

Epsom's Earth health doctor checks GMC

20 April 2024



Epsom residents led by Dr. **Kristine Damberg** converged Thursday 18th April on the General Medical Council (GMC) headquarters in Central London, decrying what they perceive as the regulator's lackluster response to the urgent health risks posed by climate change. The demonstration, organized by the **Planetary Health Coalition**, aimed to spotlight the pressing need for action on climate-related health issues affecting the community.



Dr Damberg protesting outside General Medical Council.

Dr. **Kristine Damberg**, Senior Simulation Practitioner and ESTH Sustainability Champion based at **Epsom Hospital**, voiced concerns about the immediate health impacts of climate change in the area. She lamented the rise in climate-related ailments among patients, including heat-related illnesses during the 2022 heatwave. Dr. Damberg emphasized the gravity of the situation, citing staggering statistics: "In the UK, 29-43,000 people die unnecessarily every year because of air pollution."

Adding: "Even in a relatively affluent area like Epsom we are seeing these impacts on patients presenting to GP surgeries and hospitals. In the 2022 heatwave there were 3000 excess deaths in the UK and on the wards at Epsom Hospital the temperature was consistently above 30 degrees. It was extremely challenging for staff to work and keep already vulnerable patients safe at these extreme temperatures."

She stressed the imperative for proactive measures, echoing The Lancet's designation of climate change as the most significant global health threat of the 21st century. "We need to act now to protect our community."

However, the GMC's recent efforts to incorporate sustainability into medical ethics guidelines have fallen short, according to Dr. **Rammina Yassaie**, a medic and ethicist. She criticized the optional nature of these additions, stating, "Practising climate-conscious medicine should be a clear duty of a doctor." She called for more robust guidance from the regulator to address the climate crisis head-on.

Epsom resident **Warren Bunce** echoed these sentiments, expressing disappointment in the GMC's perceived inaction.

“The General Medical Council’s silence on climate change is a betrayal of public health,” he asserted. He called for stronger support for healthcare professionals in Epsom and beyond to confront the health consequences of a warming planet.

Protestors also raised concerns about the GMC’s financial ties to fossil fuel industries. Dr. Christelle Blunden, a GP from Southampton, highlighted the disconnect between the GMC’s ethical standards and its investments. “Doctors want their money out of ecologically destructive industries,” Dr. Blunden stated. She emphasized the need for regulatory bodies to lead by example in addressing the climate crisis.

The protest occurred amidst growing legal restrictions on climate activism, with the recent conviction of Dr. Sarah Benn, a GP from Birmingham, serving as a stark reminder of the risks faced by healthcare workers advocating for environmental causes. Dr. Benn’s case underscored broader concerns about the erosion of protest rights in the UK, prompting calls for greater protection for activists.

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20 April 2024



Nearly 92 per cent of voters in a Surrey University College Union (UCU) indicative survey supported holding a vote of no confidence in the Vice Chancellor, with a further 96 per in favour of a vote for the executive board.

Surrey UCU has been campaigning against ‘compulsory’ redundancies and financial severance elicited by the University of Surrey in an all-staff emergency meeting on March 6. Vice Chancellor Professor Max Lu (VC) announced the university would have to cut staff and assets as part of cost-saving exercises.

A UCU open letter dated April 11 alleged the university was trying to turn a “£10m deficit” into a “£10m surplus”. A spokesperson claimed staff feel they have been “coerced” into redundancy, or “feeling that their hand has been forced”.

An academic, who wished to remain anonymous, said: “It’s extremely distracting and upsetting [...] Commitment to the university falls and commitment to your work falls. You invest a lot of time into your institution and when your institution doesn’t value you back, you question why.”

Speaking about her department, she said: “It’s horrible. Morale is very low” and people feel “very insecure about their jobs”.

High inflation, soaring energy bills and overall cost of living pressures were cited by the VC as reasons why the university needed to reduce its expenditure. Sector-wide problems within Higher Education such as “devaluing domestic tuition fees” and declining numbers of international students “due to external factors” were also highlighted in a letter by the VC

However, the UCU argued that poor financial management in “historical borrowing and significant spending on multi-million-pound projects” undermined the VC’s claim. Recent developments include the Surrey Institute for People-Centred AI (opened in 2021) and launching a new medical school with an intake for 2024.

Over 90 per cent of the university’s income was borrowed externally, coming second in the UK in 2021/22. Gross debt increased by £16.6m in 2022/23 to £296.5m compared to 2021/22, as the University entered into a new £20m term loan used to support the purchase of a building on campus, this was partially offset as a result of scheduled repayments.

Soaring from 0.1 per cent interest rates in December 2021, to 5.25 in 2023, the university now has to pay back around 4.5 per cent interest in its loans (2024).

“It’s a reckless [...] way of living,” the academic said, “to borrow, borrow, borrow with the hope that you will make that money back.”

Rather than trying to “play with the big boys” and be a Russell Group university or UCL, the academic said, “Surrey needs to play to its strengths” as a small, safe university in Guildford which looks after its students.

Fewer Surrey UCU members voted to start formal industrial action (75.3%) than those in favour of a no confidence motion. Academic staff explained striking would mean taking teaching away from university students, who were not at fault.

The union is meeting on April 22 to discuss the next steps and has invited MP Angela Ricardson and parliamentary candidates to attend.

A spokesperson from the University of Surrey said: “Our University is not immune to the unprecedented financial

pressures facing the UK's higher education sector - including high inflation, high energy costs, the sustained devaluation of tuition fees and the recent decline in international student numbers. We're taking a focused and nuanced approach to tackling these sector-wide challenges at Surrey, with our approach designed to minimise the impact on our people and our core mission. We are looking at a variety of measures to increase income and save on costs including offering voluntary severance to some colleagues. We are hoping to avoid compulsory redundancies."

Getting teed off by golf club's landfill designs

20 April 2024



A Surrey golf club has been accused of being a "landfill site in disguise" after anger at the sheer volume of heavy lorries that could be needed to drop waste off at the site.

The owners of Merrist Wood Golf Club, off Holly Lane, are hoping to redesign and reconstruct the existing course including water features and the creation of a heathland and wetland habitat.

The remodelling would include making use of nearly 600k tonnes of recovered 'inert materials' across the 55-hectare site. 'Inert waste' is discarded materials that do not biodegrade or chemically react with other substances.

These plans, which are currently under consideration, could see around 141 Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) movements at the sites for up to 256 days a year across the possible two years of the renovation project. A six-hour period is proposed for these movements meaning at peak times there could be one HGV movement every 2.5 minutes.

The planning application has received 55 objections and only one letter of support. Opposing the application, locals have raised concerns the HGVs would exacerbate an already congested road and increase wear and tear. One resident said: "Everything is just a constant worry. We moved here for peace and now it feels like it has been taken away."

Road safety issues were highlighted by some residents, suggesting footpaths will be "destroyed" and there will be "no safe place" for students and parents to cross the road for Merrist Wood College and Fairlands School. Locals expressed fears about how the HGV movement would impact on 'school run' times and rush hour, citing the narrow lanes as already dangerous.

Despite residents' anxieties about the development's impact on the road, Surrey County Council (SCC) officers have concluded that "there are no unacceptable highway and transport impacts".

The applicant argues the many road journeys over the construction period will be less disruptive than traffic caused by piece-meal course maintenance. As the source of the inert soils is still unknown, it is likely routes from both the north and the south will be used to access the site.

Comments asked what 'inert materials' will consist of, with some dubious of where the matter will be sourced. Sceptical commentators have described it as a "landfill scheme in disguise" with the amount of material suggesting it is being "dumped on the site".

Rather than 'borrowing' existing soil on the course, inert waste is described as the 'best way' to create new terrain. Planning documents state if inert waste material was not used in the project, 'virgin' soil would have to be used.

Constructed in 1996, the applicant argues the 18-hole golf course has 'deteriorated' and "suffers from a number of underlying design defects". Taking over the course in 2020, Lavershots Oaks Ltd complained the club has a "poor reputation' and is 'failing' as a sports club and as a business.

The Guildford MP Angela Richardson has written to residents affected by the Merrist Wood Golf Club planning application to alert them to the proposals and the consultation. She raised concerns about the traffic disturbance, congestion caused and whether detritus will be left on the ground.

The Wooldridge Group (formerly known as Lavershot Oaks), which specialises in civil and contract build projects, filed for administration on February 5 this year. The Wooldridge Group has been approached for comment.

Consultation on the application ends April 16.

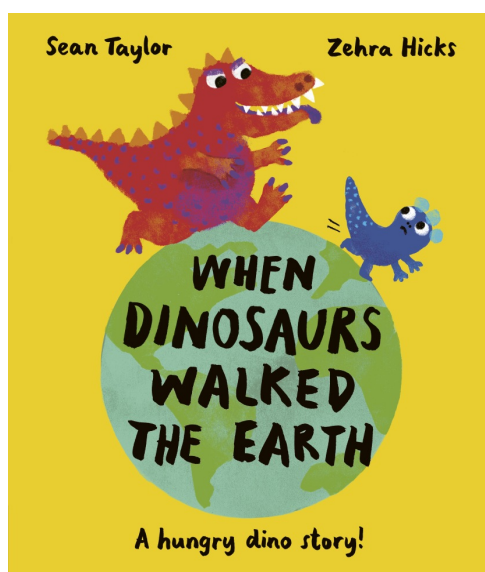
Image: Entrance to Merrist Wood Golf Club. (Credit: Google Street View)

Walking with dinosaurs ... not quite

20 April 2024



Epsom-based **Zehra Hicks** is an award-winning children's book author and illustrator whose books have been translated in over 20 languages. Through her work, she shows the magic of storytelling to children through her comical illustrations, which has led to an already impressive list of accolades, including being highly commended for the Macmillan Prize for Illustration and winner of the Heart of Hawick Award, to name a few.



When Dinosaurs Walked The Earth, authored by Sean Taylor and illustrated by Zehra, is one of five shortlisted books for this year's £10,000 **Oscar's Book Prize**. Founded in honour of book-loving Oscar Ashton who passed away aged three and a half from an undetected heart condition, the prize seeks to find the best children's picturebook, and is supported by **Amazon** and the **Evening Standard** with Princess Beatrice as a patron. The winner will be announced at a ceremony in central London on the 7th May.

Zehra is a tutor at Chelsea College of Arts, where she completed a short course in Book Illustration in 2009.

Since then, she has been highly commended for the Macmillan Prize for Illustration, winner of the Heart of Hawick Award, named LoveReading4Kids Debut of the Year in 2011 and shortlisted for the Read It Again! Cambridgeshire Children's Picture Book Award.

About Epsom Zehra told the Epsom and Ewell Times: "I moved to Epsom from London 14 years ago when I was pregnant with our second child. For quite a while I missed living London, but now I definitely have the best of both worlds. I feel incredibly lucky to be living in a town with so many open green spaces like Epsom Common and Epsom Downs, yet only being a 35 mins train ride away from the capital.

"I love going for daily walks with my sausage dog, Vincent. Sometimes I even run with him. I'm much more likely to come up with book ideas on a walk or run than stuck behind my desk! And I love bumping into people for little chats. Being an author and an illustrator can be quite lonely, and I find Epsom residents and dog walkers so friendly.

"I work in cafes too, so although some people may think there are too many cafes in Epsom, I happily make use of them ALL! You may often see me in Gail's or D's Coffee House with a sketch book working on new ideas. I love the buzz in cafes - it helps my creativity, and I love that there seems to be more and more residents working in cafes, creating a lively working community."

"Having an art shop and bookshop is a huge benefit to me too, as is the market. It would be lovely to have some more independents though. A few are cropping up, but very, very slowly!"

Image: Zehra Hicks and her sausage dog on Epsom Common

Low morale hits Surrey Police

20 April 2024



Up to 20 per cent of Surrey Police officers want to leave due to low morale and poor pay, according to a new report.

Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) found that 84 per cent of officers had experienced stress, low mood or anxiety over the studied 12 months. Of 2,276 Surrey police officers, 460 responded to the Pay and Morale Survey from November 2023.

PFEW issued its survey to support its national campaign for fair pay for police officers and an independent pay mechanism. It found nearly 80 per cent of officers said they were unsatisfied with their pay, with 69 per cent saying their workload was 'too high'.

Tom Arthur, Branch Secretary of Surrey Police Federation, said: "This year shows yet again that officer morale stays at an all-time low, some 90% of those surveyed confirming this - with pay and feeling undervalued by the Government being the main reasons.

"One in five of my colleagues in Surrey are actively seeking alternative employment. Forces and the Government cannot keep ignoring this and making platitudes to the public about how they are serious in dealing with Law and Order."

Polling 460 officers, 20 per cent of respondents said they intend to resign from Surrey Police either 'within the next two years' or 'as soon as [they] can'. This was slightly lower than the national average (22 per cent) in the PFEW survey.

Due to the high number of staff leavers Surrey has a group monitoring resignations with leavers' questionnaires and stay interviews. A recent PEEL inspection into Surrey Police found it still "lacks understanding" why staff or recruits might leave the force.

Adrian Rutherford, Director of People Services for Surrey Police and Sussex Police said: "We have seen our largest police officer recruitment drive in a decade; welcoming hundreds of new officers into our organisation and onto the streets of our communities."

However, 12 per cent of police staff posts were vacant at the end of November 2023, according to a Surrey Police and Crime panel report. Approximately 73 per cent of respondents from Surrey Police said that they would not recommend joining the police to others.

The report found 85 per cent feel 'worse off' financially now than they were five years ago and 16 per cent 'never' or 'almost never' have enough money to cover all their essentials. Whilst police officers received a 7 per cent pay rise in 2023, they have still seen a 16 per cent real-terms pay cut since 2011.

Supporting and protecting Surrey's workforce was found to 'require improvement' in the latest PEEL report (December 2023). The force had not completed a well-being survey in three years, or the Bluelight self-assessment to understand what affects good or poor well-being.

Officers responding to the PFEW survey said they do not feel respected by the Government (95 per cent) and they do not feel valued within the service (65 per cent) and over half (54 per cent) said they were experiencing low morale.

Surrey Police said it had a wellbeing strategy "which places officer and staff wellbeing at the heart of the organisation". Indeed, the force's mental health app, Backup Buddy, won best innovation at the InsideOut Awards 2021. However, according to the survey, morale and pride in the force have dipped since then.

Adrian added: "Our police officers undertake a demanding and often dangerous role, ensuring that we keep Surrey safe and protect the most vulnerable from harm. As a force, we are doing all that we can to ensure that we're alleviating some of the pressures faced by those on the front-line.

"We will be looking closely at the findings of the survey, alongside our recent internal employee opinion survey to look at what we can do to improve matters. We wish to be an employer of choice and will continue to work with our colleagues in the Federation, as well as our own people, to ensure we're doing all that we can to demonstrate the high value we place on our officers and staff and to be the best employer that we can be."

Image Dave Connor CC 2 by deed (altered placing officers in front of Surrey Police HQ entrance)

This time a victory counts!

20 April 2024



Premier Division South							
Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
16	Spelthorne Sports	36	10	8	18	-25	30 *
17	Guildford City	36	8	4	24	-54	28
18	Epsom & Ewell	36	8	3	25	-37	27
19	Colliers Wood United	34	6	7	21	-36	25
20	Sheerwater	36	7	4	25	-56	25

Epsom & Ewell FC 4-1 Fleet Town. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Tuesday 16th April 2024.

After just two wins under his tenure to this point, our Manager Warren Burton was able to celebrate his 48th birthday with a third victory as we won this rearranged League match 4-1 against Fleet Town. In fact it could be argued that this was the most impressive of his three, quite probably better than our 6-2 win over a lacklustre Sandhurst Town side in March, as this win came against a better team and we had to come from behind to do it too!

The win must have been particularly tough on the visiting supporters who had been 3-1 up on Saturday and had probably already added the three points to the League table to close on the playoff pack, only to see one of their players badly injured and the match subsequently abandoned, and then to face a second trip up from Hampshire in four days before being heavily beaten; a win that ends any faint playoff hopes they may have had.

We made three changes to the line up from Saturday's match with Nick Wilson and Jaevon Dyer coming back into the starting line up and they were joined by Thompson Adeyemi who was originally due to be on the bench, but got the call up after Carl Oblitey was late arriving for the match and had to be content with a place on the bench. Tijani Eshilokun and Matt McGillivray were absent for this one.

We got off to an awful start on Saturday when we conceded in the eighth minute, but this time we were behind even earlier as a harmless looking ball came over towards Wilson in the sixth minute, but somehow the ball got tangled up in his feet and then fell for the opposition's leading scorer Dan Bone who scored twice on Saturday and then added another with a low drive past Dan O'Donovan from twelve yards.

The teams seemed to be following Saturday's script as we equalised soon after with a nice passing move that went from left to right where Ethan Brazier went forward before feeding Luke Miller whose low right wing cross was met at the near post by Will Kendall from just six yards out to give Filip Chalupniczak no chance with a left foot strike in the twelfth minute.

Kendall was unlucky to see his low strike deflected into the side netting before another Kendall header from a Miller delivery was only half blocked by Chalupniczak with Dyer knocking in the loose ball from close range, only to see the offside flag raised against Kendall. Kendall looked to be linking with his team mates much better in this game and it was good to see Dyer looking much more like the flying threat we had seen so frequently last season. In short, even with Oblitey by now sitting on the bench, we actually looked like we posed an attacking threat, which you couldn't often say about our team this season.

It was around the half hour mark in the original match that we started to get pushed back, but that didn't really happen here. In fact we looked the more likely to score as the half concluded and had a great chance when Kendall supplied a superb reverse pass into the path of Dyer, but just as he went to round the keeper, he stumbled over the ball and allowed Chalupniczak to claim the ball. This was a massive chance and when O'Donovan tried to see a ball out for a goal kick but got caught out, nearly leading to a goal for the visitors, it made you wonder if we had missed our chance. We went in at the break level at a goal each.

We continued on the front foot in the second half and Dyer sent a curling shot just beyond the far post after Adeyemi's set up. We've not had a vast amount of luck this year and just when I was thinking it would be great to get some here, that's exactly what happened, when in the 51st minute a deep left wing cross forced Bradley Pegg to turn back to defend it, only for him to knock the ball into his own net under pressure from Kendall from eight yards out. The ball could have gone anywhere, but squirmed into the corner of the Fleet net!

We had the lead which was crucial, as I was concerned about the idea of us trying to see the match out for a draw, but could we hold on to it? As you would expect, Fleet came back at us and a far post header by Argjend Ahmetaj was just wide but we were soon back on the attack and Kendall wasn't able to keep his header on target from Adeyemi's superb left wing cross. However, any concerns about the miss were forgotten soon after and we extended our lead on the hour mark. Miller set the ball back to Brazier, whose cross from out wide looked like it was just going to hang in the air for an easy catch, but Adeyemi had other ideas and out jumped Chalupniczak, heading the ball up in the air. It seemed to hang in slow motion before coming down off the bar, but fortunately Kendall was first to reach it and he smashed the ball into the roof of the net from just six yards out to make the score 3-1.

Relief was evident across the ground and we continued to take the game to our opponents who then began to self-destruct when Dan Bone was sent to the sin-bin after believing that he had been fouled. During that time we had further chances with Reece Tierney's header being blocked, while Wilson was just wide from 35 yards and Taylor forced a low save at the near post. For such an important match, it was unusual to feel so relaxed, particularly this season, but we were under relatively little pressure.

Although O'Donovan picked up a yellow card for a bit of time wasting, the visitors were chasing shadows as we passed the ball around like a training session and even when they returned to eleven men we remained the better side. Oblitey came on for Dyer and he was in the action soon after, with a low shot smacking Chalupniczak's right hand post and rebounding to safety, but by this time Matt Sirmon had become the second visiting player to visit the sin-bin and this left them down to ten for the remainder of the match, during which we scored a fourth goal. It was the 96th minute when the ball came in from the left and was then passed to Miller who feigned to shoot on two occasions, completely tricking the defenders before slotting past the keeper from close range to complete the scoring.

It would take a brave person to say that they saw this performance or result coming after Saturday's abandonment and our recent displays, but it obviously gives us a huge lift in our relegation battle and it has to be said that if we had played like this more frequently, we wouldn't be in the position we have been in. It was certainly very good timing to produce our best ninety minutes of the calendar year and maybe our Manager should have birthdays more often!

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Ethan Nelson-Roberts (c), Adam Green, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, Luke Miller, Luke Taylor, Will Kendall, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Carl Oblitey for Dyer (79), Sirak Negassi for Brazier (83), Zack Ingham-Wright for Taylor (86)

Related report:

This defeat will not count

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Climate motion sparks energetic debate in Council

20 April 2024



In a lively session at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Tuesday 16th April, councillors engaged in a debate over a motion proposing a significant environmental mandate for future housing developments.

Councillor **James Lawrence**, (LibDem College) the initiator of the motion, emphasized the urgency of addressing climate change through stringent environmental standards in housing. He argued that aiming for the highest energy efficiency rating, Grade A of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for all new house builds, would not only align with climate goals but also save residents money in the long run.

"I believe that this ambitious policy would allow us to more effectively design the housing of the future, both saving residents money and meeting our climate goals and saving energy in the long run," Councillor Lawrence asserted.

However, concerns were raised regarding the practicality and affordability of such a mandate. Councillor **Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley) queried the feasibility of implementing the requirement and its potential impact on housing affordability.

"How much would these homes cost and to what extent would that mean that less affordable and social housing is built because of the cost of these elite homes?" Councillor Coley questioned.

Councillor **Phil Neale**, (RA Cuddington) drawing from a construction background, echoed similar sentiments, highlighting the challenges developers would face in meeting such stringent standards without significantly increasing housing costs.

"In reality...to provide housing of above A, which is what is being asked in this motion, is impossible," Councillor Neale argued, stressing the need for practical solutions to address the housing shortage.

Amidst the debate, Councillor **Kim Spickett** (RA Cuddington) urged a nuanced approach, emphasizing the importance of considering the impact on families and advocating for a stable efficiency metric in EPC ratings.

"The focus of an EPC headline metric needs to be on reducing demand through a stable efficiency metric," Councillor Spickett remarked, urging caution in setting overly ambitious standards.

Despite the spirited discussion, Councillor **Julie Morris** (LibDem College) urged the council to aim high, citing the potential benefits of setting ambitious environmental standards.

"It's much easier to negotiate downwards than it is to negotiate upwards," Councillor Morris asserted, advocating for bold action to combat climate change.

However, Councillor **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley and Chair of the responding Licensing Planning and Policy Committee) cautioned against rushing into decisions without considering the economic viability and broader implications of the mandate. He stressed the importance of evidence-based decision-making and cautioned against jeopardizing housing affordability.

Councillor Lawrence concluded by urging the council to consider the motion's underlying sentiment, even if it failed to pass, highlighting the growing momentum for stringent environmental regulations.

The motion was defeated on a show of hands.

Image: Oakton Developments - new houses in Epsom

Seeing through transparency in Council Chamber

20 April 2024



In a fullsome debate during the Full Council meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Tuesday 16th April, members clashed over a motion aimed at enhancing transparency in decision-making processes. The motion, proposed by the Liberal Democrat group, called for a policy of ‘transparency by default,’ urging that all meetings and documentation be made public unless specific exemptions under the Local Government Act applied.

Councillor **Julie Morris** (LibDem College), expressing disappointment with the decision not to refer the matter to the Standards and Constitution Committee, argued that the current approach lacked proper review and resulted in too many discussions being held behind closed doors. She emphasized the need for a more nuanced approach to determine when confidentiality was truly warranted.

Councillor **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Horton) echoed concerns about transparency, citing instances where information had been withheld or meetings had been abruptly shifted to private sessions. She called for comprehensive training for both officers and councillors to ensure better understanding and adherence to transparency principles.

Councillor **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) acknowledged the challenges in navigating confidentiality requirements but defended the importance of open discussions. He highlighted the unique opportunity afforded by debating the motion in a public forum, urging members to engage in constructive dialogue.

Newly-elected Councillor **James Lawrence** (LibDem College) expressed confusion over the rationale behind certain decisions to withhold information. He stressed the importance of providing clear explanations to the public and fellow councillors, especially in cases where secrecy seemed unwarranted.

Councillor **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) raised concerns about the misuse of private sessions for political reasons, emphasizing the need for robust scrutiny and public engagement. He criticized the current administration for potentially undermining transparency and urged for greater accountability moving forward.

In response to criticisms, Councillor **Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley) defended the decision to debate the motion in full Council, emphasizing the importance of public engagement. He questioned the opposition’s reluctance to address transparency concerns in a public setting.

Councillor **Alan Williamson** (RA West Ewell), opposed the motion, asserting that existing transparency measures were sufficient. He cautioned against broadening transparency requirements, arguing that certain discussions necessitated confidentiality to foster open dialogue.

Councillor **Peter O’Donovan** (RA Ewell Court) highlighted the distinction between confidentiality and secrecy, emphasizing the need for a safe space to discuss sensitive issues. He cautioned against overreach in transparency efforts, citing the potential risks to privacy and effective decision-making.

Councillor **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington), echoing sentiments expressed by Councillors Donovan and Spickett, emphasized the importance of confidentiality in certain discussions, particularly those involving commercial interests or personal safety. He cautioned against inadvertently stifling open dialogue by overly broadening transparency requirements.

Councillor **Hannah Dalton** (RA Stoneleigh) underscored ongoing efforts to address concerns regarding confidential sessions, promising clearer explanations for why certain items were categorized as confidential. She emphasized the need for balance between transparency and privacy, acknowledging the challenges inherent in navigating sensitive issues.

Councillor **Kieran Persand**, (Conservative Horton) expressing support for the motion, highlighted frustrations over perceived barriers to transparency within the council. He stressed the need for greater accountability and public trust, arguing that enhanced transparency measures were necessary to rebuild confidence among residents.

Councillor **Alison Kelly**, (LibDem Stamford) who seconded the motion, underscored the importance of improving communication and understanding among councillors and the public. She proposed measures to enhance clarity around confidentiality, aiming to provide residents with a better understanding of decision-making processes.

However, Councillor **Liz Frost**, (RA Woodcote and Langley) Chair of the Standards and Constitution Committee, urged caution, warning against potential unintended consequences of broadening transparency measures. She emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between openness and the need for confidential discussions to facilitate effective decision-making.

Following the debate, the motion was put to a vote, with a majority ultimately deciding against its passage.

Image - Cllr Liz Frost responds to the motion. Council Chamber. EEBC YouTube

Council getting belted by Green Group?

20 April 2024



The **Epsom Green Belt Group** has submitted a “complaint” to **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**, expressing grave concerns over what they perceive as significant failures in the governance, oversight, and leadership of the **Local Plan**. The group’s submission outlines several key issues they believe have hindered the proper scrutiny and preparation of the plan, which will shape planning permissions for buildings in the future.

In their communication to the Council, the Epsom Green Belt Group emphasizes the importance of preserving green spaces and utilizing brownfield sites to deliver affordable homes within the borough. They express frustration at what they see as resistance from planning officers to cooperate with members of the **Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC)**, hindering the committee’s ability to provide direction and challenge to the Local Plan.

According to the group, the LPPC, tasked with influencing and controlling the development and use of land in the Borough, has not fulfilled its obligations effectively. They argue that the LPPC should have been actively engaged in the preparation, adoption, and review of the statutory Development Plan, including Local Development Documents. However, their analysis reveals a concerning lack of involvement and debate on critical aspects of the plan.

Of particular concern, the Group argues, is the apparent absence of discussion or challenge regarding the Spatial Strategy, Plan policies, and critical decisions related to the Local Plan. Despite the completion of a public consultation, which garnered 1,736 responses, the Group asserts that none of the LPPC meetings addressed the results or expected impact on the Regulation 19 Local Plan. This lack of engagement is compounded by the cancellation of several LPPC meetings and a significant increase in the Local Plan budget without corresponding scrutiny or accountability.

The Epsom Green Belt Group urges the council to address these issues urgently and provide clarity on the timetable for scrutiny, challenge, and direction of the Local Plan by the LPPC. They demand assurance that the committee will have the freedom, opportunity, time, and resources necessary to fulfill its mandate without undue constraints or interference from officers. Additionally, they call for a contingency plan in case of further delays to the Local Plan timetable.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council were swift to respond with answers to **six** demands made by the Green Group:

1. **The detailed timetable for the scrutiny, challenge and direction of each significant element of the Local Plan by the LPPC**

The Proposed Submission Local Plan with a recommendation will come to Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC) in November 2024. Councillors can discuss, debate and if needed change the recommendation at this meeting. If supported, the recommendation would then go to full council in December 2024 for all Councillors to discuss and debate. If supported, this would then be put to public consultation in January 2025.

2. **The date on which the analysis of the consultation results, and proposed amendments arising from it, will be presented to the LPPC for adjustment and/or approval**

A Consultation Statement will be published as part of the agenda pack for the LPPC in November 2024 where the Proposed Submission Local Plan will be considered. The exact date of this meeting is to be confirmed.

The Consultation Statement will summarise the responses received on the Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) and how they have been considered in producing the Proposed-Submission (Regulation 19) version of the Local Plan.

3. **That the LPPC will be given the freedom, opportunity, time and resources sufficient for it to fulfil its mandate, as set out in its Terms of Reference, without undue constraints or interference from officers**

Correct. In line with the Council’s constitution, officers advise Councillors in their professional capacity, and Councillors are responsible for decision making in respect of the Local Plan and its content.

The Council’s constitution can be accessed from the following link:
<https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=205&Mid=1619&Ver=4&Info=1>

4. **That review, challenge and direction of the Local Plan will be included in the agenda of every meeting of the LPPC to be held until publication of the Regulation 19 consultation**

The Council’s Constitution provides the terms of reference for the LPPC, these are set out in Appendix 3 (p16-18). Agenda items coming to Council Committees are typically brought to arrive at a decision.

The LPPC responsibilities include making decisions at key stages in the production of Local Plan documents as set out

below:

- Considering and approving Draft (Regulation 18) Local Plans
- LPPC considered and approved the Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) for consultation on 30 January 2023.
- Considering and recommending for approval to Full Council, submission versions of Development Plan documents
- LPPC will consider the pre-submission Local Plan in November 2024.

The next decision related to the Local Plan regards the Proposed Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19) at the November LPPC meeting.

5. That there is sufficient time and budget to accommodate any and all changes the LPPC may recommend

As has been reported to LPPC, the Local Plan timetable has a limited degree of flexibility to ensure that the Local Plan is submitted to the government for examination by the 30 June 2025 deadline, which is the deadline set by government for submission under the current Local Plan system. The scale of changes made will influence whether there is a delay to the programme- for example, minor typographical errors or clarification of wording will not impact the programme. However, changes that require amendments to the evidence base could lead to delays that result in the transitional arrangements deadline being missed.

6. That a contingency plan is in place should the currently proposed Local Plan timetable slip for any reason, including matters arising from the review and challenge set out above.'

There are elements of contingency in the plan, but if the Local Plan timetable slips and as a result it will not be possible to submit the Local Plan to the government by the 30 June 2025, we will prepare a Local Plan under the reforms set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act. The government are due to publish further legislation in relation to plan making reforms that will need to be considered.

Something special going on at Epsom baths

20 April 2024



Rainbow Leisure Centre in Epsom has recently started running tailored swimming lessons for children with special needs and disabilities.

The sessions - which have proved to be a big hit - take place in small groups in the teaching pool where it is quieter and less stressful for the children. Mums and dads join their young person in the water along with the class teacher, picking up tips on how to help their child feel more confident.

Participants are aged from 4 - 8 years old and have a range of neurological and physical difficulties such as autism, dyspraxia and impaired vision. Children are also welcome to take part in the mainstream classes during the rest of the week if they feel confident enough to do so.

Young swimmer Heidi, seen here with mum Stacey and teacher Ana, loves her classes at Rainbow. Stacey says, "She loves the water and gets to have fun while learning to be safe."

Mary Mannion, Swimming School Manager at the centre, comments, "The classes are very popular. We're delighted to be able to offer this service to young people and their families. Keeping fit and safe in the water is so important for children of all ages and abilities."

Rainbow is run by GLL under the 'Better' brand. As a charitable social enterprise, the organisation is committed to supporting the wellbeing of local communities.

SEND swimming takes place on Thursdays at 6.15pm. For more details, look at the app at Better_uk or contact customer services at customer.service@gll.org or call 0330 123 1500.

Epsom Karate Kids go global

20 April 2024



The Mo-ichido England Karate Association, nestled in the heart of Horton Country Park, made waves on the international stage as they ventured to Albena on the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria. Their mission: to compete in the prestigious 14th WSF World Shotokan Championships, facing off against formidable opponents from across the globe, including national squads hailing from as far as the Ivory Coast.

Led by Colin Sensei and Squad Captain Olivia Lusted, the club sent a team of 8 young competitors, proudly representing England on the global karate platform. Their performance exceeded expectations, returning home with an impressive haul of 1 gold, 3 silver, and 2 bronze medals. This achievement catapulted England to the 12th position out of 27 on the medal table, showcasing their resilience against adversaries with greater resources and support.

From the Mo-ichido association's humble beginnings in an old, rundown cow shed in Horton Country Park, the club has evolved into a beacon of inspiration within the local community. Offering a diverse range of activities including physiotherapy, yoga, pilates, meditation, Ki-aikido, the club has transformed the shed into a sanctuary where individuals of all ages can partake in the shared passion of karate.

With a track record of producing European and World champions, the Mo-Ichido club continues to make strides in the martial arts realm, representing excellence on both national and international fronts. However, their ambitious pursuits come with financial challenges, prompting the club to seek sponsorship opportunities to sustain their journey towards global domination.

For more information on the remarkable achievements and ongoing endeavors of the Mo-Ichido England Karate club, visit their website at moichido.co.uk.

Boxing champions young people in Epsom & Ewell

20 April 2024



A new local boxing programme, led by **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council** and delivered by **Epsom Boxing Academy**, saw its first cohort graduate in March. 14 students, referred by local schools, were enrolled on the course. Graduating students were awarded an England Boxing Bronze Award which was complimented with an AQA Empire Fighting Chance Award in nutrition and health.

The structured boxing programme aimed to help young people build confidence, self-discipline, and resilience as well as improving self-esteem and supporting positive mental health.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said; "I was honoured to attend the graduation of the Epsom & Ewell Community Boxing Scheme.

"Boxing is a fantastic way to keep fit, but it has also been shown to aid in the development of life skills including self-discipline, mental strength and control, and personal responsibility; as well as helping manage feelings of aggression. Boxing also provides invaluable opportunities for students to connect with positive mentors.

"We know that community schemes like this one are a fantastic way to tackle inclusion in sport whilst promoting positive outcomes for young people in our borough. I look forward to Epsom & Ewell Borough Council spearheading more initiatives like this one in the future."

Joe Harding, Boxing Coach and founder of Epsom Boxing Academy, added; "The scheme was a great chance to create and deliver a programme specifically for our community in Epsom & Ewell.

We saw an unbelievable change in the students over the weeks as they developed and demonstrated boxing techniques, learnt about the human body, and about food labels and nutrition.

Life coaching and mentoring helped students' progress in terms of their self-confidence, personal discipline, and punctuality. We were able to provide a safe space and an environment for the young people to express themselves. The results were outstanding. We were extremely proud to be part of such a great project."

The Community Boxing Scheme is part of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's wider strategy to improve the wellbeing of residents through activity; and reduce barriers to sports and leisure participation for those who may not otherwise have access to facilities. It follows on from a successful swimming programme, delivered in partnership with leisure operator and social enterprise GLL and made possible by an award from Sport England funded by the National Lottery.

Image courtesy EEBC

Not in Epsom and Ewell but other Surrey elections test the water...

20 April 2024



The fate of 116 council seats in Surrey are up for grabs as voters head to the polls on Thursday, May 2. There are 11 boroughs and districts in the county, with widespread voting taking place in six - Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead, Runnymede, Tandridge and Woking. There is also a bye-election for a single seat on Waverley Borough Council.

There are no local council elections this year in Epsom & Ewell, Guildford, Spelthorne, and Surrey Heath Borough Councils.

With a general election less than a year away, this vote will be viewed in some quarters as a significant bellwether for the race for Downing Street. Counting will begin on Friday May 3.

The first results area expected to come out of Woking Borough Council at 4pm, followed by Runnymede and Tandridge at 5pm. Mole Valley and Reigate and Banstead councils are predicted to declare by 6pm with Elmbridge tellers expected to be wrapped up by 6.30pm.

Do I need photo id? Yes -you need to bring valid photo identification in order to vote this year. Valid IDs include expired official documents such as passports that still have a strong resemblance. Voters without an accepted ID can apply for the free Voter Authority Certificate - a fast track card that will allow people to vote.

Elmbridge Borough Council

Number of seats up for election: 16

Election result expected: 6.30pm Friday, May 3.

Largest party: Liberal Democrats

There are 48 seats in total on Elmbridge Borough Council with 16, one third of the total, up for grabs on May 2. The Liberal Democrats have 20 councillors, Residents' Associations, 16, and the Conservatives, 12. The Liberal Democrats became the largest party in the borough, overtaking their coalition partners - Residents' Association - last year in a borough that has been historically Conservative.

The Esher and Walton parliamentary constituency largely covers Elmbridge and is represented by Dominic Raab, who resigned from the cabinet on April 21. He later announced he would quit as MP at the next general election.

Mole Valley District Council

Number of seats up for election: 14

Election result expected: 6pm Friday, May 3.

Largest party: Liberal Democrats

A boundary review last year led to all out-elections across the borough, delivering a sweeping victory for the Liberal Democrats. This year, Mole Valley District Council reverts to electing its members by thirds across its 13 wards. In Capel, Leigh, Newdigate and Charlwood voters will be sending two representatives, bringing the total elected this year to 14 as they replace the seat formerly held by Lesley Bushnell, In total there are 39 councillors in the district.

The council is currently controlled by the Liberal Democrats who have 29 elected members. The opposition is formed from six informal independents and three Conservatives. At a national level the Conservative Mole Valley MP since 1997, Sir Paul Beresford, said he will not stand in the next general election.

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

Number of seats up for election: 16

Election result expected: 6pm Friday, May 3.

Largest party: Conservative

The Conservatives, with 22 councillors, are the single largest party in Reigate and Banstead but do not have overall control of the borough council. In the 2023 election, the Tories lost seats to the Green Party, which now has 11 councillors and Labour, one. The rest of the authority is made up of five Residents' Association, three Lib Dems, two independents.

Voting takes place across in each of the borough's 15 wards with one person elected in each. The exception is in Tattenham Corner and Preston where, to fill a vacancy, two members will be elected.

Conservative MP for Reigate Crispin Blunt announced in 2022 that he would not run for re-election, having first won the seat in 1997.

In January Mr Blunt was re-bailed until April after his arrest on suspicion of rape and possession of controlled substances.

Runnymede Borough Council

Number of seats up for election: 15

Election result expected: 5pm Friday, May 3.

Largest party: Conservative

Runnymede Borough Council went to no overall control in 2023 but has had a Conservative leader ever since it's formation in 1974. Going into this May's election there are 18 Conservative councillors, six Runnymede Independent Residents Group, five independents, four Labour, four Liberal Democrats, two Green Party, and one Reform UK - after former Tory and current deputy mayor Robert Bromley crossed the floor.

Runnymede is one of the three Surrey councils, the others being Spelthorne and Woking, to rank in the top five nationally for local authorities with the largest average debt per resident.

The MP for the area - which also includes Weybridge in neighbouring Elmbridge, is Ben Spencer. He was elected in 2019 with 54.9 per cent of the vote, ahead of Labour candidate Robert King, 20.6 per cent.

Waverley Borough Council

Number of seats up for election: 1

Election result expected: Early Friday, May 3.

Largest party: Liberal Democrats

Waverley Borough Council has 50 councillors across 24 wards that are voted for in an "all out" elections where every seat is decided. This year however is the much smaller matter of the race for the vacant Witley and Milford Borough seat in a May 2 by-election. The last all out vote was in 2023 when the council remained in no overall control.

The Liberal Democrats are the largest party with 22 councillors and are in coalition with the Farnham Residents' 13 members, Labour's two officials and the single representative of the Green Party. There are 10 councillors on the Conservative opposition and a further two independent members.

The MP representing the greatest number of people who call Waverley Borough Council home is the chancellor Jeremy Hunt. The 57-year-old MP was first elected to the Southwest Surrey constituency in May 2005.

Woking Borough Council

Number of seats up for election: 11

Election result expected: 4pm, Friday, May 3.

Largest party: Liberal Democrats

Woking Borough Council votes in thirds -with one councillor elected in each of its 10 wards. A by-election to fill the vacancy in Hoe Valley to bring the total number of seats decided up to 11. Voters in Woking began to turn their backs on the Conservatives after its financial problems became clear. The borough had a Tory leader from 2007 up until 2022 when the Liberal Democrats took control. Going into the May 2024 local elections the Lib Dems hold 19 of the 30 potential seats on the council with the four Conservatives making up the official opposition group.

The rest of the council is made up of four independent members, two from Labour and one vacant seat.

MP Jonathan Lord, who assumed office in 2010, was given a vote of confidence by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to hold his seat in the next General Election.

Tandridge District Council

Number of seats up for election: 43

When is the election result expected: 5pm Friday, May 3.

Largest party: Residents' Alliance

Every seat on Tandridge District Council will be decided when voters go to the polls on May 2. This year there will be 43 councillors returned to 18 wards, up from the current number of 42 - after the Local Government Boundary Commission for England redrew the electoral map. Previously the council elected its members by thirds.

Currently Tandridge District Council is led by the Residents' Alliance, which holds 18 seats. The Liberal Democrats, 11, Conservative nine and Independent Group, four, comprise the rest of the council.

The nearest matching parliamentary constituency is East Surrey, currently held by the energy secretary Claire Coutinho after she was elected in 2019.

Epsom and Ewell candidates dominate Police Commissioner election

20 April 2024



Nominations have closed in the race to become the next Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) with four candidates across the parties lined up. Two of the four candidates are Epsom and Ewell councillors.

The Epsom and Ewell Times has invited all candidates to submit statements to our publication and we hope to publish them in the days ahead.

The PCC role oversees the work of Surrey Police and its Chief Constable and holds them and their decisions to account. They set the strategic direction and aims for the force through the Police and Crime Plan.

In the running on May 2 are Lisa Townsend (the current PCC and Conservative), Paul Kennedy (Liberal Democrat), Kate Chinn (Labour) and Alex Coley (Independent).

Salaries of the PCC are decided on a national basis and vary depending on the size of the force; the commissioner for Surrey will receive a salary of £73,000 per annum.

PCCs are also responsible for all funding relating to policing, including the police precept, and to work with the Chief Constable to set the force budget in line with priorities and deliver value for money for residents.

Providing a link between the police and Surrey residents, the PCC listens to the public's concerns and works with the Chief Constable to create improvements.

Lisa Townsend, Conservative

Looking to get a second term, one of Lisa's major flagships is campaigning to end violence against women and girls. She has been working on various community projects including Safer Streets tackling anti-social behaviour and support services for victims.

In a post on X, formerly Twitter, Lisa said her immediate priorities are maintaining and growing the police force, as well as working with the Chief Constable on 'back to basics' policing. She said this includes "ensuring Surrey Police do what only they can: investigating and solving crime, not sitting in hospitals."

Alex Coley, Independent

Previously a Digital Lead for the Met Police, Alex said he wants "more bobbies on the beat" in Surrey. Headline policies include petitioning to parliament to change the way police funding is allocated in the country; so that the government contributes more for policing in Surrey than the taxpayer

Since 2018 Alex has been an Epsom and Ewell councillor as well as chairing the Crime and Disorder panel for the borough. The only independent candidate, Alex is campaigning to "take party politics out of policing" and put "pride and professionalism back into Surrey Police".

Paul Kennedy, Liberal Democrat

Hoping to be third-time lucky is Paul- a former barrister, accountant, actuary and Mole Valley councillor. Some of his campaign policies include "bringing back community policing" and combatting offending behaviour through restorative justice, education and support for mental health and addictions.

In a press statement, Paul said: "Like many people I disagree with the idea of PCCs, but we're stuck with them for now. So, let's do the job properly." If elected, Paul said he will work with the Chief Constable to fix the issues highlighted in the December 2023 inspection report.

Kate Chinn, Labour

Councillor for Epsom and Ewell, Kate's policies include refocusing on neighbourhood-based policing and using empty

shops in the town centre for a police presence. Preventative measures is another concern as Kate aims to increase support services for young people.

Kate has said that she wants to review current training to ensure police have a good understanding of domestic violence, misogyny and sexual assault.

The deadline to register to vote is April 16, which can be done online. Elections take place on May 2, with the result announced the following day.

To vote for your preferred candidate, a valid ID must be brought to the polling station. This can include passport, driving licence, disabled or older person's Bus Pass funded by the UK Government, and a biometric immigration document. Residents without an accepted form of photo ID can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate (VAC).

Avoid ticket scams this summer

20 April 2024



Residents are being warned to be aware of online ticket scams that are catching out eager concert-goers ahead of the summer.

Surrey Trading Standards is pleased to announce the launch of a campaign aimed at curbing event ticket fraud across both counties. With a number of residents falling victim to deceptive practices when purchasing event tickets online, this initiative seeks to protect residents from financial loss and disappointment.

Event **ticket fraud** involves unscrupulous individuals exploiting the high demand for tickets to concerts, sporting events, and other popular attractions. Fraudulent practices include the sale of counterfeit tickets, non-existent tickets, and tickets with inflated prices. Such schemes not only result in financial losses for consumers but also tarnish the reputation of legitimate event organisers and venues.

Surrey Trading Standards has already witnessed online scammers attempting to exploit people wanting to see concerts by Taylor Swift, and the Foo Fighters. Future scams may include Glastonbury and sporting events such as Wimbledon and this summer's Paris Olympics.

Steve Ruddy, Head of Trading Standards at Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards said: *"Music and sports fans are at risk of huge rises in online ticket fraud. Criminal activity selling fake tickets is becoming more and more prevalent online and we urge people to avoid disappointment by being cautious when purchasing tickets for all sporting and music events."*

"Ticket fraud not only harms consumers financially but also undermines trust in the marketplace. Our campaign aims to empower our residents with the knowledge and resources they need to make informed ticket purchases. By raising awareness, we can create a safer environment for consumers to enjoy live events across Buckinghamshire, Surrey and beyond."

Tips for purchasing event tickets online

- Only buy direct from legitimate ticket sites
- Always use a debit or credit card when you buy tickets online (not bank transfer). This helps to protect your money should something go wrong
- Be extra cautious when purchasing tickets advertised by individuals on social media Fraudsters use social media to advertise tickets that don't exist. If you're looking for a ticket, always search for it yourself from a trusted source
- Low prices and seemingly great deals are often used to disguise scams. However, if demand for tickets is high or an event is sold out, fraudsters can charge more to trick desperate buyers
- Check the details of the site you are buying from and before entering payment ensure the web address starts with https and that there's a padlock icon in the browser bar
- Check the vendor is a member of the **Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers (STAR)**

Residents are encouraged to report their concerns about event ticket fraud to the **Citizens Advice consumer service** on 0808 223 1133. The helpline takes all enquiries on behalf of Trading Standards across England and Wales and will pass the report to the relevant Trading Standards team.

Alternatively, if you have been a victim and lost money, please report to Action Fraud at **actionfraud.police.uk** or by calling 0300 123 2040.

1st generation UCA graduates celebrated

20 April 2024



Two graduates from the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) in Epsom, Surrey have been named in Universities UK's 100 Faces campaign, celebrating the stories and achievements of first-generation students.

McKenna Marsden and **Troy Hunter** feature in the campaign's arts and sports talents category alongside Happy Valley star, Amit Shah, the crime writer Sir Ian James Rankin OBE, and BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2022, Beth Mead. All 100 graduates listed by Universities UK were the first in their families to attend university.

"Going to university gave me a lot more independence and taught me new skills, developing my abilities in a subject which was once just a passion," said McKenna, who is a BA (Hons) Fashion graduate. He was chosen by British Vogue as one of its top 50 emerging designers, showcased his graduate collection at London Fashion Week, and interned at Christopher Kane.

He said: "University gave me stability while allowing me to break into the fashion industry, leading to many big achievements. I don't think I would have had the success I did without studying at university."

Originally from Newcastle, McKenna's working-class background was the main inspiration for his final graduate fashion collection and continues to influence his designs.

"Anything is possible if you believe it and work hard for it no matter how many setbacks you may have, if you believe you can achieve your goals you can," McKenna added.

Troy, who graduated from UCA in 2013 with a degree in BA (Hons) Film Production, has gone on to write episodes for the hit Netflix show Sex Education and an episode of Eastenders. He was also nominated for Outstanding Breakthrough Creative (Television) at the NAACP Awards.

Troy said: "Studying film production at UCA made a huge difference in my life, it gave me the confidence and determination to continue pursuing a career in the TV and Film industry when people around me were telling me otherwise."

His success continues in the form of a short film called Mya and his debut play Black Pride, as well as a television adaptation of the same name, with Maia Pictures.

New research commissioned by Universities UK revealed the transformative impact of going to university, with almost three-quarters of first-in-the-family students agreeing their degree gave them the confidence to apply for jobs without feeling like an imposter.

Vivienne Stern MBE, Chief Executive of Universities UK, said: "There are those who say that too many people go to university. I disagree. These stories tell you why. In this country, you are still twice as likely to go to university if you are from the wealthiest background, compared to the least wealthy. That's not right.