Epsom's homelessness crisis

Finding temporary accommodation for families at risk of homelessness is the "biggest financial pressure" facing Epsom and Ewell.

Following Epsom and Ewell Times report 13th October 2023 on Epsom and Ewell Council's 10th October 2023 meeting of the Community and Well-being Committee: "Council Grapples with Rising Cost of Homelessness", Emily Dalton probes further after this year's meeting 8th October 2024.

Our local Council (EEBC) provides around temporary units to 250 households, according to data from July 2024. Of those, 90 are nightly accommodations.

The council spent £1,665,493 on nightly emergency accommodation in 12 months to April – an overspend of £395,000. EEBC had originally budgeted for 70 families in nightly paid accommodation but throughout the first five months of 2024, the Council was regularly supporting in excess of 90.

"The situation remains significantly serious and will be for some time to come," said Councillor Clive Woodbridge, speaking at a Community and Wellbeing meeting on October 8. Despite hard-working officers behind the scenes, council documents stated that it is unlikely the number of homeless families will decrease over the next 12 months.

EEBC is absorbing the costs through its original budget, a homelessness grant reserve and the council's general fund balance and contingency. Nearly £650k has been awarded to EEBC as part of a Homelessness Prevention Grant for this financial year 2024/25. But, officers warned that if demand remains exceptionally high, the local authority may have to dip into its reserves.

Homelessness "affects all households of all sizes", a EEBC officer told the committee. He added: "But particularly for us, the higher expenditure is around family-sized households." Overcrowded and multi-generation families, rather than rough sleeping was presented as the most prominent issue coming before the council, the officer said.

Due to demand for accommodation, officers are on occasion having to use economy hotel rooms when no other accommodation is available. The total cost for this can be around £140 per night.

Officers explained the council has a legal "duty" to help people at risk of homelessness and so will continue to foot the bill for temporary accommodation despite the budget pressures.

Landlords were encouraged to take on more council tenants at a landlord forum run by EEBC on September 26. The council is looking for landlords of three, four and five-bedroom houses to sign up to its private sector leasing scheme, so it can reduce the amount it spends on the nightly units. EEBC also highlighted the 'Rent Deposit Scheme' as a preventative homeless measures where councils support tenants with deposits and guarantees.

Looking for new ways to solve the problem, EEBC has asked landlords to help provide emergency housing for families and individuals at risk of homelessness. Although the event was reportedly "well attended", council officers said it may be "slow burn" for landlords to come forward for the scheme. Officers said there were a couple of approaches but "nothing concrete yet".

Related reports:

Epsom and Ewell Press Release on Homelessness

Council Grapples with Rising Cost of Homelessness

Image: Evelyn Simak cc-by-sa/2.0

Some Surrey boroughs get brownfield funding

Surrey councils will get nearly £2m to release disused brownfield sites to unlock desperately needed land for house building including cash to clear asbestos and transform the "heart of Camberley".

Boroughs and districts are bracing themselves for tough new Government housing targets that could see the demands to deliver new homes skyrocket.

In an effort to alleviate some of the pressures the Government has announced £68m of funding is to go directly to 54 local authorities to turn what it describes as neglected land into housing.

Two of those councils are in Surrey; Surrey Heath Borough Council is set to receive £1,480,300, with Tandridge District Council in line for £250,159.

The funding is to be used clearing empty buildings, former car parks or industrial land in order to make way for homes.

Historically it is expensive to get such sites ready for housebuilding and can sit as empty eyesores for years.

Surrey Heath Borough Council has said in a statement the funding will support its new housing development in London Road site, "near the A30 in the heart of Camberley".

It added: "The grant will be used to demolish derelict buildings on the site and safely remove asbestos from the former Allders building, clearing the way for future development."

The money is part of a three-year £180 million Brownfield Land Release Fund 2 launched in July 2022 to allow local authorities in England to build on blocked brownfield land.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said: "From the outset we promised to get this country building again to deliver 1.5 million homes over this parliament and help tackle the housing crisis we have inherited. That is the essence of fixing the foundations and driving growth.

"I said this government is on the side of the builders, not the blockers. And I meant it. This funding for councils will see disused sites and industrial wastelands transformed into thousands of new homes in places that people want to live and work. Our brownfield-first approach will not only ramp up housebuilding but also create more jobs, deliver much-needed infrastructure, and boost economic growth across the country.

"This government is rolling up its sleeves and delivering the change the British people deserve."

Housing and planning minister Matthew Pennycook said: "The government is committed to a brownfield-first approach to housebuilding, and we have already taken steps to prioritise and fast-track building on previously used urban land through our proposals for a 'brownfield passport'.

"The funding announced today will support the delivery of thousands of new homes and boost economic growth by unlocking development on scores of abandoned, disused and neglected urban sites across the country."

Releasing brownfield land is one step in meeting the needs for housing but some councils are calling on the government to do more.

Waverley Borough Council has written to the deputy prime minister Angela Rayner over the government's wider planning reforms, which currently would require the council to deliver 1,379 homes a year - a figure that borough leader Councillor Paul Follows called "unrealistic" and "unachievable".

He added: "The proposed standard method is fundamentally detached from the realities of local constraints, including national designations such as the Surrey Hills National Landscape. It risks undermining both the environment and community cohesion, and we urgently need a more credible, locally tailored approach."

Further concerns were raised over the role of developers in housing delivery.

Planning authorities such as Waverley have no control over the rate of housing completions.

The Allders building in Camberley will have asbestos cleared to make it suitable for housing (image Google)

Surrey Tories bouncing back already?

The Conservative election turnaround in Surrey shows no sign of slowing after the party beat the Liberal Democrats, Labour and independents to take two more seats at the October 2024 by-elections.

Voters in Elmbridge backed the Tories in both seats contested on Thursday, October 10 - holding on to Weybridge and winning Hersham Village.

The polls were called following the death of former Conservative councillor and "community champion" Charu Sood, who died after a cancer battle in August, and the resignation of Chester Chandler.

The two victories build on other Tory wins in Surrey with the party winning in Waverley Borough Council following a huge 19 per cent swing and victory in Runnymede where they doubled Labour's vote share.

The wins have left the Conservative group leader on Elmbridge Borough Council in buoyant mood and talking up the possibility of going into coalition with the residents groups to offer "a better approach".

Councillor John Cop said: "We're back, after a couple of difficult years it's amazing to see the council group grow again.

"I think it was a combination of two factors.

"Firstly there was a very clear rejection on the door of what the Liberal Democrat council has done.

"The Hersham community has been treated really poorly.

"There's been the closure of the community centres, still not fully reopen and there was a lot of concern around high rise buildings going up on the town centre - and the council not getting a local plan in place leaving us open to development.

"Secondly. there was a real anger at the new Labour government, winter fuel coming in, and talking down the economy, I think that was why we saw such a dramatic turnaround."

Elections in Elmbridge take place every year, with the fourth year left free for the county council ballot.

The Conservatives had not won in Hersham since 2021. Cllr Cope put the reversal in fortune down to the popularity of their candidate whom he dubbed "Mr Hersham" '

In Weybridge, the party held on to narrowly hold the seat, in what was their first victory there since 2022.

The new council now comprises 21 Liberal Democrats, easily the largest party, 13 Residents Associations Group members, 11 Conservatives, two Hinchley Wood RAG and one independent.

It leaves the door open for a change of control at the top should the residents associations go into coalition with the Conservatives, something Cllr Cope said he would look to do.

 ${\hbox{\it Cllr Cope said: $\tt ``We would welcome going into coalition with the residents associations and change the council for the better.}$

"I would be more than happy to talk to the residents' associations to see if they would prefer a different approach."

Weybridge St Georges Hill results in full

- Colin McFarlane: Conservative Party 608 votes, 46.0 per cent (Elected)
- Andrew Kelly: Weybridge and St George's Independents 598 votes, 45.2 per cent
- Brittany Johansson, Green Party, 116 votes 8.8 per cent

Turnout 19.7 per cent

Hersham Village

- John O'Reilly. Conservative Party 1029 votes 55.4 per cent (Elected)
- Vasha Khodiyar, Liberal Democrats 736 votes 39.6 per cent
- Francis Eldergill. Labour Party 94 votes 5.1 per cent

Turnout 27.1 per cent

Newly elected Elmbridge Borough Councillor Colin McFarlane and John O'Reilly (image John Cope)

What were the odds of Epsom & Ewell's $4 \times 2 + 2$?

Epsom and Ewell 2-2 Fleet Town. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 12th October 2024.

For the fourth time in a row our match resulted in a 2-2 draw, this time against high-flying and unbeaten Fleet Town at the KGF on Saturday. We could and maybe should have handed them their first League loss of the season, having come from behind to lead with twenty minutes remaining, but a late Dan Bone equaliser ensured that we had to share the points once again, and in all fairness, the draw was the correct result.

In front of an attendance counted as 116 (yet officially and farcically advised as 148) that included around twenty of our Colts, we made just one change from the team that had drawn 2-2 at Redhill seven days previously with Niall Stillwell coming in for his first start for the club at right back for the injured Ethan Brazier, as he had done in our draw with the leaders.

We kicked off towards the Chessington end for the first time in a number of matches and Carl Oblitey had the first chance when he tried his luck from long range but was well wide, while the visitors were a lot closer with their first attempt after a deep Tom Smith cross was headed wide at the far post by Danilo Cadete. However, they took the lead in the 11th minute after a good move on the left resulted in a low ball in that was teed up nicely for Matt Surmon to drive it into the net, with a slight deflection off a defender from the edge of the penalty area.

Last season we had to play two home matches against Fleet Town after the original contest had been abandoned for an injury, but in each case an early Fleet goal was answered rapidly with an Epsom equaliser, and this time it was no different, as we only had to wait three minutes to draw level. For the second match in a row we had another own goal in our favour, as Oblitey had tried to put a through ball for Ali Fofahan on the right, but over hit his pass. However, Fofahan retrieved the ball and sent over a dangerous low ball with his left foot. With Oblitey waiting for a tap in, Ross Stepney got there first, but only succeeded in diverting the ball into his own net off the crossbar from five yards out!

Stepney then earned a yellow card for going through Fofahan, but it's not entirely clear how Fleet didn't retake the lead in the 28th minute, when a low shot was well saved by Dan O'Donovan, but the follow up from close range from Tane Caubo somehow went back across the goal, missing the target from what appeared to be extremely close range. O'Donovan made another good low save with five minutes of normal time remaining from Luke Kandi before our keeper nearly claimed an assist when his free kick went to Jason Bloor, whose shot was on target and would have crept inside the right hand post of Finley Purcell, but was blocked by a defender and we went in at the break on level terms.

Surmon headed an early chance over the bar for Fleet within a couple of minutes of the restart and the majority of the possession was with them for a while, but on the hour we began to redress the balance and Ethan Nelson-Roberts sent in a dangerous ball that was cleared just ahead of Oblitey by Smith. Caubo headed another half chance wide for the visitors, but then somewhat against the run of play we took the lead in the 70th minute. A clever pass set Fofahan away down the right, and he cut back onto his left foot before delivering a peach of a cross to Oblitey, standing unmarked and five yards out, leaving him with the simplest of headers into the net.

David Romer came on for the injured Stillwell, which led to a little bit of defensive reshuffling, but we pushed forward again and Nelson-Roberts was denied by a superb last moment tackle, before Kionte Gillfillian-Waul produced a great run and pass across the six yard box, which was just missed by a defender. It appeared that Oblitey, standing beyond him, had expected the defender to reach it and didn't quite react in time; the ball scraping off the underside of his boot from a few yards out.

A third goal then would surely have finished off Fleet Town and their unbeaten record, but good teams find a way back and although their substitute, the prolific Dan Bone, sent a header just wide, he made amends with a low shot from the edge of the area that was just out of reach for O'Donovan in the 84th minute. It's not clear to me whether Bone was on the bench for tactical reasons, or whether he was coming back from injury, but he always gives us problems and it was fortunate for us that he didn't play the full ninety minutes.

We had one last chance in the final minute of normal time when a Fofahan free kick was headed wide by Oblitey who had done well to lose his man, but just couldn't keep the header on target, and after seven minutes of injury time the final whistle confirmed our fourth straight "Desmond".

For those who are unaware, our third 2-2 draw against Redhill last week was the first time in club history that we had even had three of these in a row, so to see a fourth consecutive one is quite bizarre. The simple facts are that we have only one loss in ten matches now, but whilst the Redhill result was a good one, particularly from 2-0 down, I don't believe I'm the only person that thinks the other three of those matches really ought to have been wins.

It's not a major criticism though. Although we are currently in 15th place now with thirteen points from the same number of games, we remain seven points clear of the two relegation positions and are in much better form than the clubs down there, who are presently Balham and Spelthorne Sports. Don't be fooled by the FA Full Time site or even the very useful Football Web Pages site though, it is two clubs and not one that will go down this season. Right now though, it definitely won't be us.

With our League position fairly secure for now, we can turn our attention and focus to a pair of cup matches now, and against the

same club as Berks County visit for the League Cup tie on Tuesday and the F.A. Vase tie the following Sunday. On current form, we will be favourites to progress through these ties, but also will need to hold on to a lead when we have it, as a draw in either or both of those matches will send us to the lottery of a penalty shoot out. Additionally, we have fought back from going behind five times in the last four matches, so it would be nice to see us start a little better in the matches to come.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Callum Wilson, Anthony Nazareth, Ali Fofahan, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Jason Bloor, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: David Romer for Stillwell (71), Conrad Essilfie-Conduah for Bloor (75)

Surrey County Council finances under the spotlight

A recent Local Government Information Unit report presents a worrying picture of local government finances across the UK, with a particular focus on the impact of budget cuts on services for children, young people, disabled people, and broader council operations. This report gives context to Conservative Party run **Surrey County Council**'s current financial struggles.

The Local Government information Unit (LGiU) is a local government membership body, thinktank and registered charity.

Key Findings from the LGIU Report:

- 1. **Service Cuts Affecting Vulnerable Groups**: The report highlights that local councils are cutting essential services to balance budgets. Vulnerable groups, including children, young people, and disabled individuals, are bearing the brunt of these cuts, leading to long-term negative consequences. This is especially evident in cuts to children's social services, school transport, and support for disabled people.
- 2. Savings Targets and Financial Shortfalls: Local councils have collectively approved over £3 billion in savings for the current financial year but still face a predicted funding shortfall of more than £5.7 billion by 2026-27. Surrey County Council stands out as having the fifth highest savings target for 2024-2025, but also has the second highest predicted financial shortfall for 2026-2027, highlighting significant concerns about its sustainability.
- 3. **Surrey-Specific Context**: **Surrey County Council** is under immense pressure to meet high savings targets while facing a projected budget shortfall that indicates financial vulnerability in the longer term. Given the nationwide picture, Surrey's situation is part of a broader struggle that local governments face, attempting to maintain statutory services while cutting others. Surrey has a history of difficulties with funding, particularly in delivering adult social care and children's services, which have increasingly become the focus of cost-saving efforts.
- 4. **Impact on Services**: Specific areas of concern include reductions in spend on children's social care, safeguarding, youth services, support for care leavers, and independent living for disabled individuals. The report notes that many councils, likely including Surrey, are adopting measures such as reducing staff in children's social care and pushing for more "independence" among care leavers, which may ultimately reduce the quality of care available.
- 5. **Reserves and Exceptional Financial Support**: Councils, including Surrey, have been drawing on reserves to balance their budgets, but these reserves are not limitless. Nationally, 19 councils were granted Exceptional Financial Support (EFS), highlighting that more councils are approaching financial failure, a risk acknowledged by Surrey as it plans for the coming years.
- 6. **Broader Implications for Children's Wellbeing**: The Children's Commissioner and experts like Lynn Perry from Barnardo's have warned that cuts to preventative services for children could lead to a "lifetime cost" for the current generation. With Surrey's budget pressures, similar outcomes could be expected locally, particularly as youth services and early intervention programmes may face further cuts.

7. **Miscellaneous Cuts**: The report details examples of "almost comical sounding" cuts being made to balance budgets—such as changes to coffee suppliers, reduced support for coastal lifeguards, and reduced asbestos collections from households. These reflect the desperate measures councils are taking to preserve statutory services amidst financial constraints.

Councillor Responses:

Cllr **Bernie Muir**, Conservative Party, Surrey County Councillor - Epsom West Division and Epsom & Ewell Borough Councillor - Horton Ward, responded to the LGIU report:

"Our transformation over the last few years has given us a solid base and is helping us weather the storms encircling local government and indeed the global economy.

"That means that while the county council has a solid and robust budget thanks to many years of hard work and bold thinking, we face pressures like everywhere else.

"66% of our budget is spent on supporting young people, families and adults. This includes spend of £1.2m per day on Adult Social Care, £0.5m per day on Children's Social Care, and about £6m per month on Home to School Transport Assistance.

"Whilst the council's finances are stable, demand on our services continues to increase at a faster rate than our funding, and so our funding position is anticipated to remain challenging for the foreseeable future. We are working innovatively and reviewing the way we deliver some programmes of work to ensure we are fit for the future, continue to deliver the best outcomes for our residents and that no one in Surrey is left behind."

On behalf of four opposition Residents Association County Councillors, Cllr Eber Kington said:

"Epsom and Ewell Residents' Association County Councillors recognise that Surrey County Council continues to be penalised by Governments in terms of central Government grant funding despite the huge contribution that the Surrey economy makes to the national economy. There is also the assumption by Westminster that all Surrey residents are wealthy, which ignores both the pockets of deprivation in Surrey, but also the fact that Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Adult Social Care costs are not just related to poverty but are common across all communities.

"That said, SCC has not spent or borrowed money wisely and ignored our calls to adopt a different financial approach, including the funding of more early intervention and preventive measures to reduce future costs. In fact, SCC's inflated capital spending on infrastructure, not all of it high priority, has resulted in cuts to the planned SEND school building provision which is clearly a wrong option choice when you consider that SEND provision is one of the services that has the most pressing need.

"SCC also continues its spending on highly paid staff with 61 Directors now in the salary bracket of over £100k, including 11 of the highest paid Directors heading the Communications and Engagement Directorate. It has also been revealed that SCC has funded over 6,000 mobile phones for staff. A recent £17 million project to replace SCC's financial IT system was late and ran over budget, with the final cost acknowledged as £27m (although money is still being spent), an overspend of £10m and the equivalent of 1% on the overall SCC council tax bill.

"Currently, SCC is using a Government Bus Service Improvement Plan grant to fund a new Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) scheme that allows residents to book a convenient bus journey when they need it, focusing on rural areas without scheduled buses. However, the take-up is currently quite low and some journeys cost SCC anything from £12 to £104 per person. That is not sustainable when the Government grant runs out and SCC finds itself having to fund the DDRT system.

"Removing some of these high-cost items may not improve the budget gap very much given the overall SCC annual budget, but a clear change of policy to the funding of early intervention and prevention schemes, a capital programme that focuses on the essential services, better project management of high costing schemes and IT projects, and a leaner management structure will make a difference and are policies that Residents' Association and Independent County Councillors will continue to advocate in the coming months."

Conclusions:

The financial pressures on Surrey County Council are reflective of a broader, systemic problem affecting local authorities across the UK. Surrey's high savings targets and predicted budget shortfall for 2026-2027 illustrate a challenging future where further cuts to crucial services seem inevitable. This raises concerns for local residents, especially the most vulnerable, and suggests the need for urgent government intervention to ensure sustainable funding for local services.

A call from the Local Government Association (LGA) for financial stability and multi-year funding settlements is particularly

relevant for Surrey, as it struggles to maintain a balance between mandated services and community needs.

Ancaster acquires the Epsom keys to Allams

Sponsored article: Ancaster Group has announced the acquisition of Allams of Epsom, a prominent Skoda dealership that has been a cornerstone of the local automotive industry for over 70 years. This move comes as Ancaster celebrates its 75th anniversary, marking a strategic expansion for the group across South West London and Surrey.

Allams of Epsom, located on Longmead Business Park, has been serving customers in the region since its establishment in 1952. The dealership is well-known for offering the full range of Skoda vehicles and operates as an authorised service and MOT centre. For decades, it has built a loyal customer base, providing reliable service and quality vehicles to generations of local residents.

With this acquisition, Ancaster Group continues to solidify its presence in the South East, adding to its existing network of 13 dealerships representing brands such as Nissan, Hyundai, MG, Renault, and Dacia. This addition will allow the group to further enhance its customer offerings, particularly in the fast-growing Skoda brand. Ancaster's Managing Director, Stephen Wood, expressed enthusiasm for the future, stating, "This acquisition is a strategic milestone for us, as it accelerates our growth and broadens the brands we offer in South London and Surrey. Allams and Ancaster share the same important core values of customer service provided by a motivated and committed team."

Allams will continue to operate under its current name, with customers benefiting from the enhanced support and synergies provided by Ancaster's wider network. The acquisition positions Ancaster to serve the Surrey and South West London markets even more effectively, with a strong focus on customer satisfaction, as both companies are known for their dedicated service teams.

The Allams dealership has long been a fixture in Epsom, having earned a reputation for trust and quality in automotive sales and servicing. For local residents, this acquisition signals the continuation of a trusted service, now backed by the broader expertise and resources of a larger dealership group. Ancaster's purchase ensures that Allams will remain an integral part of the community, while also benefiting from new growth opportunities within a larger organisation.

Ancaster Group, which was founded in 1949, has built its reputation over the decades through customer service, trust, and value. With this latest acquisition, the group looks set to strengthen its ties to the local community, continuing to offer a comprehensive range of new and pre-owned vehicles across multiple brands.

For Epsom motorists, this new chapter in the history of Allams promises continuity in quality service, combined with the benefits of a broader dealership network under the Ancaster umbrella.

Sutton & Epsom Rugby beat the unbeaten

On Saturday 11 th October 2014 Sutton & Epsom RFC visited Crescent Farm to play Sidcup who were the early season league leaders of London 1 South after five games. On that day the Black & Whites tore up the form book winning 23-16 with a stunning Kyren Ghumra try manufactured by a perfect kick from Frankie Murray. Almost a decade later to the day it was a sense of dejà vu as high-flying Sidcup arrived at Rugby Lane this time topping Regional 2 South East. The visitors were the only unbeaten team in the league, had secured the maximum 20 points from four wins in which they had scored the most points and conceded the least by a considerable margin. It was not a case of lightning striking twice but more like Thor's hammer descending from the heavens in a cataclysmic explosion such was the intensity and physicality of this superb contest won by S&E by a margin of 12-7.

Freddy Bunting got the ball rolling as Sutton played towards the clubhouse with the permanent threat of rain. The early exchanges ceded little territory before a wonderful kick from Josh Twyford angled into the home 22. The hosts responded with two bone-shaking tackles from Ben Tame, that set the tone for an afternoon not for the fainthearted, and a fine kick from Gareth O'Brien cleared their lines. The ferocity of the tackling and a slippery ball hindered the attacking

prowess of both XVs. Kiwi Josh Rea demonstrated his talent with a brace of tackles followed by a fine break, Bunting probed with the boot and Sutton attempted to prise open the visitors' well organised and aggressive defence. The first genuine chance came on the quarter hour when Austin Bell kicked ahead and the covering Seb Ellison was caught as he attempted to run from his line. However, in the ensuing frenetic melee the referee awarded Sidcup a scrum for a knock on. The game continued with great pace whilst thunderous tackling from both defences held the upper hand as time after time ball-carriers were unceremoniously dumped onto their posteriors. With the half hour approaching Josh Twyford perfectly placed kicked settled irritatingly just outside the Sutton 22 and a hesitant Bell, now at 15 after an injury to Gareth O'Brien, kicked out on the full. The visitors failed to prosper as their lineout faltered. From a Sutton scrum Rob Hegarty ducked, weaved and evaded tacklers before offloading to the galloping Glanville who burst to halfway where, as ever, Dan Jones was in support. The ubiquitous flanker set off on one of his increasingly familiar runs and was finally halted by the swarming Sidcup defence in their 22. Sadly this exhilarating attack ended as a pass was delivered to a man who was more trying to get out of the way than storm forward.

The Rugby Lane team's confidence was growing and Bell put through a grubber on halfway and recovered it and chipped over to the 22. The second kick was rather over-egging the custard and a grateful opposition regained the ball. To remind everyone who was the top team Sidcup went onto the attack. An excellent kick-chase established them in the Black & White 22. It was now the moment for their backs to demonstrate some wonderful handling in the wet conditions. Sutton were scrambling on their line defending for their lives. Perhaps it was frustration or impatience but with a try looking probable the Crescent Farm men conceded a penalty by going in from the wrong side. Freddy Bunting thumped the ball to halfway and danger was averted. As the enthralled spectators were contemplating a 0-0 score at the break the deadlock was finally broken. Sidcup 15 Seb Ellison collected a Bunting kick on his 22. His return was not his finest strike but the ball descended into space for the rapidly approaching fullback. A favourable bounce was recovered and Seb Ellison ran the ball back from halfway. The covering Freddy Bunting ushered him to the corner no doubt hoping this would be a 5-point score at worst. Up stepped the experienced Josh Twyford who converted magnificently from the touchline to put the league leaders 7-0 ahead. It was already in time added on but the robust nature of the contest had meant that the medical teams had been on the paddock rather more often than usual rebuilding their troops and there was ten additional minutes. Josh Twyford just failed to increase the visitors' advantage as a long-range penalty drifted wide. Then it was a case of cattywampus in extremis as a Sutton scrum buckled. Fortunately for the hosts the Twyford kick into the corner erred in their favour and sailed out of the dead ball area. The half finally concluded with the Black & Whites pressing for a score.

The Kent men were determined to reaffirm their status and put the Sutton upstarts in their place at the start of the second period as they kicked an early penalty into the corner. S&E were soon in survival mode as they had a scrum 5 metres from their line. Tremendous Sidcup scrummaging drove the Black & White eight over their line at a rate of knots. Steve Munford managed to touchdown to avert the try. Now it was Sidcup's turn to have the put in. The home supporters feared the worst based on the most recent evidence. Incredibly Sidcup conceded a penalty at the scrum as it wheeled. The hosts gleefully accepted the salvation. Reinvigorated by their defensive resilience they went onto the offensive.

Sutton progress was met by a Sidcup side whose tremendous tackling scythed down all before them. But the Black & Whites were not deterred and started to benefit from a flurry of penalties. The spectators were divided over the perennial question: "Take the three points or kick into the corner?" The team went for the higher tariff option. The excellent S&E lineout secured possession but progress could be measured by inches rather than yards so resilient was the visitors' defence. Then an infringement gave Freddy Bunting a 'free ball' and he kicked to the corner where the ball escaped the clutches of two of his comrades. Another 3 points was declined and this time a huge tackle dislodged a ball giving an escape route for the leaders that they gratefully accepted.

The action switch ends but a lofted kick ahead just drifted into the Sutton 22 and an alert Bunting called for the mark and set off on a counter. Replacement Angus Findlay made a wonderful run into the Sidcup half. The ball came to Lawrence Elliott outside the 22 and to counter

the onrushing defence he kicked ahead along the deck. The crowd were distracted as Elliott was poleaxed but Josh Rea kept his eye on the ball and won the race to score. Though Freddy Bunting missed the conversion his side now trailed 5-7.

Mr Willis declared that there were 11 minutes to play as the crowd urged on both teams for another score. Sidcup descended into the Sutton 22. Austin Bell seeking anonymity and respite for an injured shoulder retreated to the flank for a breather. Unaware of his condition he was given the ball close to his line. He kicked for touch but the breeze meant it settled on halfway. Bell was first to the ball and fly-hacked onwards wisely declining to scoop it up on the run. The ball advanced deep into the 22 and S&E regained possession. The ball was sent wide where Jordan Huie collected the pass and ran straight for the corner. A fabulous covering tackle brought him crashing down but he stretched out to score his first try for Sutton. An ecstatic crowd cheers increased when the insouciant Bunting made the touchline conversion look elementary for 12-7. The hosts managed to see out the game without creating unwanted anxiety to record one of their best wins in many seasons.

Any side contemplating beating Sidcup this campaign will need to bring their 'A+Triple Star Game'. The front row triumvirate of Messrs Gibboons, Fordham and Carmen are formidably supported by a powerful back five. With the ageless Josh Twyford as the puppeteer at 10 they have variety in attack and multiple threats. Traditionally their defence has been superbly organised but there is now an almost savage power to their tackling. Indeed both sides dug so deep in defence they might have enjoyed vistas of Bondi beach. Sutton rose to the challenge and matched the league leaders for defensive desire and were neither intimidated nor subdued. Willing forwards carried, the backs attacked at every opportunity and the kicking game was astute. From 1 to 18 the Black & Whites raised their level to new heights. There have been an avalanche of tries in the league so far at Rugby Lane but this was by far the match of a season that is still in its infancy. Sutton & Epsom

O'Brien, Huie, Scott, Elliott, Bell, Bunting ©, Munford, Boaden, Mount, Gibson, Glanville, Tame, Rea, Jones & Hegarty.

Replacements: Hilton, Green & Findlay.

Sidcup

Ellison, Masters, Leek, Smith, Keeley ©, Twyford, Sullivan, Gibbons, Fordham, Carmen, Clarke, Stock, Ruff, Healey & West.

Replacements: Conlon, Williams & Pooley.

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy

Public meeting about Epsom Hospital future

A public meeting has been scheduled for October 17th, 2024, at the **Epsom Sports Club**, located next to **Epsom Hospital**, to discuss the future of local healthcare services. The meeting, organized by the **Epsom and Ewell's Residents' Associations**, will be centred on the evolving plans for Epsom Hospital and the broader health services in the area. The keynote speaker, **James Blythe**, Managing Director of the Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust, will provide an update on the trust's long-term plans, including the new Specialist Emergency Care Hospital (SECH) in Sutton and the modernization of both Epsom and St Helier hospitals. The event will be followed by a Q&A session, allowing local residents to voice their concerns and ask questions directly to the leadership.

This meeting follows recent developments within the Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust, which is moving forward with a £500 million project to build the SECH in Sutton. This new hospital will centralize acute services such as emergency care and surgery, while 85% of other services will remain at Epsom and St Helier hospitals, ensuring local residents continue to have access to a wide range of healthcare services nearby. The new SECH, located on the Sutton Hospital site, is designed to enhance patient outcomes by co-locating with the Royal Marsden Hospital and the London Cancer Hub.

Epsom and Ewell's newly elected MP, **Helen Maguire**, has made healthcare a key priority in her first 100 days in office. Maguire has been an advocate for the new hospital in Sutton, meeting with the Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust to see that the project moves forward without delays. In a press release marking her 100th day in office, Maguire emphasized her commitment to ensuring that the SECH is built and that Epsom and St Helier hospitals are modernized to better serve the local community. She

has also scheduled a meeting with Health Secretary Wes Streeting to gain more insights into the government's broader healthcare strategy

Maguire's focus on healthcare comes at a time when the trust is also addressing other critical issues such as managing its financial constraints while improving patient services. Maguire attended the trust's recent Annual Public Meeting, underscoring the importance of the SECH in addressing long-standing challenges.

Local residents are encouraged to attend the public meeting on October 17th to stay informed about the future of their healthcare services and to have their say in the discussions about these transformative plans for Epsom and its surrounding areas.

Event Details:

Topic: The Future for Epsom Hospital and Local Health Services

Date: October 17th, 2024

Time: 7:30 PM

Venue: Epsom Sports Club, next to Epsom Hospital

Speaker: James Blythe, Managing Director, Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust

Format: Presentation followed by a Q&A session with refreshments

Fly-tippers force closure of Surrey recycling centre

A Surrey recycling site will permanently close due to persistent fly-tipping at the site.

The Mound car park in Tattenham Corner has been repeatedly hit by high levels of dumped rubbish, despite CCTV cameras being installed at the site Reigate and Banstead Borough Council has said.

The centre's final day will be October 17.

Councillor Hannah Avery, executive member for neighbourhood services said: "When fly-tipping at one of our recycling sites blights the local area and prevents us from recycling all the waste that we can, it is doing more harm than good.

"It reduces the environmental benefits, increases the financial costs of waste disposal and takes our Cleansing team away from other work to keep the borough clean.

"I want to thank the majority of residents who are recycling their waste responsibly and especially those that are going the extra mile to arrange local clean ups.

"I want it to be easy for Reigate and Banstead residents to recycle as much of their household waste as possible, but I also want them to be confident that their recycling gets recycled properly and has a positive environmental impact."

All collection bins with the exception of the clothes banks will be removed with the vacant space turned over for car parking.

According to the council, its recycling sites can be magnets for large amounts of non-recyclable fly-tipped rubbish – a quarter of all reported tips last year were at the Tattenham Corner site.

Overall the council says it clears 300 van-loads of dumped waste from The Mound each year.

A spokesperson for the council said that in an effort to stem the flow they used mobile CCTV and issued 16 fixed penalties for fly-tipping and a further 12 for littering at the site so far this year since, while in March new signs informed visitors that ongoing misuse could lead to the facility being closed without further notice.

It did not reduce the number of fly-tips - including from both commercial and trade waste.

The spokesperson added: "The council estimates around 70 per cent of the dumped waste is made up of items that cannot be recycled, which contaminates the recyclable waste that people are disposing of responsibly.

"As a result, the Tattenham Corner recycling site, which is on Royal Drive, will close permanently on Thursday. October 17.

"The Mound car park will close for one day on October 21 to allow for the creation of additional car parking spaces."

Image: Royal Drive Tattenham Corner Fly-tipping (RBBC)

Epsom Station gets an artistic makeover

In the hustle and bustle of daily life, railway stations often feel like transient spaces where passengers rush through without a second thought. However, at Epsom Station, something unique is happening. Thanks to the *Art@the Station* initiative from **The Art Society UK**, along with a group of talented young students from Epsom and Ewell's own **Nescot**, the station has become a vibrant hub of art and creativity, offering a refreshing experience to commuters.

As part of the *Art@the Station* initiative, art and design students from Nescot (North East Surrey College of Technology) have created striking artwork inspired by Epsom's most iconic landmarks. The project, designed to showcase emerging talent in public spaces, not only adds life to the station but also provides passengers with a more enriched and inspiring environment. The station's subway now serves as a gallery, featuring bold, colourful images that celebrate the town's rich heritage.

Angie Child from **The Art Society Epsom** led this creative transformation as project manager. The theme, **Sense of Place**, invited students to capture the essence of Epsom—its famous racecourse, clock tower, and other key sites. The result is a stunning display that has already stopped passengers in their tracks, prompting them to admire and even photograph the eyecatching designs.

"I am delighted with the outcome of the wonderful images the Nescot students have created for Epsom station," said Angie. "The students went above and beyond to fulfil the brief. Even while we were still installing the artwork, passengers hurried past but stopped to admire and take photos of the beautiful, colourful pieces."

The project, supported by a grant from Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), is not only a boost for the station's appearance but also a significant achievement for the students involved. They had the chance to showcase their work to a wider audience, gaining real-world experience in the process. Special recognition was given to Nescot's graphic design tutor, Miles Merritt, who encouraged and guided the students throughout the project, integrating it as an exciting extension of their coursework.

Out of more than twenty designs, the standout works from George Pearson, Alfie Carr, Callum Jones, and Wiktoria Sawicka won the competition. These students, all from the local area, embraced Epsom's history and reimagined it in vibrant graphic designs. Their interpretations offer a fresh perspective on the town's heritage, creating a dynamic fusion of past and present.

GTR's Community Engagement Manager, Rob Whitehead, worked closely with the students, even providing them with rail tickets to visit an art exhibition in London as part of their creative journey. "We're thrilled to support this initiative in Epsom and showcase the incredible talent of Nescot students," Rob said. "Our Station Partners Small Grant fund has helped bring this fantastic community project to life."

The *Art@the Station* project isn't limited to Epsom. Younger students from Epsom Downs School also contributed, creating a large mural titled *Rockets* at Tattenham Corner Station. The initiative will continue into 2025, with more artwork planned for display at Ewell East Station, ensuring that local creativity continues to enrich the travel experience.

This collaboration between The Art Society, Nescot, and GTR is a powerful example of the impact community-driven projects can have. By bringing art into public spaces, these initiatives not only enhance the visual appeal of stations but also provide passengers with a deeper connection to local culture. Moreover, they offer younger generations a valuable opportunity to actively participate in and be recognised within their community.

For now, as commuters pause to admire the bright, bold designs at Epsom station, one thing is clear: art has the power to transform even the most ordinary spaces into something extraordinary.

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Find out more:

Nescot, The Art and Design Department:

The Art Society Epsom

https://www.theartssocietyepsom.org.uk/

GTR

Art @ the Station

https://theartssociety.org/arts-news-features/art-station