

Neutrality Council for Epsom and Ewell Times

9 January 2024



In a groundbreaking move towards transparency and community involvement, **The Epsom and Ewell Times** is proud to announce the establishment of a Neutrality Council. This council, comprising representatives from the major political parties and the Residents Associations, will play a pivotal role in completing an annual appraisal of the neutrality and quality of the Epsom and Ewell Times.

Annual Appraisals for Transparency

The purpose of the Neutrality Council is clear: to provide a representative from each major political party and the RA for the annual appraisal of our newspaper's neutrality and quality. These comprehensive appraisals will be published to ensure transparency and community engagement.

Flexible Representation

Each political party has the flexibility to change its representative, allowing for dynamic assessments that capture a range of perspectives. The form of the appraisal, including a section for free-form comments, will be provided to facilitate a thorough and unbiased evaluation.

The inaugural representatives are:

Cllr Robert Leach (RA Nonsuch)

Emma Ware (Conservative)

Cllr Alison Kelly (LibDem Stamford)

Mark Todd (Labour)

Clockwise top left: Leach, Ware, Kelly, Todd

An Independent Process

The Neutrality Council operates independently of The Epsom and Ewell Times, highlighting our commitment to objective reporting. Council members will be approached individually for the first annual appraisal in or about November 2024. If they wish to members may collaborate in joint submissions.

Community Trust and Confidence

This innovative institution aims to be a significant contributor to maintaining high standards and bolstering community confidence. By involving representatives from various political backgrounds, we ensure a diversity of perspectives that align with our commitment to being "for the community, by the community."

A Step Towards Transparency and Involvement

In an era where local news services are evolving, we strive to maintain a high standard of informative and readable content for our local residents. By submitting to this annual appraisal process, we not only enhance transparency but also actively involve the community in shaping the future of The Epsom and Ewell Times. Your feedback matters, and we believe this initiative will strengthen our bond with the community we proudly serve. Stay tuned for the first annual appraisals from our esteemed Neutrality Council members!

Battersea power ahead of local rugby team

9 January 2024



Battersea Ironsides 38 Sutton & Epsom RFC 29. Saturday 6th January.

In September at Rugby Lane Sutton & Epsom belatedly gained their first success of their campaign

with a last gasp 26-25 win over the then league leader's Battersea Ironsides. Therefore the return fixture was anticipated with great relish. Before the kick off there was much disruption from the scheduled proceedings. Storm Henk had led to torrential midweek rains resulting in Battersea's Openview facilities being unplayable. Fortunately an alternative time and venue was found. The match was rescheduled for 4pm at the splendid Grasshoppers RFC venue. The crowd enjoyed the curtain-raiser at 2pm as HAC overcame Grasshoppers 22-14 in the parallel Regional 2 Thames League before settling in for the main event. A thrilling nine-try match ensued with the lead changing hands five times before Battersea Ironsides triumphed 38-29.

Sutton & Epsom suffered a setback in the warm up as Tom Lennard injured his back. The deck was reshuffled and Gareth O'Brien went to 10 and Austin Bell, returning from University, came off the bench to 15. The unfortunate Lennard, with all the mobility of an octogenarian, was ushered to the bench and was unlikely to play any part in proceedings unless some miracle worker happened to be strolling down Syon Lane. The game started under the floodlights with Battersea Ironsides immediately in the ascendancy. A try in the opening minute was denied as the hosts were held up over the line. Five minutes later blindside flanker Ollie Davies made the first of many penetrating breaks. From halfway he broke through the first defender then palmed off prospective tacklers who were scattered like skittles as he raced in to score. Charles Stuart regally added the conversion for a 7-0 lead.

The high tempo opening from the hosts continued as Charles Stuart added a penalty to extend the lead to 10-0. Moments later Sutton were on the scoreboard from the familiar efficiency of Freddy Bunting's boot as he added another penalty to his ever-increasing season's tally to make it 10-3. However, the errant Sutton defence yielded another penalty that enabled the hosts to regain their ten-point advantage to lead 13-3 a couple of minutes later. At the end of the first quarter Battersea Ironsides were rewarded for their dominant start to the match with their second try. This time it was Number 8 Tom Jeffs who forced his way past flailing defenders from ten metres out. The ball-carrying of Davies & Jeffs was to be the difference between the sides by the final whistle. Though Charles Stuart's conversion drifted harmlessly wide the Ironsides had a healthy advantage of 18-3 with the visitors starved of territory and possession.

The early ascendancy of the SW17 outfit was replaced by a sterling Sutton comeback. At last the Black & Whites put together some phases and excellent handling got them deep into the Battersea half. The opportunity looked to have been lost but the referee brought the game back for an earlier offence. With the 15-point deficit Captain Bunting shunned the 3-point option and kicked to the corner. The gamble saw a rich reward. Josh Pulvirenti scored from close-range and Freddy Bunting added the conversion to trail 10-18. Though the S&E revival was soon deflated by another Charles Stuart penalty that saw the score at 21-10 the Black & Whites had a foothold in the game and were looking dangerous when they had possession.

With the interval rapidly approaching Sutton & Epsom enjoyed their best spell of the game as they went in search of a score before the break. Resolute and powerful tackling by the Battersea team held the line. However, under pressure the defence transgressed and they were reduced to 14 men. With the clock counting down in time added on in the first period finally flanker Rob Hegarty forced his way over following a 5-metre lineout. Freddy Bunting's conversion concluded the first half with Sutton closing the gap to 17-21.

The second half began with the Black & Whites confident that they could repeat the come from behind win they had enjoyed earlier this season. In contrast Battersea sought to regain the dominance they had enjoyed at the start of the game. As ever the opening score of the half would be vital for the hopes of both sides. Ten minutes into the second period Battersea kicked into the Sutton half. Fullback Austin Bell gathered the ball and looked for an advantageous 50-22 kick. As the ball rolled towards the beneficial touch it trickled to a halt but Sutton's initial frustration was transformed into delight. Winger Kyren Ghumra arrived with the cover and his boot manage to nudge the ball to the Ironsides 22. He regained his footing gathered the loose ball and ran in unopposed. Freddy Bunting added the conversion and Sutton led 22-21.

If self-doubt had entered into the hosts it was soon dispelled as the redoubtable Tom Jeffs added to his account with his second try of the afternoon. A penalty was kicked to the corner and the 5-metre lineout was secured and ball was quickly transferred to Tom Jeffs who bulldozed his way over. Though the conversion was missed Battersea lead once more by 26-22. Sutton refused to be subdued and five minutes later they had regained lead. From a breakdown 15 metres from the line lock Ewan McTaggart gather the ball, broke through and sidestepped the last defender to score by the uprights. The towering second row is arguably S&E's most improved player this season and his try was greeted with joyous enthusiasm from the travelling support. With Freddy Bunting adding the extras the Black & Whites led 29-26 entering the final quarter.

Once more the Ironsides went in search of a try. Another penalty was kicked to the corner for a 5-metre lineout. The expectant home crowd bayed for a repeat dose of the medicine. Initially it appeared that the Sutton defences had frustrated the hosts on the line. After much delay and close inspection of the mass of humanity piled in front of him the referee raised his arm aloft to signal the try. Prop Henry Warby was awarded the crucial score. The pendulum had swung back in favour of Battersea and Charles Stuart's conversion put the hosts 33-29 ahead. A couple of minutes later the confused crowd saw Josh Glanville and a Battersea forward depart with yellow

cards. It came to pass that Sir had been unimpressed by some pushing and shoving though the incident was less than what commuters experience boarding a rush hour tube and to onlookers it seemed a rather draconian response.

The topsy-turvy nature of the second half had fifteen minutes to go and the outcome was still in the balance. Sutton & Epsom went in search of the 22 and a platform to launch an attack on the Battersea line. Freddy Bunting's long penalty kick from hand, intended for the corner, was gathered infield and a mark called. The threat was averted and the Ironsides set out their stall in the visitors' half. In a rousing finish multiple attacks followed as last ditch tackles frustrated the hosts. Finally, Charles Stuart rounded off a fine performance as he dummied and sidestepped his way over the line for Battersea Ironside's fifth try of the afternoon. The score resulted in an unseemly fracas in the in-goal area. No further cards were issued with only a couple of minutes remaining but Battersea were awarded a penalty at the restart. For those who revel in the unusual it was rather disappointing that Charles Stuart did not attempt the extra three points but Battersea led 38-29 with a two score cushion.

There was no further addition to the score and the Ironsides had won a most exciting game 38-29. Messrs Davies and Jeffs had been outstanding for the victors carrying numerous times collecting considerable yardage as well as three tries. Sutton had looked dangerous in attack but their defence lacked the excellence of their Cobham away win and ultimately that was the deciding factor in a match played between two sides who were notably better than their earlier meeting this season. Next Saturday Sutton & Epsom host Old Alleynians who have started 2024 in splendid fashion by crushing London Cornish 50-17. When the two sides met at Dulwich Common in September the Old Boys edged out S&E 29-25.

Sutton & Epsom:

Austin Bell, Ciaran Mohr, Willem Ratu, Kyren Ghumra, Freddy Bunting ©, Gareth O'Brien, Ross Parsons, Tom Boaden, Chris Farrell, Alex Mount, Ewan McTaggart, Josh Glanville, Rob Hegarty, Josh Pulvirenti & Matt Whitaker.

Replacements: Callum Gibson & Ben Green. Unused: Tom Lennard.

Battersea Ironsides

George Clair, Will Diamond, Ben Turner, Jacob Donovan, Mike Brennan, Charles Stuart, Jack Moates, Harry Martin, Ollie Lewis, Henry Warby, Archie MacPherson, Sam Reeves, Ollie Davies, Alex Chitan & Tom Jeffs.

Replacements: Harry Batson, Max Trickett & Cameron Baker.

A goal conceded for every year not played

9 January 2024



Epsom & Ewell FC 0-5 Camberley Town. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 6th January.

Our first meeting with Camberley Town for five years ended in a dispiriting home defeat by five clear goals, which marked our worst defeat of the season so far. Historians won't be particularly surprised as we hadn't won on this day in history since 1934, but this was surprisingly poor, bearing in mind our stellar second half showing just seven days previously.

Despite many other matches being called off and the knowledge that our game would definitely be on, a hugely disappointing crowd counted as 62, even though the official figure was advised as a rather ambitious 92, witnessed a very disappointing performance against a Camberley Town team that belied their League position and looked likely to score whenever they went forward, while we registered just two shots on target, with the visiting keeper Stuart Norman only having one serious save to make, and that came in second half injury time!

We made three changes from last week's win over Tooting & Mitcham United. Steve Springett was on dad duty and was unable to take the field, while Nick Wilson and Reece Tierney returned to the line up after being unavailable and injured respectively. They came in for the injured Ollie Thompson and also Nick Inwugwu who had to make do with a place on the bench, while Lewis Peach came in up front.

On a day when there were some very erratic officiating calls that left players confused and sometimes frustrated at times, it is important to point out that this match wasn't close enough to be affected by them, even though we looked quite good for the opening ten minutes!

Unfortunately, the first time the visitors went into our half, their striker was brought down clumsily on the edge of the penalty area and Regan Hitch delivered a free kick casually into the bottom far corner with our keeper Harvey Keogh either slow to get down to it, or unsighted. This goal came in the tenth minute and the lead was extended just two minutes later as a right wing cross was met with an unmarked looping header from Mason Taylor that gave Keogh no chance from

twelve yards.

Things nearly got worse in the 14th minute when another break on the right from Stan Jones ended with a shot past Keogh that crossed the line, but hit the diagonal stanchion supporting the post and came back out. We had a spell of incidents like this a few years back at Chipstead, but fortunately, in each case the officials had awarded the goal to us. This time there was to be no such decision in Camberley's favour, much to the amazement of a number of their players and the score remained at 2-0.

Maybe it was to be our day after all. That bit of fortune should really have motivated us to fight back, but Epsom just weren't at the races and a third goal followed in the 26th minute. Maybe appropriately it was Jones who was the scorer after being "denied" twelve minutes earlier, although his shot appeared to be scuffed and Keogh, expecting a more powerful shot, went down before the ball got there and it crept into the net.

We desperately needed a way back into this match in quick time and Luke Miller produced a pinpoint cross for Pearch, but he headed the ball over the bar from just six yards. What we didn't realise at the time was that this would prove to be our best chance of the match and the visitors were soon back on the attack with Keogh being well placed to make a good save from a close range header. As we went into the third minute of injury time Tommy Williams played a decent one-two with a teammate, but the shot with his weaker left foot was easily fielded by Norman.

Could we turn this around in the second half, as we had done just seven days previously? Well, frankly, no! We had only been playing for a few minutes when an injury to Ayran Kugathas necessitated his replacement. We did put together a decent move, starting with Jaan Stanley who found Miller who then set up Rory Edwards, whose shot went across goal, but was just out of reach of the incoming Ethan Nelson-Roberts. Keogh was forced into another good save but in the 70th minute a good run from Jones ended with a shot across goal where Brandon Vangrove was there to touch the ball in from close range for the fourth Camberley goal. Things were looking really serious now and we made a triple substitution, but Keogh still had to make another close range save to prevent the score going higher.

We had a half chance with quarter of an hour remaining when substitute Thompson Adeyemi had a try from just outside the penalty area, only to see the ball hit the full face of the cross bar and rebound to safety, but in the 79th minute a corner was headed in by the unmarked Tom Wensley at close range and we were 5-0 down. Keogh had to make another couple of saves, with the latter of these coming out of the top drawer with a full stretch save of a shot that was heading for the top corner before Norman actually had some work to do in the 92nd minute when he tipped over a Williams shot from twenty yards with the subsequent corner being headed over by Tierney, but to be honest, a goal wouldn't have even counted as a consolation, such was the standard of this performance.

You rarely get results this one-sided unless two things happen. Firstly, we didn't play well, but secondly, Camberley did. With the hugely impressive Jones on the field, we appeared to have no real answer and remain winless against the Krooners in nine attempts dating back to 2014. To his credit our Manager Springett was brutally honest about the performance on social media after the match and it is hoped that we can fight back, although we now do not have another League match for three weeks, so there should be plenty of opportunity to try things out at training during that time. Either way, we need to improve or this relegation battle will remain a concern for far longer than it really should do.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Tommy Williams, Ayran Kugathas, Rory Edwards, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, Luke Miller, Tijani Eshilokun, Lewis Pearch, Jaan Stanley, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Nick Inwugwu for Kugathas (50), Thompson Adeyemi for Stanley (65), Ade Batula for Pearch (77), Tino Carpena for Miller (77), Jerry Antwi for Nelson-Roberts (77)

Dorking Halls to get refit

9 January 2024



The "jewel in Mole Valley's crown" is set to shut over the summer as it undergoes a £3.24million safety refit. Dorking Halls has been recommended for the "minimal" amount of work needed to fix its most immediate problems. A decision on an £8m modernisation of the venue with improved seating, bars, toilets, and sound proofing will be taken next year.

Councillor Nick Wright, cabinet member for leisure and tourism, told overview and select committee at Mole Valley District Council: "The halls are a very important part of Mole Valley's cultural infrastructure, with over 114,000 tickets sold in 2023. They are used by residents from across the district and beyond.

"The halls are sorely in need of repair and refurbishment and the particular concern is over the state of the 90-year-old fibrous plaster ceiling in the great hall itself.

"This has to be dealt with urgently as a health-and-safety issue and it also costs us a lot in inspections and remedial patches. We absolutely have to avoid any chance of a forced unscheduled closure of the halls for safety reasons."

Initial studies into the work began in 2022 with three ideas put forward. The first is the minimal safety work, the second an enhanced program to upgrade stages, access and bar areas. The final, which was ultimately not considered, was an aspirational complete remodelling.

The halls would need to close in summer 2025 as well; if the council agrees to go ahead with the second phase of works. The primary focus of the first phase will be to make the ceiling safe. Critical ceiling failure has been identified as a risk. If no work is done, there is the potential that the fibrous plaster in the Grand Hall becomes so unstable that the halls are forced to close at short or no notice.

Any collapse, regardless of whether the public were in attendance, would likely lead to a fine. The report read: “The priority is to address the ceiling at the earliest opportunity, to avoid the risk of being forced to close the Grand Halls to the public at short or no notice, with the associated reputational damage, and financial consequences of cancelling events, refunding ticket sales, and compensating for loss of profit.”

It has been about 30 years since the halls last underwent a large-scale refurbishment, when the building was extended and the current layout created.

The cinema was made digital in 2010 with other minor works also carried out. Cllr David Draper described the work as well deserved and necessary.

Officers told the meeting the site is compliant but that it “struggles to accommodate some shows” with adjustments and limitations enforced which often means performances are restricted, or not the full versions performed in other venues.

The meeting on Wednesday, January 3, heard: “We have to cut things to make it safe and workable so it’s not presenting a danger, it’s just a bit limiting and we’re only just managing.” Cllr Wright said: “Dorking Halls is the jewel in the crown of Mole Valley but its getting a bit tired, it needs a polish, and it needs to look much better than it does at the moment.”

The plans were then signed off later that night during a brief, 30 minute long, extraordinary cabinet meeting.

Homeless child will have his day in court

9 January 2024



The High Court has granted a judicial review into Surrey County Council’s decision not to house a “child in need”. In 2019, a 17-year-old who was known to Surrey’s social services team was on the verge of being made homeless.

Surrey County Council caseworkers, who the judge praised, said the teen required the highest level of intervention together with a co-ordinated multi-agency approach. These are reserved for cases where children are in serious need. However, when he applied for emergency accommodation, the council’s housing team said they were forced into a “snap judgement” – something the judge dismissed.

Mr Justice Calver rejected the county council’s claim that their decision was made against the clock and found they had a “duty to provide him with accommodation”. The judge said he was “well known to Surrey County Council with his history of children’s services involvement”, and that the council had already made considerable enquiries about his needs and welfare.

He added it was “clearly the case that... suitable emergency accommodation...was required, whilst his full needs, including his need for continuing accommodation and support, were further assessed.”

Following the county council’s decision the teenager, now 22, began to “sofa surf” between friends and family until he eventually ended up homeless and living on the streets.

Justice Calver’s judgement read: “Despite this, Surrey County Council inexplicably failed to provide (him) with any accommodation and indeed failed to take any steps to assess his case at all until September 18, 2019, being five days later, which is highly regrettable.” He wrote: “It is plain in my judgement that as at September, 18, 2019 it was or ought to have been clear to Surrey County Council on the facts as known to them that he could not return home, and did not otherwise have stable, suitable accommodation. Instead it merely recommended a referral to its targeted youth support.”

Justice Calver also said that, given the background of the young man’s situation, and how well known he was to Surrey County Council it was “extraordinary that on October 28, 2019, Surrey County Council nonetheless closed his case.”

The judge said that while there was “no doubt” he had a “caring and diligent social support worker” it was “clear that Surrey County Council as an organisation seriously failed” him. He said: “I do not accept the submission of Surrey County Council that no purpose would be served now in granting the relief sought by this claim,” adding “the support he receives from his supported accommodation key worker is being stepped down over time, and is accommodation-based.

“He still requires but cannot access support to return to college, access vocational training, plan his future and manage

his social anxiety, all practical challenges which he struggles with owing to the lasting effects of his childhood.”
The judgement, handed-down on Friday December 15th granted the man permission to bring his claim forward for review.
A spokesperson for Surrey County Council said it does not comment on active court proceedings.

Something special for Surrey athletes

9 January 2024



Special Olympics **Surrey Athletes** Gear Up for Inaugural National Winter Games. In an exciting development for Special Olympics Great Britain, the country’s leading sports training and competition provider for individuals with intellectual disabilities, the spotlight is on six talented athletes from Special Olympics Surrey. These exceptional individuals are set to represent their region at the upcoming inaugural National Winter Games organized by Special Olympics GB.

The event, scheduled to unfold in Folgaria, nestled in the picturesque northern Italian region of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol, will feature alpine skiing and figure skating competitions for athletes with intellectual disabilities. From January 27 to February 3, the participating athletes will showcase their prowess on the icy slopes and the glittering rink.

A total of 73 athletes hailing from England, Scotland, and Wales will participate in the Special Olympics GB National Winter Games, and among them are the six accomplished athletes from Special Olympics **Surrey**:

- **Mikey Lines** – Alpine Skiing, SO South East – SO Surrey
- **Bartholome Meredith-Hardy** – Alpine Skiing, SO South East – SO Surrey
- **Stef Nakoneczny** – Alpine Skiing, SO South East – SO Surrey
- **Karen Oosthuizen** – Alpine Skiing, SO South East – SO Surrey
- **Elanor Sinden** – Alpine Skiing, SO South East – SO Surrey
- **Alice Willans** – Alpine Skiing, SO South East – SO Surrey

Colin Dyer, Chief Executive of Special Olympics GB, expressed his enthusiasm about expanding their competition calendar with the introduction of the National Winter Games. He highlighted the transformative impact of national and international events on athletes, inspiring them to develop life skills and make positive changes, supporting their independence and career growth.

Special Olympics GB is extending its gratitude to Special Olympics Grampian club for their dedicated planning efforts as the host club. Additionally, Inclusive Skating has been recognized as the delivery partner for all figure skating events. The Ski Company and Alpe Cimbra are providing crucial support to ensure the success of the National Winter Games.

Dyer emphasized that this competition will play a pivotal role in selecting athletes for the subsequent Special Olympics World Winter Games, slated for Torino, Italy, from March 8 to 16, 2025. Team Special Olympics GB will be represented by eight alpine skiers and two figure skaters, marking their return to the global stage since 2017.

Across England, Scotland, and Wales, Special Olympics GB’s impact is evident, providing regular sporting opportunities for over 6,600 athletes with intellectual disabilities. With 95 accredited clubs offering training and competition in 27 different sports, a devoted team of 3,800 volunteers ensures the success of the programs.

Established in 1978, Special Olympics Great Britain is a non-profit charity dedicated to providing year-round sports coaching and athletic competition in summer and winter sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. With 95 accredited programs across England, Scotland, and Wales, the organization offers coaching and competition opportunities in 27 sports, supported by over 3,800 volunteers benefiting more than 6,600 athletes.

Special Olympics GB goes beyond sports, transforming lives by boosting confidence, realizing potential, enhancing physical fitness and mental well-being, fostering courage, and fostering new friendships. Financial support from individuals, trusts, and corporate donations is crucial for the continuation of their impactful work.

Founded in 1968, Special Olympics is a global movement aimed at ending discrimination against individuals with intellectual disabilities. Using the power of sport and programming in education, health, and leadership, Special Olympics fosters acceptance and inclusivity.

With over six million athletes, Special Olympics Unified Sports® partners, one million coaches, and volunteers in over 200 accredited programs, Special Olympics organizes more than 30 Olympic-type sports and over 100,000 Games and competitions annually. Learn more at www.SpecialOlympics.org.

Surrey social landlord downgraded by regulator

9 January 2024



Problems with repairs, service charges, complaints, damp and mould, contributed to one of Surrey's largest social housing landlords being downgraded by regulators for failing its tenants.

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) found that issues at A2Dominion had "crystalised over a breadth of areas" which "resulted in poor outcomes for its tenants".

The report, published on Wednesday January 3 said A2Dominion had been working to make improvements but had not yet been able to deliver the changes required. This led to poor quality data, poor reporting, and the board not having effective oversight.

Harold Brown, senior assistant director for investigations and enforcement at RSH, said: "We found significant issues with A2Dominion's data and its business planning, risk and control framework, leading to a failure by the provider to manage key risks effectively. A2Dominion is working with us to address these issues and we will continue to monitor the provider as it works to return to compliance."

The group owns and manages more than 38,000 homes across 79 local authority areas in London, the South East and Wiltshire. The majority of its housing stock is for general needs. It also has significant levels of shared ownership housing as well as supported or sheltered accommodation. A2Dominion, as a charitable housing association, must meet certain regulatory standards over how it is run.

Its new board took over in September 2022 and referred itself to RSH following concerns over the quality of some services, as well as its financial position. A2Dominion was then under review for three months while it was investigated for potential non-compliance.

In a letter to stakeholders, CEO Ian Wardle said: "We know that outcomes for some customers have been poor. Earlier this year, we issued an apology to customers who had been adversely affected. While we have made some improvements, work is still underway to fully resolve issues with repairs, service charges, complaints, damp and mould, latent defects and the roles and responsibilities with managing agents. We also know that our services aren't as responsive as they could be. In some of these areas, we aren't always delivering the high standards we set ourselves and customers expect."

The regulator downgraded A2Dominion from G1, which means a provider meets governance requirements, to G3 where there are issues of serious regulatory concern which the provider is working to improve. Its financial position is unchanged. The new grading does not affect services and it will continue to deliver its day-to-day operations as normal.

Mr Wardle said: "Over the past few months, we've been in positive and constructive discussions with the regulator following our self-referrals. We've welcomed the opportunity to identify further steps that we can take to make improvements for our customers and the communities we serve. "The regulator has confirmed that it has assurance that we have an adequately funded business plan in the short term, sufficient security in place, and is forecast to continue to meet its financial covenants.

"Since I joined in September 2022, we've had a new chair of the board appointed, many new board members, and changes to our management team. All our colleagues are passionate about what we do. However, in far too many instances, colleagues haven't had the resources and processes to fully deliver outstanding customer service. It is my job to fix this, and we've made improvements throughout 2023, with more planned in 2024.

"At the same time historic decisions on development schemes, tougher trading conditions and rising costs have affected our finances, but we will weather the storm. We've already made a number of significant improvements in relation to customer complaints and have prioritised our commitment to social housing as the core of our business, including our exit from care services and fine tuning our development strategy so we can focus on getting things right first time for our customers. We also remain financially strong, with an A credit rating from Fitch, £3.6 billion of assets, and over £300 million of undrawn available facilities.

"I look forward to continuing to work closely with the regulator following their decision, and will collaborate on the steps we need to take to return to our previous rating."

Image: A2dominion Home

Surrey chief moves on after 6 years

9 January 2024



Surrey County Council Chief Executive Joanna Killian is to leave the council in March to take up the role of Chief Executive of the Local Government Association (LGA).

Joanna has been at Surrey for six years and has overseen dramatic transformation of the organisation, in the face of unprecedented challenges.

She will leave Surrey in a robust financial position, and with improved inspection ratings and peer reviews in almost all services.

Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, said: *“Joanna’s approachable and caring nature, coupled with fierce ambition and sharp knowledge has guided this council through difficult change, tough choices, an unstable economic and political climate, as well as the small matter of a global pandemic – all challenges in which this council has come to the fore, and delivered better outcomes for the residents of Surrey.”*

“She has kept us true to our ambition that no one in Surrey should be left behind, and her leadership has had a hugely positive impact on this county as a place, and its people.”

Joanna Killian said: *“While I’m hugely excited and honoured to be taking up the Chief Executive role at the Local Government Association, it is with a heavy heart that I’m saying goodbye to Surrey.”*

“Surrey is a wonderful county, full of innovation and ambition, and the County Council reflects that, with a great workforce all dedicated to improving people’s lives.”

“Local government plays a vital role in communities up and down the UK, making a real difference every single day. It’s a sector I feel very privileged to work in, and I’m glad to be continuing that journey with the LGA, acting as a strong voice for councils with some big challenges ahead.”

Joanna will leave Surrey County Council on March 6th. Succession arrangements will be announced in due course. The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. Representing 315 councils across England and working with councils in Wales, it works to promote local government, supports councils to improve and helps the sector make a difference to people, places and the planet.

Related reports:

County CEO’s pay rise triggering strikes?

Surrey braces for doctors’ strike

9 January 2024



Hospitals and health services across Surrey are bracing themselves for the longest “and most difficult” strike in NHS history. Junior doctors, who make up about half of the medical workforce, will walk out for six consecutive days starting Wednesday, January 3, after negotiations broke down following the Government’s offer.

Health chiefs are warning people to expect significant disruption as urgent, emergency, trauma, maternity and critical care are prioritised during the work stoppages over routine and scheduled appointments.

It comes as hospital services are already stretched with the NHS experiencing one of its busiest periods.

In December, Royal Surrey County Hospital issued a plea to only attend in cases of life-threatening situations or serious injury after its accident and emergency department reported its busiest ever day.

Matt Jarratt, chief operating officer at Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust said: “Our junior doctors have our full support,

whether they choose to participate in industrial action or not. But we know this strike action will put more pressure on frontline services and our staff, who are already working incredibly hard.

“We are again asking members of the public for their support in using services responsibly and appropriately, thereby helping us keep our emergency departments and 999 for those who need them most. We are also asking people to be patient, particularly if services are busier and waits are longer than usual or if outpatient or planned procedures need to be rearranged, as our frontline teams prioritise critical services and work hard to make sure people get the care they need.”

The long-running dispute has meant hospital trusts have developed emergency plans to cover disruption but the timing has made this walkout even more challenging.

Dr Charlotte Canniff, joint chief medical officer for Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership and Surrey GP said: “We have well-rehearsed plans in place to manage these periods of disruption, working together across health and care organisations. However, due to the timing, and with this being the longest period of planned industrial action the NHS has ever seen – taking place over six consecutive days – we expect this to be the most difficult period of action yet.

“During the last period of strike action, just before Christmas, at its peak, on December 21 we saw 497 junior doctors from Surrey Heartlands taking part in planned action. With junior doctors making up around half of all doctors, a reduction of this scale has a significant impact on the services our frontline teams can continue to provide – so we do expect significant disruption to routine appointments and planned procedures as we prioritise urgent, emergency, trauma, maternity and critical care for those who need us most.”

Dr Rob Laurenson and Dr Vivek Trivedi, are the co-chairs of the British Medical Association’s junior doctors committee. In a joint statement, they said: “It’s incredibly disappointing that we’ve had to call this strike – no doctor ever wants to have to take industrial action. Junior doctors face the brunt of the decade of underinvestment that has undermined the NHS frontline.

“The record-high waiting list and chronic lack of resource are pushing many talented doctors to the brink; as a profession we are exhausted, disenchanted, and questioning whether we want to stay in the health service at all. Add to this years of pay erosion, and it’s no wonder that morale on the frontline has never been lower.

“Patient safety is our top priority at all times, including during strike action, which is why we not only give trusts adequate notice to arrange appropriate cover, but also have an established process with NHS England, which we have successfully used over the previous eight rounds of strike action, to constantly review staffing levels and act appropriately, including derogating staff back to work when absolutely necessary.

“Of course, these strikes don’t have to happen. We’ve been clear that it is the government that cancelled talks and we would still at this late hour encourage Government to put forward a credible offer so that we can stop this strike and get back to doing what we really want to do – care for patients.”

Junior doctors in England will be taking strike action from 7am on Wednesday January 3 until 7am on Tuesday January 9.

The NHS will prioritise urgent and emergency care as consultants cover for junior doctors, but has said people should continue using urgent medical services as normal.

For minor problems, general practices, community pharmacies, and dentists are not expected to be affected.

Dr Timothy Ho, chief medical officer, Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust, said: “These strikes come at a time that will cause huge disruption to the NHS, with services already feeling the strain of winter pressure. All health and care partners are working together, and we have drawn up contingency plans but we are concerned as this round of industrial action will see junior doctors on strike for six days.

“We are working closely with partners to ensure we prioritise urgent and emergency care for patients, but we do need the public to continue to support us and use the right health service to meet their needs.

“Routine appointments may be rescheduled. If you have not been contacted by the Trust, we would advise that you attend your appointment as planned, but please continue to check for updates.”

Related reports:

[Local NHS Doctors and Consultants striking](#)

[Plea ahead of doctors’ strikes round 5](#)

[Doctors’ strike: advice](#)

[Junior doctor strikes to be ‘monthly’ in Surrey?](#)

[Surrey doctors to go on strike?](#)

Epsom and Ewell schools get new CEO

9 January 2024



The new chief executive of one of the country's biggest multi academy trusts has a busy schedule in place as he prepares to visit all 42 schools under his watch during his first term.

Julian Drinkall, the new CEO of GLF Schools, has started 2024 with a pledge to visit all schools within the Trust, located in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Surrey, West Sussex and the London Boroughs of Wandsworth and Croydon, during the spring term.

GLF's schools in Surrey are Banstead Infants, **Cuddington Croft Primary** (Cheam), **Danetree Primary** (West Ewell), **Glyn** (Ewell), **Rosebery** (Epsom), The Beacon (Banstead), **The Vale Primary** (Epsom), Warren Mead Infants (Banstead), Warren Mead Juniors (Banstead), Cordwalles Juniors (Camberley), Frogmore Juniors (Camberley), Hammond (Lightwater), Lightwater Village, Pine Ridge & Lorraine Federation (Camberley). Lime Tree (Merstham), Merstham Park, Merstham Primary, Salfords Primary,

Mr Drinkall replaced the outgoing and founding CEO **Jon Chaloner**, who stepped down from his role last month after 11 years of leading the organisation through a period of continued growth. The pair worked together in the weeks leading up to the Christmas break to help the transition before the New Year. [Many will remember Jon Chaloner during his headship of Glyn School in Ewell.]

Mr Drinkall said "GLF Schools is in an enviable position, with many great schools and poised to go from strength-to-strength. I intend to visit all our schools in my first full term. Context is everything in schools and, as with our children, each and every one of them has different needs at different moments in time.

"It is that context and that ambition that I want to learn about, and I am looking forward to getting to know as many of our staff as possible, as well as our students, parents and carers, schools and communities, and hearing about the incredible work that everyone is engaged in and committed to."

Mr Drinkall has held a variety of education CEO roles and was CEO of the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), leading its turnaround over a five-year period. He said he was both 'delighted and proud' to be starting work for GLF Schools, which provides education to over 17,000 young people aged from two to 19, in a diverse array of settings and employs around 2,500 members of staff.

He added: "I'm looking forward to establishing new dreams and possibilities for our Trust, and I'm committed to finding innovative and supportive ways to make that happen for all our children and young people."

Peeling away Police Report

9 January 2024



Cllr **Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley) is Chair of the borough's Crime & Disorder committee and Epsom & Ewell's representative on the Surrey Police & Crime Panel, which holds the Police and Crime Commissioner to account. He writes for the Epsom and Ewell Times on an HM Inspector's report on Surrey Police.

At the beginning of December, Surrey Police released the latest report from His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary. This is known as a PEEL assessment, which stands for police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy.

It is disappointing to see the overall deterioration in a number of areas since the last report two years ago. Surrey Police is no longer Outstanding in any areas, while areas that were assessed as Good have slipped to Adequate or Requires Improvement.



Cllr. Alex Coley

Residents have frequently told me how unhappy they are about problems trying to contact Surrey Police. ‘Responding to the public’ is now graded as Inadequate in the latest inspection, the lowest rating possible. First contact is paramount, so I am encouraged that a Chief Superintendent has now been appointed to oversee the contact centre, but this will need to be watched closely to turn things around.

The PEEL assessment also shows that Surrey Police is failing to record sexual offences effectively; a serious issue for the flagship priority of preventing Violence Against Women and Girls. Furthermore, when victims report antisocial behaviour, the force is failing to record most crime and to tackle ASB effectively. This has led to a rating of Requires Improvement for ‘Recording data about crime’.

The inspection also shows that ‘Building, supporting and protecting the workforce’ now Requires Improvement in Surrey. Policing is a tough job, with lots of pressure. If the wellbeing of police officers and staff isn’t looked after it’s no surprise this affects performance. The attrition rate for new police officers reflects this assessment rating, with 32% leaving in the first two years.

I have met with the new Chief Constable twice and had the opportunity to ask about his plans for Surrey Police. I have found him to be candid and convincing about the changes that need to happen. He has appraised the situation as a question of leadership. I believe we need to prioritise putting residents first and fighting crime. It’s what we pay our taxes for.

I remain less convinced about the repeated underspend in the Surrey Police Group budget and will continue to raise this with the Police & Crime Commissioner. While I appreciate the desire for resilient reserves, I do not feel it can be justified to squirrel away £43m into treasury management while performance deteriorates. The PCC is directly responsible for financial reserves and the police precept collected from your council tax.

Source: <https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/peel-assessments/peel-assessments-2023-25/surrey/>

Top image: Surrey Police vehicles in the Epsom and Ewell Town Hall car park. Google.

Miracle escape in Ewell for octogenarian

9 January 2024



Motorist John Woods, who is lucky to be alive after a pre-Christmas accident, has appealed for public help in tracking down the hit-and-run driver responsible.

John, aged 84, of Tolworth, was driving along the A240 Kingston Road, Ewell, at 10,15am on Wednesday, December 20th, heading to a hospital appointment, when his Ford Focus estate car was side-swiped by a silver-grey vehicle, travelling at speed in the opposite direction, which failed to stop.

It must have come across the central reservation of the road, which is a dual carriageway at this location. John's car rolled several times, ending on its side, and he had to be pulled out by passers-by, thankfully suffering only from shock and minor cuts and bruises, which just required a check-up at Kingston Hospital.

The accident happened near the Aldi store in Kingston Road and now he is hoping that it might have been captured on a CCTV camera or someone might have noted the number of the culprit's car.

John, whose vehicle has had to be written off, is asking anyone who has any information to contact the local Epsom police and quote incident number: SYP20231220-0206.

He said: "I could have been seriously injured or even killed, so it would be good for the driver to be identified before a further accident happens with even more tragic results".

Conquering disability through art

9 January 2024



Conquest Art CIO was founded in Cheam in 1978 by artist **Ursula Hulme** MBE and now has 15 groups throughout England. The members have a wide range of health problems and disabilities and they are encouraged to work using their imaginations creatively at their own pace. This helps build self-confidence and enables people to relax and make friends with similar interests within the group. No previous artistic experience is needed to join.



'Coronation Celebration' - a picture made as a joint project by the members of the the Stoneleigh Conquest Art Group

In the past an annual exhibition of members' work has been held at Bourne Hall in Ewell. This year the exhibition was held online and in 2024 there are plans to hold it at the Horton Chapel in Epsom.

Each year an annual meeting (accompanied by an exhibition) is held at St. Paul's Church, Northey Avenue, Cheam, and the Charity Coordinator is in the process of setting up a series of meetings on Zoom where the leaders of the various groups can discuss common issues together and share ideas.

Three of the groups are in Epsom and Ewell as follows:-

Epsom Methodist Church, Ashley Road, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5HU 'phone number 01372 723966.

The leader is Christine Loizou. Held on Tuesdays from 2pm - 4pm.

Stoneleigh Methodist Church, Stoneleigh Crescent, Epsom, Surrey, KT19 0RT. 'phone number 020 8393 4116. The leader is Lesley Lee. Held on Mondays 2pm - 4pm.

Christ Church Ewell, Cheam Road, Ewell, Surrey, KT17 1AD 'phone number 07500 339 168 The leader is Steve Deal. Held on Mondays from 1pm - 4pm. Currently this group has no vacancies.

Conquest Art is run by volunteers with the exception of the co-ordinator. Anyone who would like to find out about volunteering or who feels inspired to learn more about Conquest is very welcome to come along to one of the groups to see what happens there.

For further information please see the charity website at www.conquestart.org

Top image: Caterpillar draft excluder made by partially sighted and blind members at Epsom from coloured wool pom-poms.

Underinvestment hits most vulnerable

9 January 2024



The “most vulnerable” people in Woking will be made to find new homes after their extra care facility failed vital fire safety checks and was “all but condemned”. Brockhill Extra Care Housing, in Clifton Way, has space for 48 apartments over two floors with a waiting list to get in.

In February this year **Surrey Fire and Rescue** conducted a review of the home prompting Woking Borough Council to introduce a Waking Watch – where trained people continually patrol a building and its perimeter to detect fires and raise alarms.

The facility changed its emergency procedures from Stay Put to Evacuate. The council also upgraded its fire detection systems. Many still can’t evacuate the building fast enough, leaving the bankrupt council with the decision of spending £5.8 million on a complete refit, or closing the fire trap.

A meeting of its executive committee, on Thursday, December 14, concluded the home open was no longer viable, regardless of the council’s finances, and residents, families and other stakeholders would be consulted over the closure of the Brockhill Extra Care Housing scheme. According to papers presented to councillors, the building appears to have had limited investment with only minor works carried – meaning it now requires “major capital works over the next two years and beyond”.

Its’ boiler failed a year ago causing “considerable inconvenience and discomfort to residents and staff” and is beyond repair.

Residents currently rely on a temporary heating but the entire system is “aged and in poor condition and requires upgrading and renewing. Since then, no new people have been allowed to move to the home, occupancy has dropped to 68 per cent and, where possible, the council has tried to moved residents to the ground floor to aid evacuation.

The anticipated total capital expenditure required on Brockhill over the next 10 years is forecast to be about £5.8 million, according to the report.

Deputy leader of the council, Cllr Will Forster, said: “The fire risk assessment has all but condemned that building. Particularly with the clients that we have in there. They are just so vulnerable, they have to leave the building so quickly in the event of a fire, because of the type of building it is. And that’s just not humanly possible for them.”

Any decision around Brockhill will have implications and put additional cost pressures on adult social care budgets with the council admitting that this will be difficult and upsetting for people living and working Brockhill, as well as the families of residents living there.

Leader of the Council, Cllr Ann-Marie Barker said: “Its obviously heartbreaking for me to see this. “I know what a well loved and valued facility it is.” She added: “But we have had a significant fire risk arising from a fire brigade assessment. We’ve known some of this work was needed we’ve been working in the last year we’ve done work on fire doors fire alarms, having a waking watching place to protect residents but the fire services have now determined that its just not safe for the most vulnerable and it’s so urgent that those most vulnerable people do need to move as soon as possible.”

Cllr Ellen Nicholson (LD, Mount Hermon) said: “The residents there are some of the most vulnerable in Woking and I find it incredibly sad that the chronic underprovision and the legacy of mismanagement has led to these fire risks and these safety risks for these incredibly vulnerable people.”

Image Brockhill care home – Google

Horley make mincemeat of Epsom and Ewell

9 January 2024



Horley Town 4-0 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 23rd December 2023.

Exactly six years to the day since we last visited Horley Town, we made a visit that will not live long in the memory unless you are a Horley fan as we crashed 4-0 in our latest League fixture.

Horley produced a nice touch for this contest by sending some of the children around the ground to offer everyone mince pies, but regrettably that was all we would get from them in this match, as they finished much the stronger of the two teams after a fairly even first half hour. In comparison, we were extremely generous and many gifts were presented by our team!

Our line up contained our Captain Harvey Keogh, who had returned from a trip away, while Tommy Williams came back into the starting eleven, pushing Ethan Nelson-Roberts further forward. Tijani Eshilokun, Luke Miller and Tino Carpena also started, while Thomson Adeyemi surprisingly dropped to the bench and Sirak Negassi and George Owusu were not available. Finally, Ollie Thompson was back on the bench after what looked like being a longer term injury last weekend, although he advised that he wasn't going to be risked. For Horley there were two former Salts as Josh Alder and their Captain Louis Chin lined up against us.

Although possession was fairly even in the opening exchanges, we never really managed to get a shot of any power or accuracy at goal, while for Horley, Sam Harper broke through, but Keogh spread himself well to block the ball with his feet. An Alder right wing cross just eluded the incoming strikers, while Keogh then required treatment after he and a home player both went up with high feet and our man came off worse. Fortunately he was able to continue after receiving treatment.

The game changed in the 33rd minute when Miller picked up a yellow card, somewhat harshly, I thought. However, his response to this in applauding the decision earned him an unnecessary visit to the sin bin. Our club are well aware when a referee has an assessor present, but I wonder whether our Management are advised of this fact, as you always know that these sort of things are more likely to be actioned on by an official who is being assessed.

Within a minute we were forced into a substitution after Reece Tierney picked up an injury and Thompson came on for an appearance he wasn't expecting to make. Horley stepped up the pressure and Nick Inwugwu made a good clearance from a dangerous ball in. Then Alder's shot on goal was blocked for a corner, from which Jake Roberts then fired the ball into the roof of the net for the opening goal in the 37th minute.

We were back to ten men soon after, but Horley were up and running now and a right wing cross was headed just wide of our goal before our defence parted in the 48th minute and Joshua Rapson delicately chipped the ball over the exposed Keogh to put the home side two nil up at the break.

We had a couple of half chances early in the second half, but Nelson-Roberts was flagged offside when Miller appeared to be fouled in the area, and then a Steve Springett free kick required George Hyde in the Horley goal to make his first real intervention of the day by punching the ball clear, but these were small crumbs unfortunately and in the 57th minute we conceded a third goal in awful circumstances when Harper eased past Inwugwu and squared the ball for Cameron Gyeabour to finish off from close range.

Bad became worse just seven minutes later when Hyde's long goal kick put Alder through and with no defenders nearby, Keogh had to come out, leaving the former Salt to chip the ball over him into the net from twenty yards, despite a covering defender being on the line by this time.

In response Springett sent a free kick high and wide from 25 yards and substitute Adeyemi also sent a shot wide, but I didn't recognise a single shot on target from our boys in this match and there was even time for Hyde to venture behind the goal to share a drink with some of the home fans! The final chances fell to the home team and they had a fair shout for a penalty turned down, before Hyde nearly secured a second assist when his long ball found Rapson on the left and his shot was well blocked by Keogh, although the ball went up in the air and should have really been finished off by an incoming player, but fortunately he missed his kick! We were then reduced to ten men in the 93rd minute after Nelson-Roberts picked up a visit to the sin-bin himself. He has been one of our best players this season, but obviously you can't influence the match when you are on the sidelines and we need to start learning this lesson. Mercifully the whistle saved us from further punishment and we retired, defeated by four clear goals.

There were many concerning aspects about this particular afternoon, but I shall concentrate on the three most important ones. Firstly, the way we defended, particularly in the second half. Secondly, we have now gone 301 minutes of normal time since we scored a goal. Finally, for the first time in a while results around us did not go well, particularly with Colliers Wood United winning at Tooting & Mitcham United. We face the latter in our next contest and it's fair to say that this now becomes a very important League match for our club.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Tommy Williams, Nick Inwugwu, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, Luke Miller, Tijani Eshilokun, Tino Carpena, Rory Edwards, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Ollie Thompson for Tierney (34), Thomson Adeyemi for Carpena (56), Jaan Stanley for Miller (76), Ade Batula for Springett (76)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Surrey Borough running up big debts

9 January 2024



Runnymede Borough Council has been served formal notice over its “significant debt” and an over reliance on commercial income to support its services. The Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has written to the council after the borough borrowed 71 times its core spending power to fund an “investment strategy that produces a less than 1 per cent return”.

DLUHC’s Best Value Notice was issued after the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy raised concerns in July. The council can still receive, and be awarded, government funding while under the 12 month notice.

Writing to the Runnymede Borough Council (RBC) was Suzanne Clarke, DLUHC’s deputy director of finance. She said: “Ministers remain concerned as to Runnymede Borough Council’s capacity to comply with its Best Value Duty under the Local Government Act 1999.”

Mrs Clarke added: “The authority has significant debt relative to its size, as of March 31, 2023, it had borrowing 71 times their core spending power, which has been used predominantly to invest in the authority’s property portfolio. This level of debt poses the authority with capacity challenges, particularly in asset management, commercial and regeneration activity.

“Commercial income represents a substantial revenue source for RBC and is used to support both core and discretionary services, which exposes the authority to significant financial risks should anticipated income fail.”

She said the borough has engaged constructively and openly with the accountants and indicated it was taking steps to address the concerns raised in the review.

Responding to the notice, Councillor Tom Gracey, Leader of Runnymede Borough Council said: “It is right that effective scrutiny must be in place around investment and spending decisions to ensure value for money. I am proud of the track record we have delivered in Runnymede in not only providing investment in our social housing, regeneration across communities, and funding services valued by our residents, but also in our sound risk and financial management.”

Andrew Pritchard, chief executive of Runnymede Borough Council said the notice reflected the next step in their ongoing and positive dialogue with DLUHC and that most borrowing had been locked in while interest rates were at an historic low. He added: “This borrowing enabled us to fund a mix of commercial investment, improvements to our social housing stock, and complete the regeneration of Addlestone and Egham – all of which now benefits residents.”

Councillor Don Whyte, group leader of the Liberal Democrats told the Local Democracy Reporting Service that the council had been waiting a considerable time for DLUHC’s decision. He said: “The decision removes a degree of uncertainty and provides some clarity of what it needs to do. The areas that Runnymede are specifically charged with improving are justified, most notably decision making and scrutiny processes, and capacity and capability.

“An example of this is that the Conservative administration have always ensured that the chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is a Conservative, marking their own homework, and not one of the opposition which is deemed best practice in local government.”

He added that the Government needed to “take a significant amount of responsibility for the position” local authorities are in “given that loans amounting to billions of pounds were provided by the Public Works Loans Board with minimal due diligence”.

Cllr Robert King, Labour group leader, said: “Runnymede can not go on throwing good money after bad at underperforming investments”.

He added that questions had been raised about “the investment strategy which produces a less than 1 per cent return” with only “partial plans” for “paying back the debts principle, not just the interest. Something which should have been reviewed long ago, and not just now or with a future peer review from the Local Government Association”.

Image: Cllr Thomas Gracey (image Runnymede Borough Council) and Runnymede Borough Council (Grahame Larter)