Ashtead heroes recognised by local Rotary

Ashtead 'local heroes' were recognised for their outstanding service to the community at last night's 2024 Ashtead Rotary Community Awards.

Three awards were made, to people nominated by their peers, for outstanding services to the local community.

The **Individual Community Service award** was given to **Richard Garrard** who, in 2017 set up the Patient Participation Group with Ashlea Medical Practice. The Group was such a success that it won a national award in 2020. Richard is also Chair of Ashtead Good Neighbours, growing the Group to over 100 drivers who provide transport for medical appointments. He also led the Ashtead British Legion Poppy Appeal which raised £12,000 last year.

The **Group Service Award** went to the Trustees of **Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall** (APMH) whose centenary is being celebrated this year. The trustees and volunteers are committed to improving and maintaining the Hall which is an outstanding community facility for the Ashtead community.

The **Service above Self Community Award** was awarded posthumously to **John Woollatt**. John sadly passed away in May 2024. He was the Chair of the Trustees of Dyscover, a local charity for people suffering with aphasia, a complex language disability. John brought a business approach to Dyscover making it a progressive well-known local charity. He was also a very 'hands on' Chairman where no task was too big or too small.

Ashtead Rotary Club President Tony Webb said,

"The Charitable support that Ashtead Rotary Club receives from the local community through Ashtead Village Day, is immense. In large part this is down to individuals and organisations, such as those who we celebrate this evening, for the support they give to our local community.

"This evening, local community nominations have enabled us to go some small way to say a big 'thank you' to those who have undertaken such outstanding work. I would therefore like to pay tribute to them on behalf of Ashtead Rotary Club, and to all of those other volunteers in Ashtead who put in time and effort to help others in our local community".

Art, culture, and science collide in Surrey

This November, the **University of Surrey** will open its doors to the public as it hosts two prominent research festivals: the **Being Human Festival** and the ESRC Festival of Social Science. As part of the Being Human Festival, the UK's only national festival dedicated to the humanities, Surrey will explore key themes related to identity, culture, and the human condition. This year's festival features a number of intriguing events, including:

- Landmarking through Music: Early Recordings Revealed: Listen to early recordings as heard by your great-grandparents! Connect with early 20th century music through wax cylinders and develop an understanding of their role within society at the time.
- Poetry Play! Performances and Workshops: Think you might be a poet? Do you love poetry? Or maybe you just don't get it. Are you puzzled or excited by the weird ways words work in poems? If you appreciate the power of language, we made this for you.
- Landmarking Surrey's Musical Heritage: Dame Ethel Smyth: Dame Ethel Smyth was a pioneering composer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a prolific author of biographical writing about herself and others, a leading suffragette, and for the majority of her life a resident of the county of Surrey.

Running concurrently is the ESRC Festival of Social Science, which focuses on the real-world impact of social science research. This year's festival at Surrey tackles a wide range of urgent societal issues, including:

• Green Means Go? Tackling Surrey's climate emergency through deliberative democracy: Discover the latest sustainability-focused research and innovation initiatives being led by the University of Surrey.

- Bridging Digital Divides: Building dialogue on online safety between youth and parents: Discover what the evidence really says about young people's digital lives and the challenges of online safety, parenting and digital citizenship.
- The Role of AI in Modern Policing: Key topics will include risk assessment, facial recognition, robotics, data mining, and cybercrime detection, offering a deep dive into the current applications of AI in policing.
- Eco-Logic: How Can We Make Green Living Easy? Discover surprisingly simple strategies that transform your daily routine into a sustainable one, without sacrificing comfort or convenience.

Professor Annika Bautz, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Business and Social Sciences said:

"Both festivals are designed to be interactive, accessible, and thought-provoking. They offer attendees the chance to engage directly with cutting-edge research in ways that are relevant and relatable to all aspects of life. From workshops that let you create your own art or stories to expert panels exploring societal challenges, the festivals are an invitation to explore, question, and rethink the world around us.

"Whether you're passionate about the arts and humanities, curious about the social sciences, or simply looking to engage in meaningful conversations, these events offer something for everyone. The University of Surrey is proud to be a hub for these conversations, and we invite the public to participate in these exciting and enriching festivals."

Key dates:

- ESRC Festival of Social Science: 19 October 9 November 2024
- Being Human Festival: 7-16 November 2024

For more information, a full list of topics and events, and to book your free tickets for any of the events, please visit: https://buytickets.at/universityofsurrey3

Epsom and Ewell's over 60s win multi-sports

Wednesday 2 October saw the 16th running of the Better Club Games tournament at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park's Copper Box Arena.

The annual event put on by charitable social enterprise GLL for the over-60s, saw over 400 older people from 20 local teams descend on the 7,500 seat venue - the 4th largest event space in London.

The 'Battle of the Boroughs' pits contestants from London and the south east in a diverse range of activities – all in friendly competition.

Darts, dominoes, short tennis, short-mat bowls, swimming, badminton, table tennis, cycling, walking netball and walking football all featured – with 200 people taking part in the walking sports held the week before in the Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre and 100 in timed swims in local clubs throughout September.

Across all sports and locations, 700 older people took part.

In a tightly fought contest, Team Epsom & Ewell took the ultimate overall title – ahead of Waltham Forest in 2nd and Greenwich in 3rd. Epsom & Ewell were also winners in 2023 in the first gathering of the Better Club Games since Covid.

GLL first decided to put on the Better Club Games back in 2006 when it realised there was no major multi-sports activity in the UK which brought older adults together annually in the spirit of fun competition.

Competitors are drawn from Active Ageing Clubs facilitated by GLL in leisure centres; the activities chime with GLL's mission to improve health and wellbeing as a key community service through physical activity and sport.

Active ageing has since become a major public health priority with noted benefits to physical health, mental health and helping reduce social isolation in the UK's older population. In addition, keeping active reduces the burden on the NHS.

The 2024 Better Club Games Ambassador was actor and radio presenter Christopher Biggins, 76. He added some trademark fun

to the proceedings, taking part in a candid Q&A and trying his hand at darts and table tennis.

'Better' is the brand name of the UK's leading leisure charitable social enterprise GLL. The company's ethos is to reinvest in local community health and wellbeing and the Better Club Games is a key part of this commitment.

GLL Deputy CEO Phil Donnay said: "It was inspiring to see over 400 participants at the Copper Box Arena turn out to take part in this year's running of the Better Club Games, compete and have fun.

"The importance of ageing well and living well is huge - both for individuals and wider society.

"As a charitable social enterprise, GLL are proud to show what older people are capable of through our Better Club Games.

"Congratulations to all those who took part and to our worthy winners - Epsom & Ewell."

Speaking from winning team Epsom & Ewell, semi-retired accountant Tony Gayle, 68, from Stoneleigh, took part in the table tennis, the Games enabling him to rediscover his interest in the sport. "The competitive element is fun but the most important thing is to enjoy the day. It's sociable – you see people you met at the Games last year."

Epsom & Ewell Team mate Phil Humphrey, 64, is a retired construction consultant who was involved with building the Stratford Olympic Park. This was his fourth Club Games and though he previously competed in table tennis, he has now switched to short tennis. "I'd never tried it before but they needed someone for the team a couple of years ago," he explains. "Myself and my partner volunteered and we got to like it – so much so that we now play once or twice a week, all year round!"

Better Club Games is organised and funded exclusively by charitable social enterprise GLL – which runs the Olympic legacy competition venues Copper Box Arena and Lee Valley Hockey & Tennis Centre which hosted the sports.

In addition to transport and refreshments, participants enjoy raising awareness for their club, a celebrity ambassador on the day, a team trophy for each individual sport winner and a medal for every competitor.

Teams from Enfield, Mole Valley and Newham competed for the first time.

The event was supported by GLL supplier partners Technogym, Your PT and Brakes.

GLL Communications

Picture caption: 2024 Better Club Games Winners - Epsom & Ewell with GLL Deputy CEO Phil Donnay (4th from right, front row) and Club Games Ambassador Chris Biggins (second row, 4th from left) /Credit: GLL

More or less Surrey Police challenge to Commissioner

Staffing cuts at Surrey Police could be in the pipeline as the force attempts to fill a potential £23.4 million financial hole.

Surrey Police has to make the savings in the next four years and both government-agreed pay increases for police officers and staff and inflation have added to the difficult financial position.

Recognising the financial pressures on forces, the government has awarded a special grant of £175m in 2024/25 to fund the 4.75% officer pay award. Out of money set aside to cover the pay increases, Surrey has been awarded just £2.1m to cover the costs.

As Surrey gets a smaller slice of government funding, calculated by a formula, there is less money to go around. The police allocation formula (PAF) is worked out through various data sources, including population density and the relative need for policing in areas. The nature of the formula grant system means the annual money allocated to Surrey covers just 45% of the total budget whereas other areas such as Northumbria get 80%.

In a Police and Crime Panel meeting on September 26, Surrey Police's Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Kelvin Menon, said "it is too early to say" exactly the savings that will need to be made and where.

The CFO said it is likely the government's funding will only cover pay increases for Surrey's police officers so the force will have to bridge the £2.4m gap to cover the costs of police staff itself. Police staff may be cut as the force has to keep a base number of 2,253 police officers in place.

Speaking after the meeting, Cllr Richard Wilson (Bagshot and North Windlesham/ Liberal Democrat) said: Due to the government's penalty regime in place to ensure officer numbers are maintained, any reduction can only come from police staff.

This means the people helping front-line officers in investigations and forensics."

The CFO told the panel that work was also being done into making savings by changing shift patterns, reducing overtime and forensics, looking at the benefits of upgrading administrative and data systems, potentially reducing vehicle numbers and a detailed budget review by area.

Modelling different scenarios, the CFO said Surrey Police might have to make up to £27.6m gap as a worst-case scenario, or £21.5m on an optimistic basis. Mr Menon added: "The Chief and the PCC are both committed to try and minimise any impact on residents."

If the savings cannot be reduced by the time the budget is set in February 2025, the CFO said Surrey Police will have to use some of its reserves.

Uncertain future for officer numbers

In a national drive to increase police officers, the previous government set Surrey Police an 'uplift' target of 2,253 officers and awarded £48k for every officer recruited above the baseline. Although the force recruited an additional 22 officers it now remains uncertain whether the £48k bonus will be received every year, accounting for the extra officers.

Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner, Lisa Townsend, said: "If [the bonus] ceases to be the case then officer numbers will have to be reduced." She added the reduction would happen through "natural wastage", meaning officers leaving the force for a new job or change in career.

Surrey currently loses an average of 17 officers a month, creating overall a 10% vacancy in the force.

A gloomy atmosphere took over the meeting as the PCC repeated there was a lot of "uncertainty" in the new government's policy going forward so the force is unable to forecast officer numbers beyond 24/25. She said that constables have been told not to expect any more funding.

Cllr Wilson criticised Mrs Townsend during the meeting, stating the PCC ballot paper for her re-election had the description. More police, safer streets'. He asked: "Shouldn't voters take that as a commitment that the number of officers is going to increase?"

Mrs Townsend said the number of officers has increased and is still increasing, and argued it was for the Chief Constable to decide where officers and staff are best deployed. She added: Both the Chief Constable and I have both made commitments to ensure that we have more officers out and about on the streets."

American baseball started in Surrey

The latest **BBC Secret Surrey podcast** features Julian Pooley, Public Services and Engagement Manager, who tells the story of a previously unknown William Bray diary. Covering 1754-1755, the diary was found in a garden shed in 2007. It is a fascinating document for many reasons but it is particularly interesting as it is the earliest known manuscript reference to baseball, confirming baseball was played in Surrey more than 20 years before American independence.

Listen here »

Read more from Surrey History Centre HERE.

Text and image courtesy Surrey History Centre

Hampton's Jolly Boatman has more to be jolly about

Hampton Court and its historic views will be forever changed after the secretary of state approved controversial Jolly Boatman plans to build 97 homes together with an 84 bed hotel and restaurant on the banks of the River Thames.

The landmark ruling on the long-running saga was confirmed this week when Lisa Nandy, Secretary of State for the Department

for Culture, Media and Sport published her formal decision on Friday, September 27.

The decision comes as welcome for developers who have been battling to regenerate the area around Hampton Court station but is a slap in the face to the campaigners who have fought for decades to stop it.

It comes at the end of a nine week consultation that ran between April and June this year in call for new evidence.

The majority of responses focused on the impact the huge development would have on Hampton Court Palace and surrounding area given its cultural status.

However, much of the evidence presented had already been considered during an earlier planning appeal when inspectors overturned Elmbridge Borough Council decision 2022 and green lit the development, Mrs Nandy said.

Instead the focus on the government's decision related to changes in planning law and the listed statuses of Cigarette Island Park and the Coal Office – as well as arguments over maximum heights of buildings on railway land.

Issuing her decision, the Secretary of State for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport said she gave "consent to build the residential-led mixed use scheme on land around Hampton Court Station, specifically the former Jolly Boatman and land adjoining Hampton Court Station, Hampton Court Way, the Western part of Cigarette Island, east of Jolly Boatman and Hampton Court Station site."

She said that since the apeal, Elmbridge Borough Council's supply of deliverable housing had declined, and failure to proceed with the site would be make the problem worse

The government also considered the council's local heritage listing of the land opposite the palace was not a sufficient reason to not approve the development and plans.

The former Jolly Boatman site is next to the River Thames and overlooks the palace.

Elmbridge Borough Council rejected the original application which received more than 1,800 objections due to "excessive height and bulk" and "harm to numerous heritage assets".

However, its decision was challenged and overturned after the planning inspector ruled it fit with surroundings while the hotel, retail units and riverside restaurant would improve the experience for those using the station to visit the palace.

The inspector added that the plans would also support the rest of the town.

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Will Epsom get an even higher housing target if it misses the early boat?

The UK Government is preparing to release a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that could impose mandatory targets for housebuilding, including on Green Belt land, sparking concern among local councils. The revised framework, expected in December 2024, may dramatically increase housing targets for local planning authorities.

A recent consultation on the proposed changes, led by **Angela Rayner** MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, closed on 24 September 2024. One of the most significant changes being considered is a new "Standard Method" for calculating housing targets. For boroughs like **Epsom & Ewell**, this could have major implications.

Currently, Epsom & Ewell builds around 189 new homes per year. Under the borough's developing Local Plan, this would increase to about 300 homes annually, which would result in the loss of around 57 hectares of Green Belt land. However, the new NPPF could demand the construction of 817 homes per year. Any local authority whose housing target falls more than 200 homes per year below this number would be forced to revise its plans. Epsom & Ewell's current proposal falls short of this target.

Transitional arrangements proposed in the draft NPPF state that the new rules will not apply to Local Plans submitted before one month after the framework's publication, likely 20 January 2025. Therefore, Epsom & Ewell has a narrow window to submit its Local Plan and avoid being subject to the new higher housing targets.

However, the borough faces time constraints. The Local Plan consultation process takes about two months, and the council will need additional time to compile and respond to feedback. With meetings scheduled for late November and early December, there is concern that the borough may miss the deadline to avoid the higher targets, which would result in the loss of an estimated 21 hectares of Green Belt per year.

Other councils are moving quickly to avoid being caught by these new regulations. St Albans, for example, has begun a public consultation on its Local Plan even before receiving full council approval, to ensure it stays ahead of the anticipated NPPF changes.

If many Councils beat the deadline and enjoy lower targets, will their Government preferred share then be redistributed to those Councils tardy in submitting their plans?

Response from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

Cllr **Peter O'Donovan**, (RA Ewell Court) Chair of the Licensing, Planning and Policy Committee (LPPC), issued the following statement:

"The Council is preparing its Local Plan in accordance with the timetable set out within its approved Local Development Scheme,

this is to ensure that the Regulation 19 Local Plan document is supported by the necessary evidence when it is considered by the Licensing and Planning Committee (LPPC) in November.

The LPPC will debate the Local Plan and make a recommendation to full Council, who will make the final decision on how it wishes to proceed with the Local Plan. This process is required by our constitution.

The Council has submitted a response to the recent 'proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system,' which was recently approved by the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (24 September 2024). We understand that a significant number of responses have been submitted to this consultation and that there may be delays in the revised NPPF being published by the government.

It will only be once the revised NPPF is published that we will know what the details are and what the implications are for the borough and our emerging Local Plan. This includes the transitional arrangements that will apply for Local Plans.

Subject to approval by Council, we intend to commence consultation on our Proposed Submission (Regulation 19) Local Plan in mid-January 2025."

Katherine Alexander of **Epsom Green Belt** raised serious concerns about the future of the borough, highlighting the delays in renewing the Local Plan, which dates back to 2007. In a statement, she said:

"Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has one of the 10 oldest, and most out-of-date local plans in the country. If Angela Rayner's proposals are rolled out, the borough's housing targets will more than quadruple to 817 dwellings per annum. This would fundamentally change Epsom, leading to increased traffic, strained infrastructure, and the loss of over 20 hectares of Green Belt land each year, equivalent to more than 50 football pitches.

Councillors have recognised that the proposed housing target is much too high, writing to Angela Rayner on 13 September 2024 stating 'these new numbers are immense and could destroy our historic district and market town.'

There is a solution, or at least a stay of execution, if the council accelerates the public consultation and submits the Local Plan to the planning inspector by early January 2025. Otherwise, none of the Green Belt would be safe, and the cost of the Local Plan could rise significantly as the council works to meet these targets."

Alexander also pointed to other councils, like Winchester and St Albans, that have expedited their processes in order to avoid being caught by the incoming planning reforms.

Related reports:

Epsom Local Plan controversy heats up

Challenges to Epsom and Ewell Council's Handling of Local Plan

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Rare rugby draw for Epsom side

Battersea Ironsides 19 Sutton & Epsom 19. Saturday 28th September

A year ago the 2023-4 Ironsides vintage were on top of the table having opened their account with 80 points against Gravesend and followed that up with bonus point wins over Sidcup and the Cornish. This current Battersea brew have been battle hardened and forged into steel by a trio of nail-biting finishes. Unbeaten at Garratt Green with a one-point and a three-point victory over Thurrock and Beckenham but bettered by three on the road at Reeds Weybridge. For the high scoring visitors it was a case of wanting to return to winning ways. At the final whistle, after a gripping match, the sides could not be separated as the scoreboard read 19-19.

Players and spectators alike palavered peacefully onwards into the unclouded jollity of the afternoon. Sutton with the slope and the wind in their favour were unleashed by Freddy Bunting's perfectly flighted kick off. The first foray to the Battersea 22 was led by Ewan McTaggart who is fast becoming a most prominent feature in the S&E pack. The lock forward might be lacking in steatopygia, that comforting feature for Number 8s of yesteryear, but he makes up for that deficiency with his athleticism around the park. In reply a penalty and subsequent lineout provided the hosts with their first attacking platform. Outside centre Charles Jacobs' break was supported by hooker Oliver Lewis before Jacobs carried again. Battersea spun it wide and looked favourites to score in the corner but a wonderful covering tackle by captain Bunting led to a hopeful offload inside which was poached by Gareth O'Brien who was felled by a high tackle. It would not be the only occasion that the Black & White line under severe pressure would be relieved by the impatient hosts conceding a costly penalty.

On the quarter hour Battersea Ironsides were again guilty of failing to convert pressure into points. Awarded a brace of penalties in quick succession from a scrum and then a lineout they were in prime position five metres from the Sutton line. The Rugby Lane forwards refused to yield and the ball was sent to the flank. With defenders dwindling in numbers the hosts were stopped agonisingly close and the ball-carrier executed the most unsubtle of double movements to reach over the line. The observant Mr Howe again awarded Sutton the sweet succour of a penalty. From a certain try conceded, a moment later, Freddy Bunting was pouring a sack load of salt into the gaping wound by calmly notching his first penalty of the afternoon to give Sutton a 3-0 lead. Buoyed by this success Gareth O'Brien made a stunning strike to the Home XV's 22 . The ball was recycled and sent wide where Ironsides' 10 Charles Stuart nearly intercepted and both sides were left to rue their chances.

With the half hour fast approaching Gibson replaced Mount in the S&E front row and made an immediate impact with a rampaging carry from a lineout. Soon after Freddy Bunting was admiring his second success of the afternoon as his team extended their advantage to 6-0. The effrontery of the lead despite having less territory and possession spurred the Garratt Park team to greater heights. For the third time an error, with a try looking a distinct possibility, ended an attack but this time the knock on was not fatal as Battersea were brought back for their penalty. The green shirts piled in under the Black & White's posts before releasing the backs and winger Ewan Magee scored in the corner. Charles Stuart regally converted from the touchline to take a 7-6 lead. To pile pelion on ossa S&E lost Matt Whitaker to injury and Ben Green entered the fray. There was still time left in the first period for Sutton & Epsom to restore their lead when Freddy Bunting opted for a kick at goal from within his own half with the final play. It had perfect direction but just lacked the yardage. The sides turned around with Battersea leading 7-6. For the second period the hosts would enjoy not only the topographical advantage but also any favours from the wind. There was the possibility that the cultured boot of Charles Stuart might be the significant factor for the remainder of the contest and that Sutton's superb defensive resolve might be tested in extremis during the second half.

The tactical kicking game was initiated from the outset with a bout of kick tennis that ended in Sutton's favour courtesy of a superior offering by Gareth O'Brien. That the boot might have primacy over the running game was amply demonstrated after a couple of minutes when the dangerous Jacobs shunned the opportunity to run the ball back but rifled a marvellous kick to the

22. As the forwards wrestled for supremacy, the commitment, intensity of carrying and tackling was ratcheted up another notch by both packs. Equally the back divisions marshalled their defences as both XVs went in search for the vital opening score of the half. After 15 minutes it took an astutely angled grubber from Freddy Bunting that bounced up perfectly for winger Austin Bell to break the deadlock. It was a classic example of sporting vision, that priceless ability to see in a split second what others do not in order to create the sublime moment. A majestic touchline conversion by Bunting bisected the uprights and S&E led 13-7.

Sutton held the upper hand for five minutes. The Ironsides forced S&E to their line with a probing kick forcing a lineout ten metres out. Clean ball and a well executed catch and drive saw the hosts trundle irresistibly over the line for their second try. Trailing by a solitary point Charles Stuart's conversation oversaw the restoration of their lead by 14-13. As is so often the case the

opposition were given an early opportunity with a penalty from the restart. The Black & Whites owed their chance for the lead to a thunderous tackle from flanker Ben Tame. There was a moment of confusion when the height of the Bunting kick exceeded the diminutive stature of the Battersea uprights but Sutton & Epsom now inched ahead by 16-14. Perhaps distracted by that uncertainty the restart sailed out on the full and Sutton scrummaged on halfway. Moments later there was another indication of the tension telling. An Ironside queried Mr Howe's interpretation of the laws in a tone that was not appreciated and the referee ushered the defenders 10 metres back. If loose lips sink ships then loquacious rugby players cost three points. Freddy Bunting added a fourth penalty to his tally for Sutton to lead 19-14 with a dozen minutes to go plus the extras for stoppages.

Battersea now went in search of points. Their first sortie was cut short when they lost possession on the Sutton 22 and Austin Bell cleared magnificently to the opponent's half. S&E were on the attack but were thwarted by a Charles Stuart interception and kick that rolled into their 22. Austin Bell covered well to secure the ball on the deck and the Black & Whites were gifted a penalty as a chasing Ironside naively fell on the prostrate Bell. As the game entered time added on it was one-way traffic in favour of Battersea. The visitors were magnificent in defence and thought they had earned a turnover but the hosts were awarded the scrum. Closer and closer the Garratt Park pack advanced to the posts. Avoiding the risk of being held up over the line, with admirable patience under the circumstances, they finally forced their way over by the right hand upright. 19 all and the conversion was a mere formality for a kicker of Stuart's stature. However, Charles Stuart, endured the type of unexpected misfortune that would have been familiar to not only Aeschylus but also his historical namesake as the conversion was missed. Shortly afterwards the referee concluded proceedings and the sides shared the points for a 19-19 draw. It was a fitting result for two teams that had given their all. For Sutton Ben Green's performance off the bench was redolent of Ed Burton at Guildford in 2015. Green's previous contributions had been predominantly inconsequential minutes off the bench but he revelled in the opportunity at a serious stint at Number 8. He carried with aggression, tackled powerfully and symbolised an outstanding effort by the Sutton pack. No doubt this Battersea side will be contenders for promotion again this season as they have quality in all departments. The league now takes a week off and the action returns to Rugby Lane when league leaders Sidcup visit on 12 th October. What a difference a year makes, on their last trip in November 2023 they arrived bottom of the league and level on points with Sutton & Epsom with both clubs having only a solitary win to their names in seven outings.

Sutton & Epsom

O'Brien, Watkins, Scott, Elliott, Bell, Bunting ©, Munford, Mount, Gordon, Boaden, Glanville, McTaggart, Tame, Jones & Whitaker.

Replacements: Gibson, Green & Unused: Symonds.

Battersea Ironsides

Baker, Magee, Jacobs, Roberts, Craig, Stuart, Barnard, Chetwynd, Lewis, Batstone, MacPherson, Walton, Dollard, Chitan & Martin.

waiton, Donard, Omton & Plantin.

Replacements: Borup, Humphris & Diamond.

Local MP comes to our defence?

In a significant development in UK party politics, **Helen Maguire**, the Member of Parliament for Epsom & Ewell, has been appointed to the frontbenches of the Liberal Democrats. On September 19th, Liberal Democrat leader Sir **Ed Davey** announced

that Maguire would take up the role of spokesperson for Defence and the Armed Forces. This announcement follows the unveiling of the Lib Dems new 33-member frontbench roster, following the party's success in July's general election, where they secured a record 72 parliamentary seats.

Maguire, a former Army captain in the Royal Military Police, brings extensive real-world experience to her new role. She served in Bosnia on a NATO peacekeeping mission and in Iraq, where she assisted the rebuilding of the Iraqi police force. Magiure took to X (formerly known as Twitter) to express her enthusiasm, stating that she is "delighted and honoured" to take on the role, while also highlighting the need for the UK defence budget to reflect the challenging times we face.

A party spokesperson for Defence and the Armed Forces plays a crucial role in communicating the party's stance on national security, military strategy, and defence spending. Helen Maguire is likely to become more prominent in debates on these issues in the House of Commons, especially in light of ongoing global conflicts and increasing geopolitical tensions.

In an era of emerging threats, the public will increasingly turn to the main political parties to ensure the military is effectively managed, underpinned by competent, transparent, and realistic governance. As global conflicts and tensions continue to rise, trust in the leadership and oversight of the armed forces will become a central issue in upcoming elections, with national security playing a critical role in shaping the public's confidence and the country's future stability.

Maguire faces a challenging task, especially as the Liberal Democrats work to rebuild public confidence. The party is likely to be cautious to avoid over-promising on policies, mindful of the damage caused when they reneged on their pledge to scrap tuition fees during their coalition government from 2010 to 2015, a decision that deeply hurt their voter base.

As the third-largest political party in the UK, the Liberal Democrats are attempting to position themselves for further growth. With Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer's approval rating dipping in recent Opinion polls and ongoing uncertainty surrounding the direction of the Conservative Party, the Lib Dems may believe that they are poised for future electoral gains. The political winds of British Politics are constantly shifting, and as Helen Maguire takes a substantial step forward into the spotlight, her performance on the frontbench might just determine if the Lib Dems can ride the wave of electoral success, or end up washed out to the fringes at the next general election.