamentary activity is now ceasing and there will be no new debates or Parliamentary motions before the election.

I am not standing for re-election and so cease to be an MP when Parliament is dissolved on 29th May. I will, though, remain responsible for urgent constituency case work in Epsom and Ewell until polling day and until my successor is elected.

As the campaign has now started, I will no longer be responding to emails about party or policy issues. However if you have an urgent personal problem which requires my help during the campaign period, please feel free to raise it with me at chris.grayling.mp@parliament.uk, which will remain operational until polling day.

Once Parliament has been dissolved my constituency data records will be destroyed, as is required legally. If you contact me for help with an urgent matter please let me know at the same time if you are happy for your issue and data to be passed on to my successor if the your case is still outstanding at the time of the election.

It has been a great honour to represent this constituency, and I send my good wishes to everyone locally for the future.

With best wishes

Chris Grayling

Out of the starting gates in Epsom and Ewell's political Derby

26 May 2024



Today British Prime Minister **Rishi Sunak** announced a General Election will take place on July 4th.

Epsom and Ewell Times asked all the known candidates for their reaction to the news:

Mhairi Fraser, standing for the **Conservative Party** responded: "Epsom has been my family home for almost twenty years. The day after the election, it still will be. I have lived here, I have worked here, I have commuted from here; I have a personal interest in the success of Epsom, Ewell, Ashted and Leatherhead, and I know what it takes to deliver that success.

From protecting the Green Belt, to tackling crime by securing a more visible police presence, to regenerating our high streets, to improving our transport links – I have a plan, and I have the commitment to deliver on it. And throughout it all, I promise to run a clean campaign, as I have from day one. I have built my career over the last decade as an anti-corruption lawyer, and I will bring the same integrity to our politics. That is the first of many promises I will make to you, but not the last I will deliver on."

Helen Maguire PPC for the **Liberal Democrats** said: "Hard-working families in Epsom, Ewell, Ashted, and Leatherhead are sick of the same old unfair and divisive two-party politics which is currently tearing our nation apart. They are looking for real change and a positive future, which I am committed to working to bring. Our community have had enough of this Conservative government refusing to help them through the cost-of-living crisis, whilst also allowing our local NHS hospital and local schools to crumble, and sewage to be poured into our rivers.

This Conservative government is out of touch and out of time, and this announcement is long overdue. I am honoured to be fighting on behalf of my local community to rid Epsom, Ewell, Ashted and Leatherhead of the Conservatives, who have taken us for granted for years. In Epsom & Ewell, it's a clear choice between a fair deal with the Liberal Democrats or more chaos with the conservatives. Enough is enough, this community needs change now."

Gina Miller, leader of the **True & Fair Party**, said: "The decision to call a general election on 4th July is a concession to the inevitable, acknowledging that the time has come to face the electorate's scrutiny. This summer, we are casting our votes to end this dismal chapter of our nation's history and begin a new era with leaders who truly represent us. As I stand for election in Epsom and Ewell, I am ready to bring the voices of our community to the forefront and demanding a government that prioritises the wellbeing of its people above all else."

Mark Todd, Chair of the **Labour Party** (a Labour candidate is yet to be confirmed) said: "At last, the country has got

what it wants. Now it's time to choose between more decline under the Tories or a greener, brighter future with Labour. Your local Labour party is here to serve you and we promise that if our candidate is elected they will serve the community with all their heart. They'll be open, accessible and always try to help."

Stephen McKenna of the **Green Party** said: "Like the vast majority of the population I am delighted that the official end date of this Conservative Government has been announced!

Greens everywhere are hoping for a transformation of national politics in this election, a turning point which will resolve the cost of living crisis, introduce innovative new policies for the environment, for a new greener economy, for net zero retrofitting of our homes and a programme of new social housing as well as better public services. This is a time for real change in our society."

In the run up to the election the Epsom and Ewell Times will be interviewing the candidates and staging hustings.

Doubtful Henry VIII would have permitted

26 May 2024



The decades-long planning battle to build almost 100 homes and a hotel opposite Hampton Court Palace will soon be decided with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport set to rule on the matter once and for all.

The government department is calling for new information and evidence over proposals from Network Rail Infrastructure and Alexpo to build 97 homes and an 84-bed hotel, together with shops and new access space around Hampton Court station in East Molesey.

The former Jolly Boatman site lies next to the River Thames and overlooks the palace. Elmbridge Borough Council originally rejected the plans but their decision was later overturned on appeal.

The original application received more than 1,800 objections and 131 letters of support and was refused due to "excessive height and bulk" and "harm to numerous heritage assets".

Hampton Court Rescue Campaign (HCRC) argued it would spoil views across the river of Hampton Court Palace.

It is now in the hands of the Secretary of State because the law states developments within half a mile of the historic home of King Henry must be approved by the senior minister.

A spokesperson for HCRC wrote: "For over 100 years, Hampton Court Palace has benefited from the unique protection of the Act, which has successfully restricted developments over 50 ft in height in the environs of the Palace.

"In the Council's Development Brief for the site there is a requirement that any scheme must categorically be below 50 feet."

Permission was granted after the planning inspector ruled it would fit with the surroundings while the hotel, retail units and riverside restaurant would make life better for visitors.

Furthermore, the inspector said the plans would support the rest of the town.

People using the station, the inspector added, would have improved access to the bridge.

They said: "Taken together, these features of the design would result in a place that would be accessible and easy to move around."

On height, the inspector said: "The distinctive treatment of the upper level, together with the depth and width of the podium gardens, would break up the mass of the built form.

"Whilst they would clearly be seen as part of a larger scheme, I do not think that they would be perceived as a single mass, either in views from the park or in longer views from the north bank of the River Thames."

They added: "Some parties sought to criticise the design on the basis that it would not be sufficiently eye-catching or innovative.

"I agree that this is not a design that seeks to make an assertive architectural statement. However, in this case I do not regard that as a negative.

"I consider that the design would result in a calm, well-ordered scheme with sufficient presence to hold its own in the street scene."

The consultation includes an open text box for people's views and space to attach documents and is available via the department's website or by searching Hampton Court consultation.

Image: Jolly Boatman development viewed from across River Thames. Credit Alexpo. Henry VIII clipart cactus cowboy

Not loving it in Cobham

26 May 2024



A proposed new McDonald's is "the last thing Surrey needs"; that's according to residents living near the proposed site.

The fast-food giant has published plans to takeover the former Loch Fyne restaurant in Portsmouth Road, Cobham, but some people living nearby are not loving it – and want it turned into a community hub instead.

The vacant Locally Listed Building has fallen into a state of disrepair with McDonald's saying a Cobham branch would "bring it back into active use as a restaurant to ensure its long-term viability."

While the village of Cobham was recently named one of the most affluent communities in Surrey, residents have said that the Northfield Estate, where the restaurant is proposed, is one the lowest socio-economic area in the county.

Residents said they were "concerned" over the impact a fast food restaurant could have on people's social, mental and emotional wellbeing – and have started a petition calling for a rethink.

"The area needs a community hub, promoting social, mental and emotional wellbeing for residents, McDonald's is the direct contrast of that," the petition read, adding ' the Northfield Estate is the lowest socio economic demographic in Cobham, and one of the lowest in Surrey.' The petition pointed to research which highlights a strong link between obesity and deprivation.

Burger giant has said it has received relatively balanced feedback with people welcoming new job opportunities

Other residents concerns include the site's proximity to schools and the number of students who would be passing it on a daily basis. Many of the 391 signatories fear the restaurant, which would have space for 60 diners and car parking for 33 vehicles, would have on a significant impact on what was already a traffic hotspot.

The Portsmouth Road site is near the roundabout and Sainsbury's petrol station, shortly before the road leads on to the A3. The petition says: "The Painshill roundabout is already extremely busy, with queues forming regularly to enter or leave Cobham; additionally it can be challenging to enter or leave the petrol station."

One person wrote: "The last thing Surrey needs is another McDonald's." Another added: "I feel a McDonald's would be detrimental to the village of Cobham."

Plans for the site, which would be the group's 15th branch in the county, are still in consultation stage ahead of being submitted to Elmbridge Borough Council for consideration.

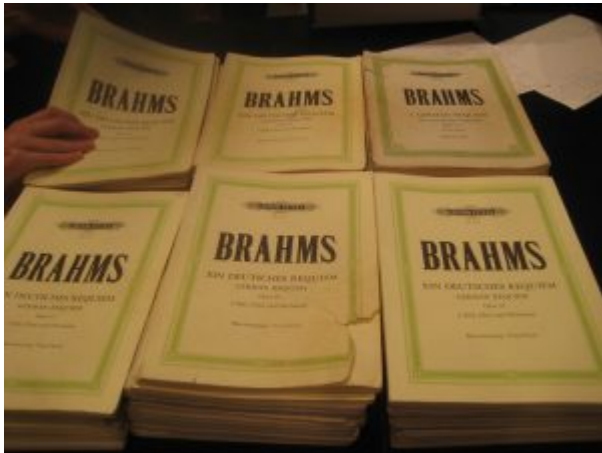
McDonald's has said it would "sensitively restore" the disused site and create "at least 120 new jobs". The Cobham branch would also "address an identified demand". A spokesperson for McDonald's said: "We are encouraged that nearly 500 people have engaged with our consultation so far for a new McDonald's in Cobham.

"To date, we have received relatively balanced feedback in response to the proposals, with local people welcoming the creation of new job opportunities, the diversified food choice in Cobham and the sensitive restoration of the vacant and under-utilised site."

Image: harry_nl CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 DEED

How amiable are thy tabernacles ?

26 May 2024



Jane Pickles reviews Saturday May 18th's Ashtead Choral Society concert at St Martin's Epsom.

If you live in north Surrey, you are lucky to have such a busy and vibrant music scene with so many concerts given by so many different groups at so many different venues.

Quantity is one thing but Ashtead Choral Society's Brahms concert on 18 May in Epsom highlighted the sheer quality and professionalism we also have available locally. Kent Sinfonia set the tone for an emotional evening with Brahms Tragic Overture. From Dr Andrew Storey's first down beat we knew that the orchestra was as one in committing to Brahm's journey of light and dark. Being a church St Martin's does not have great sight lines for all seats, but the monitors allow the audience to observe up close what is going on, and it felt like Storey was able to give Kent Sinfonia space to play stepping in to only to encourage and finesse at key moments.

That brought us to Brahm's German Requiem. We knew Kent Sinfonia were up for a night of high emotion, and the choir were not to be outdone with their first haunting 'Selig sind' (blessed are they) which developed into two wonderfully evocative movements delivered by choir and orchestra. The well-known second movement - 'Denn alles Fleisch ist wie Gras' (All flesh is a grass) - was delivered with purpose building to promised 'joy and gladness'. Talking of quality, it was good to see the baritone, Daniel Tate, and soprano, Eleanor Pennell-Briggs back in Epsom for this event. Tate's appearance saw him work his intonement, 'Lord, make me to know mine end', building with the orchestra and choir to a long, glorious final fugue from Storey into which players and singers flung themselves.

After a welcome glass of wine, the choir eased us back into Brahms' journey with the motet-like 'How amiable are thy tabernacles' before Pennell-Briggs gave us the comfort promised by the fifth movement with mesmerizing tenderness and simplicity. Tate's return portended more drama, and the choir did not disappoint with cries of 'death where is thy sting?' from which Storey set up a triumphant 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power.' This might have been a fine hopeful and triumphant end to the work, but Brahms gives us a final seventh movement ending as he starts with a reprise of the tender 'selig sind' motif from which Storey eased us to final 'rest from our labours' as Brahms' epic melted into peace.

ACS is commemorating Remembrance Day in Epsom on 9 November and I have no doubt their assembled forces will provide another great evening of quality music with their programme of Hadyn's Nelson Mass and Faure's Requiem.

Jane Pickles

Related reports:

Ashtead Choral Society give a lesson in three Rs

Ashtead Choral Society celebrated Surrey's Vaughan Williams.

Image: Flickr. CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 DEED

Banded together to fight the band

26 May 2024

Band	2023/24	Increase	2024/25
A	£1,490	£70	£1,560
B	£1,739	£81	£1,820
C	£1,987	£92	£2,079
D	£2,235	£104	£2,339
E	£2,732	£127	£2,859
F	£3,229	£150	£3,379
G	£3,726	£173	£3,899
H	£4,471	£208	£4,679

A decades-long council tax battle has been won netting residents of a retirement village up to £9,000 each after it was ruled all 113 people there had been in the wrong rate band. Their victory means the former Band E and D homes have now been reclassified and moved down one level to Band D and C - with the rebate backdating back to 1993.

Those who have live at the Oaklands Park retirement village in Redhill, built in 1989, will also be saving about £500 a year going forward at the former B and E homes. Marilyn Rodd, described as a "force of nature", chairs the Oaklands Park Residents Association, and it was her refusal to give up that ultimately won the day. She said: "We're just in disbelief

really. It was a complete turnaround we didn't expect it, we didn't expect it to go back that far, its a huge result for income-limited pensioners, £500 a year in your council tax for couples. It's disbelief and absolute joy and everyone is thrilled. There is happiness at Oaklands Park."

The Redhill retirement village features 113 one or two-bed flats, bungalows, and houses. They were originally sold as top-of-the-range homes because, at the time, the concept of a retirement village was unusual. Their prices soon came crashing down as people sold and moved on – before finding their natural market value at significantly less than originally priced.

Four years after they were built the Government introduced Council Tax – where people are charged based on the value of their property. The Valuation Office Agency, responsible for setting council tax bands, looked at the prices the homes were originally sold, and their high bands have remained.

That ruling, which residents have been fighting against ever since, has meant the retirement community has been paying Band E and D rates for their small flats, bungalows and houses for years when they should not have been.

Mrs Rodd said: "We did it as a collective. It shows the power of banding together. It took a lot of research to understand how it works. It was doggedness and a lot of research and most of all it was getting everybody working together."

From the start, they had the support of their MP and local council. Mrs Rodd said: "People move down from bigger houses and are shocked to find out its still band E. Every time someone moves in they query it. But we haven't taken no as an answer." She added: "The big difference was – they would compare the houses individually within the estate and say 'your house is in the same band as your neighbour'. "We had to get them to look outside the estate."

She added: "We are very grateful to the VOA and the council that they've decided to correct this long standing anomaly or injustice. It's nobody's fault as such it's just the system."

Councillor Jonathan Essex (Redhill East, Green) told the Local Democracy Reporting Service: "This lady took up the challenge, pulled together a comparison of properties to show the homes were out of line. It was submitted and lost, but then it was challenged and she needed to get every single resident on board, no mean feat. Then we finally heard back.

"This lady was a force of nature, it was her determination and persistence that made it all happen and it was a pleasure to support her. This gives people hope."

A Reigate and Banstead Borough Council spokesperson said: "While the setting of Council Tax bands, and any associated appeals, are the remit of the Valuation Office Agency of HM Revenue & Customs, we are responsible for collecting Council Tax. We want people to pay the right amount and, where refunds are necessary, we aim to refund taxpayers as quickly as possible."

The VOA said it could not comment on individual cases but that it works "extremely hard to ensure that all domestic properties are banded correctly" for Council Tax purposes. They added: "If a taxpayer thinks their band is wrong, they are able to contact us to submit a formal or informal challenge."

Banstead Fire Station to close?

26 May 2024



The Fire Brigade Union (FBU) has vehemently opposed the closure of Banstead Fire Station, claiming potential increases in response times could be "detrimental" to public safety.

Banstead Fire Station could move into Godstone under new proposals by Surrey Fire and Rescue Service.

"We emphasise that the closure of Banstead Fire Station could have severe consequences, as a typical house fire can double in intensity every minute," said Karl Jones, FBU Secretary in a letter to Chief Fire Officer Dan Quin. Karl called on the service to seek an alternative location as the public should "not be exposed to potential greater response times"

The average response time to critical incidents in Reigate and Banstead is seven minutes and 23 seconds. It would increase to eight minutes and three seconds if the move goes ahead, the draft plan said.

Across England and Wales, the average response time to primary fires was 9 minutes and 13 seconds, according to the most recent Home Office data. This was an increase from the previous year – with the largest component was drive time,

Moving Banstead Fire Station nine miles down the road would mean the average response time would still be under the service's 10 minute response standard for critical emergencies.

Under the reforms, the response time could put Banstead from 9th ‘place’ in terms of response times in Surrey, to joint 17th according to 2023 data from a Freedom of Information (FOI) request.

“I’m not convinced of the average response times with the geography of the area,” said Mark Johnston, Lib Dem parliamentary candidate for Reigate and Banstead. He said the response times are only averaged across the borough as a whole and did not take into account new developments in the area.

Moving the crew and equipment from Banstead to Godstone will provide better positioning of cover for the whole of the county, according to the Service. Response times for Tandridge is currently eight minutes and 42 seconds, which would be cut by 10 seconds under the plans.

Specialist software is used to calculate response times by using ‘normal road speeds’, which is equal to or slightly below the speed limit to reflect traffic and other impacts. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service said: “We are confident that when our crews are driving to an incident, also on blue lights, that our estimated response times accurate.”

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service said it is made aware of new developments in Surrey and is consulted on them in relation to access and hydrants. The service also said it reviews any current, new or emerging risks on an annual basis.

A Service spokesperson said: “We will still ensure that we can respond to emergencies in the Banstead area swiftly and with the appropriate resources and equipment when needed. We will also ensure that we continue to work with communities in Banstead to prevent these emergencies in the first place.”

Housed in the former police house, Banstead fire station is ‘not fit for purpose’, the service said. Crews cannot train on the site and have to visit other fire stations instead. Owned by Surrey Police, the lease on the station also ends in 2025. Surrey Police said the site has been “decommissioned” and has been on the disposal list since 2015.

Despite some members of the public labelling the proposals as a ‘cost-cutting’ exercise, the service added it will invest around £800,000 to ensure Godstone Fire Station is fit for this increase in people and equipment.

After extensive work, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service claim that there is no other appropriate location in Banstead. The new ambulance site at the Horseshoe in Banstead was ruled out due to emergency response times as the site is closer to Epsom, which already has sufficient fire and rescue cover and low response times.

Other sites included: The former Dormers Care Home, the former depot at Beech Grove and the detached playing field adjacent to Marden Lodge School in Caterham. However, these options were rejected due to unsuitable leases and access issues.

Taking a staged approach, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service hope to implement the accepted changes gradually throughout 2025-2030. and review them throughout the process.

Related reports:

Auto fire alarms need a 999 before fire service respond in Surrey

Not such a rosy report on Surrey Fire Service

Image - Banstead Fire Station - credit Google street view

Surrey Business Support Service

26 May 2024



Business Surrey – a new Surrey County Council service offering free and accessible support to businesses across the county – has officially been launched by Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt.

From start-ups to longstanding SMEs, Surrey companies of all sizes, sectors and stages of their business journey can access expert support for no cost via a new website www.businesssurrey.co.uk.

The Council developed the offer to coincide with the transfer of strategic powers to grow the economy previously held by the county’s two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

It means for the first time there is a single, co-ordinated business support offer for the whole of Surrey – something which is welcomed by local leaders.

Matt Furniss, Surrey County Council’s Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said: “Surrey has a fantastic economic story to tell – with more than 100,000 businesses, a highly-skilled workforce and world-leading sectors helping generate more than £50 billion a year to the UK economy.

“But we know there’s more that we can do – which is why I am delighted we have developed Business Surrey, providing a simple and easy way for companies of all sizes to access the support they need to grow.

“By being in a position to support businesses from day one of being handed these functions from LEPs, we are ahead of the national curve – something which can only be positive for our 1.2 million residents and 110,000 businesses.”

Business Surrey provides free and accessible support for all businesses in Surrey - such as targeted bespoke support for high growth companies, highlighting networking events, promoting the county’s innovative sectors, and hosting a live directory of more than 100 national and local initiatives.

The new website also brings together of the business-facing aspects of the Council’s work, including trading standards, Greener Futures and Surrey Fire & Rescue.

Business Surrey went live in April and was officially launched at Huskins in Godalming by the Chancellor Jeremy Hunt last week (Friday May 17).

Also speaking was Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council; Shahid Azeem, the High Sheriff of Surrey; and local tech entrepreneur Terence Naidu.

Representatives from Surrey County Council, business groups, universities and the county’s 11 district and borough authorities were among those attending.

Jeremy Hunt, Chancellor of the Exchequer and MP for South West Surrey, said: *“Surrey is a fantastic place to do business. The innovation and ideas of its residents, combined with sector strengths in creative industries, and tech and life sciences, make it a pivotal region in driving growth for the whole of the UK.*

“That’s why it’s great to see Surrey County Council using the newly transferred powers formally held by LEPs to develop a clear offer to support businesses.

“I would urge businesses at all stages of their journey to contact the Business Surrey team to access expert help and support.”

Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, said: *“Growing the economy in a sustainable way is a priority for the Council, which can only be achieved by working and engaging with our fantastic business community.*

“Growth is not only good for business; it also generates opportunities for local people, supports investment in our communities, and improves the lives and wellbeing of our 1.2 million residents.

“We’re looking forward to continuing to work closely with our universities, businesses, and local authority partners to capitalise on our enhanced strategic economic role, as it is only through shared expertise that we stand the best chance of growing our economies.”

As part of the launch, Surrey County Council has teamed up with Surrey Chambers of Commerce to hold a series of Business Surrey Roadshow events next month.

The sessions will include practical ways for business owners to access support to grow their enterprises, as well as opportunities to connect with like-minded professionals.

The events take place on:

- June 4 in Camberley – Login Lounge from 8am
- June 6 in Egham – Royal Holloway, University of London from 6pm
- June 13 in Horley – Langshott Manor Hotel from 8am
- June 21 in Leatherhead – Fetcham Park House from 8am

Pre-booking for the events is essential. Secure your space via the Business Surrey website – www.businesssurrey.co.uk/events.

Image: Cllr Matt Furniss, Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP and Cllr Tim Oliver at the launch of Business Surrey

Candidate seeks health and happiness for all

26 May 2024



A healthy population is the foundation stone of a prospering economy, writes Gina Miller.

Amidst economic and social turbulence, politicians tend to fall back on ‘growth’ as the route to salvation. But too many forget that growth is not an abstract economic concept – it is real people doing real work – building businesses and keeping our public services alive.

If people are the currency of growth – and they are – then the foundation stone for economic wellbeing is the health and happiness of the population at large. And we know that 80 percent of an individual's health outcomes are determined by the social and environmental position they find themselves in. These social determinants of health (SDH) concern conditions affecting how people are born, grow, work, live, and age. Outcomes that affect our financial, social, housing, education, employment and environmental systems, infrastructure, and sustainability.

Access to green space; reliable, rewarding work; and a sense of power over one's own destiny are all critical to wellbeing, both mental and physical.

Politicians can no longer ignore these facts of life and must start incorporating health metrics in the national measurement of GDP, and from the bottom-up with radical investment and transformation of town centres and local communities.

To achieve that, local government needs far more power and resources. Keir Starmer, as aspiring prime minister, is talking a good talk on more local devolution in England – but as with so much else, gives us no real detail about how he would make it work in practice. With the public finances in such a mess, people want honesty about where the money to make a difference is coming from.

At the True & Fair Party, and as part of my campaign to be MP for Epsom, Ewell, Ashted and Leatherhead, we have a plan and vision of what to do with more local devolution. We propose a new, modest levy on online and physical retail transactions to replace business rates. This would have two effects: first, to create a more level playing field between shops on the high street and the online giants such as Amazon, and second to raise funds for local services.

With 289 million online card transactions taking place every day, a charge of just a few pennies on each could raise billions and give a shot in the arm to local community funding.

My health and wealth plan would transform town centres into 'health and happiness environments' where high street settings would be used as WE Community Hubs to offer early medical intervention and screening, a range of alternative mental health services, respite services, clubs and facilities for young people, after school clubs, job search/accessing re-training, legal aid provision, debt/financial counselling and assistance to access state support such as pension credit and universal credit.

The Centre for Mental Health has recently recommended that government should routinely and systematically assess the impact of every new policy on people's mental health^[1]. I could not agree more.

I believe we – here in Epsom and Ewell – could be leaders in the country on this, using new powers to develop new partnerships between the business, charity and public sectors and pilot a Wellbeing economy in our community.

Wellbeing Economy models of this kind have already been successfully implemented in Finland, Iceland, New Zealand, Costa Rica, and closer to home in Wales and Scotland. With a growing number of countries facing the similar issues to us such as an aging, increasingly unwell population, the impacts of the digital revolution and environmental changes, and global insecurity they are looking to a transformation agenda to promote growth, improve public health, shorten supply chains, and create more resilient communities and social fabrics.

After 14 years, the Conservative government is out of ideas. Here in Epsom, Ewell, Ashted, and Leatherhead, you can choose to be the change. To make a positive vote at the next election, and enact a plan that can put our whole country on a path to a brighter future.

1. https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CentreforMH_PoliciesForBetterMentalHealth.pdf

Surrey's corpse railway and death in Victorian times

26 May 2024



The Victorians treated death very differently to people today and would photograph their deceased alongside living members of their family, take locks of hair from the departed and seal it in jewellery, (which they would wear) display bronze figures of dead animals in their homes and make plaster death masks from the faces of the dead.

If like me, you are fascinated by the Victorians' treatment of death, then you will be pleased to learn that a rare opportunity has arisen to find out all about Victorian gravestones, mourning traditions and spiritualist experiments in art and writing.

This is because researchers from the **University of Surrey** and the **Surrey Arts and Humanities Network** are offering a family-friendly event series exploring the Victorian culture of death and memorialisation.

Included in the event series is an exploration of the legacy of the **London Necropolis Railway** and a craft afternoon at the Watts Gallery.

Dr Lucy Ella Rose, Lecturer in Victorian Literature at the University of Surrey, believes that:

“Memorialisation is a cornerstone of how we engage with the past, understand the present and shape the future”.

When referring to the events organised, Dr Rose stated that:

“The series offers a unique opportunity to explore our county’s and indeed, our country’s rich variety of Victorian memorials, from traditional gravestones and grand statues to mourning attire and the artistic expressions of grief.”

Family-friendly events to be held across Surrey include:

- **Surrey History Centre** (Saturday 8 June): Immerse yourself in informative talks and delve into the archives that unveil the lives commemorated in Victorian memorials.
- **Watts Gallery** – Artists’ Village (Saturday 29 June): Participate in a “crafternoon” session, drawing inspiration from Victorian mourning practices and artistic expressions of remembrance.

When discussing the forthcoming family-friendly events, Dr Rose stated that:

“Surrey boasts a rich history of memorialisation, having served as the destination for London’s Necropolis Railway, a transportation line dedicated to carrying bodies for burial. The London Necropolis Railway was opened in 1854 by the London Necropolis Company (LNC) to carry corpses and mourners between London and the LNC’s newly opened Brookwood Cemetery in Surrey. At the time, Brookwood Cemetery was the largest cemetery in the world, designed to be large enough to accommodate all the deaths in London for centuries to come”.



Trains carried coffins and passengers from a dedicated station in Waterloo, London along the tracks of the London and South Western Railway with the compartments of the trains, both for the living and for the dead passengers being partitioned by religion and class.

The London Necropolis Railway did not close until 11 April 1941 and Dr Lucy Rose and her colleagues do not believe that these gothic, but fascinating stories should be forgotten and that is why The Epsom and Ewell Times is delighted to be able to assist with the promotion of the series.

For further information and the full event schedule, please visit the “Victorian Memorials” website:

<https://victorianmemorials.wordpress.com>

Image: Post mortem photo of a peaceful-looking woman. Attribution (CC BY 2.0)

Spanish fiesta came to Epsom

26 May 2024



Epsom Symphony Orchestra – Epsom Playhouse – 4th May – Review by Sarah Haines.

What an uplifting and colourful music evening put on by Epsom Symphony Orchestra. Their May concert at Epsom Playhouse was a rich and colourful Spanish Fiesta overseen by Musical Director and Conductor Darrell Davison.

A wonderful start to summer with its promise of outdoor living. Our party had pre performance tapas and spirits which nicely set the stage for what was to come. Chabrier's Espana captured the Spanish way of life in music. Full of character, and contrasting themes including parts that were really powerful and tempestuous. Elsewhere light and springy with happy harp playing. Ending in fantastic fanfare.

Turina's Procession of the Lady of the Dew was a charming little piece: a fantastic soundtrack to a fiesta in Seville. We listened to music from a procession - sedate and respectful; building to a joyful and jubilant end: trumpets playing the Spanish national anthem - this one really was like a film score overture.

Richard Scholfield then treated us to two wonderful pieces playing the solo saxophone (supported by the Orchestra). The first was Ravel's Pavane (arranged by Darrell Davison) - a slow Spanish dance. This was superb playing - soulful and light, a silken sound, romantic, demonstrating the repertoire of the saxophone.

The second was Borne's marvellous Fantaisie Brillante on Themes from Bizet's Carmen - a demanding soloist piece played beautifully and with flair - it was phenomenal, at times racy, playful, a powerful Tango, rapid scales with wonderful percussion joining at the end. At points it was like listening to a horse race.

The second half began with de Falla's Three Cornered Hat Suite 2. This piece depicted melodies from cafes, bars and street musicians. A throbbing intensity from the cellos and double basses interspersed with movements of lightness from the violins and violas and augmented by colourful music from the brass and woodwind. This really caught the essence of Spanish life.

Rimsky-Korsakov's Capriccio Espagnole was joyful piece: containing two morning songs, a gypsy song and a Fandango (animated Spanish dance). So many wonderful solo parts throughout the orchestra as they played this colourful piece.

The concert ended with the unforgettable Ravel's Bolero - an extremely popular piece. The familiar tune gradually built and built as more members of the orchestra came in. Two snare drummers stood like sentinels either side of the stage, reminiscent of Torvill & Dean's legendary gold winning ice-skating performance at the Sarajevo 1984 winter Olympics.

Sarah Haines

Surrey Arts appointed to lead Surrey Music Hub

26 May 2024



Surrey Arts, part of Surrey County Council has been appointed by Arts Council England to lead the Surrey Music Hub from September 2024, as part of an ambitious national programme to provide high-quality music education for all children and young people.

Surrey Arts will receive £1.42 million in funding from the Department for Education to coordinate music education in the local area, plus an additional £469,000 to invest in new musical instruments, equipment and technology tailored to the needs of children and young people in Surrey, including those with special educational needs and disabilities.

Surrey Arts will deliver high quality music education accessible to all children and young people in Surrey through diverse partnerships between educational, creative and community organisations in the local community and throughout the country.

The appointment is part of a major investment in a new generation of the nationwide network of Music Hubs. This investment will help to deliver the Government's National Plan for Music Education, and give all children and young people the opportunity to develop their musical interests as far as they wish, including helping them to begin careers in the music industry.

Denise Turner-Stewart, Surrey County Council Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities said: *"We are delighted that Surrey Arts, part of Surrey County Council will be able to continue its work in leading the music hub in Surrey. The music hub is a network of music organisations and schools working together to bring musical opportunities to young people. This funding will ensure that we are able to continue championing music and support thousands of young people across Surrey to experience the joy and pleasure of participating in musical activities."*

Darren Henley, Chief Executive of Arts Council England, said: *"Music education is enormously powerful - it can enrich young people's lives, help them connect with the people around them, and start them on the pathway to fruitful and fulfilling careers. We are excited to announce this investment in a new generation of Music Hubs, which will support the brilliant work of our dedicated music teachers across the country, and help bring high-quality music education to even*

more children and young people in every part of England.”

Visit [www.surreymusichub.com](https://surreymusichub.com) to find out more.

Notes to Editors

Surrey Music Hub is a network of music organisations and schools working together to bring more musical opportunities to children and young people in Surrey, both in schools and in the wider community. Led by Surrey Arts, the county council’s arts service, the Hub will act as an advocate for music education, encouraging participation in music across the county. They will work to ensure that children and young people from all backgrounds receive music education that is high quality, wide ranging, sustainable and accessible to all and that there are clear routes for progression. **<https://surreymusichub.com/>**

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in **Let’s Create** that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. We invest public money from Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. **www.artscouncil.org.uk**.

Image Corey Seeman

Cyclist death prompts A217 review

26 May 2024



The death of a “fit and active” cyclist has prompted a coroner to raise concerns over paths near a main road in Tadworth.

A man named John Bass died after falling from his bike following an incident involving a van on the A217 at Tadworth in December 2022.

Encroaching mud, twigs and grass more than halved the width of the popular cycle path which poses a risk of further fatalities, a coroner said at Mr Bass’s inquest.

The 80-year-old was considered a “fit and active cyclist”. While the footpath from which Mr Bass fell was 1.4 metres wide, due to encroaching mud, grass, twigs and acorns on the pavement space, the space where he was able to cycle was reduced to only 0.6 metres wide.

Weeks before his death, a highways inspector visited the path and did not consider the narrowing of pathway as a safety concern.

Assistant Coroner Krestina Hayes found in a Prevention of Future Death Report: “There is a risk to future pavement users if clear guidance is not provided to inspectors to identify safety concerns regarding vegetation growth on footpaths.”

The report, published May 14, 2024, also expressed concerns that the frequency of the yearly road inspections should be reviewed.

Speaking at the inquest, Mr Bass’ family advised the footpath by the Tadworth Road is used regularly by cyclists to avoid the vehicles on the busy road, where the speed limit is up to 40mph.

As the highway authority, Surrey County Council (SCC) is responsible for maintaining public highways. Although there is reference to trees and vegetation in SCC, there is no clear guidance on encroachment on pavements.

Inspected yearly, the stretch of highway was examined by car on November 14, and on foot on 22 November. No safety defects were found to meet intervention level by SCC. The family said the pavement was cleared shortly after the accident.

A spokesperson for SCC said: “Our deepest sympathies remain with John’s family and friends, and we will respond to the Coroner’s report following careful consideration of the concerns raised.”

SCC has been given until 3 July to respond to the report.

Image: A217 Road, Near Tadworth, Banstead. (Photo Google)