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Blue sky sees Black and Whites in the red

17 September 2024

Beckenham 29 Sutton & Epsom RFC 14. Saturday 14th September.

Sutton & Epsom arrived at Balmoral Lane as league leaders after a comprehensive Colfeians victory by 50-7. Beckenham had impressed with a 27-13 triumph of their own over Reeds Weybridge in their opener. As are the vagaries of availability there were six switches in the Sutton set up but no new arrivals. Messrs Elliott and Rea were elevated from the bench with Joe Lovatt starting at 9 to be joined by the experienced quintet of Munford, Whitaker, Mount, Mohr and Tame. Apologies for absence ranged from concussion to watching the T20 cricket finals at Edgbaston. Meanwhile, Beckenham's hat trick hero of Round One, Geordie Boyce, had endured an Australian Friday night to forget in Cardiff and was absent. After a keenly contested encounter Beckenham deserved the honours with a bonus point victory by 29-14.

Freddy Bunting kicked off on a beautifully sunny afternoon with a stiff breeze over his shoulder. After the initial sparring from both attacking units it was S&E that produced the first chance of the afternoon. A flowing break after a dozen minutes saw Sutton thwarted by foul play 5 metres from glory. The tapped penalty found its way to Matt Whitaker who stretched for the line but Mr Burchell adjudicated that the ball had not been touched down. Beckenham put themselves under further pressure by knocking on on their 22. This time it was Lawrence Elliott for Sutton who came agonisingly close to opening the scoring but marvellous defence prevented the ball being placed over the line. Moments later it was not to be third time lucky as a rampaging run by prop Alex Mount set up the perfect platform for a try but the opportunity was squandered. At the start of the second quarter Beckenham winger Gabriel Jordan dashed into the enemy half and threatened a stunning score but he was scythed down by a tremendous tackle by Lawrence Elliott. Having that taste of moderate success the hosts looked probable scorers on the half hour when Number 8 Andrew Knowles was hauled down with the line at his mercy. It was a very temporary stay of execution for Sutton. From the ensuing scrum the ball was transferred to the left where winger Gabriel Jordan had time and space to score. Despite the Lewis Bunton conversion failing on the wind Beckenham led 5-0.

Excellent pressure from the Black & Whites at the restart gave them an advantageous lineout on the host's 22. The scenario improved when Beckenham conceded a penalty that was kicked into the corner. Initially the Kent forwards splendidly drove back the Surrey pack. However, a secondary Sutton surge saw the visiting forwards advance towards the line. Then play was halted by the shrill blast of the whistle and the referee not only awarded Sutton & Epsom a penalty try but also he flourished a yellow card to captain Richard O'Keefe to reduce the host's, who now trailed 7-5, to 14 men. The Balmoral Avenue men made light of the numerical deficiency and soon regained the lead. S&E failed to deal we a bobbling ball near their 22. From the scrum the home team struck down the flank with an arcing run followed by an inside pass to scrum half Craig Thomson who went through untouched to score. Lewis Bunton's successful strike concluded the first half with Beckenham leading 12-7 despite the wind and being a player down on the naughty step.

With the Beckenham coaching contingent imploring greater dynamism from their charges one contemplated that the collective noun for a group of coaches should be a 'Frustration' of coaches. Meanwhile in the visiting camp the message would have highlighted that the numerous visits to the opposition 22 had garnered only a solitary try whereas their opponents had been far more clinical with a couple of scores. The Balmoral Avenue faithful must have viewed their team as slight favourites as they had both the lead and the wind but they knew success would only come with an improved performance in the second half.

From the restart the hosts went in search of their next score. They upped the pace and ferocity and forced an error from the visitors when their scrum, on their line, came under considerable pressure. Beckenham looked to be mimicking S&E when they dropped the ball but rather than being fly-hacked to safety it fell into attacking hands. With commendable vision a long bouncing pass reached Matt Lovell in splendid isolation for him to score with ease. Lewis Bunton added to the growing lead with the conversion for 19-7. Moments later the Kent men looked likely to score a marvellous try as they swept down the pitch exhibiting superb support play but scrambling Sutton denied them a spectacular score.

S&E brought on their bench, Messrs Boaden, Hilton and Munford as they sought to hold out under their posts. The hosts conceded a free kick that was taken quickly by Matt Whitaker and in a flash he had relieved the siege and was crossing the halfway line. With the hour rapidly approaching Sutton were indebted to a wonderful solo effort from flanker Dan Jones who showed great pace and nimble footwork to score. Freddy Bunting nonchalantly added the extras to put his

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team back into the contest as they entered the final quarter trailing by 19-14. Elation became deflation from the restart. Failure to catch the kick led to the ball being deflected forward and giving away a hideous offside penalty as the approaching ball was as irresistible as an ice-cold lager on a sweltering summer afternoon. Lewis Bunton punished the error as he chipped over the penalty for a 22-14 lead that meant the visitors needed two scores to avoid defeat.

Lewis Bunton now sensibly used the wind to keep Sutton at arm's length by pinning them in their 22 with well-placed kicks. S&E were chasing the game and conceded a kickable penalty but Beckenham went in search of the bonus point try. Though their bravery went unrewarded as they lost the attacking lineout they had their reward in time added on. Gabriel Jordan scored his second try by demonstrating great strength in contact to break the tackle and then notable determination to run 30 metres straining every muscle to score with tacklers hanging onto his frame. Lewis Bunton bisected the uprights from the touchline for 29-14. There was time for one more frustrating visit to the host's line for the persevering visitors but the lammergeyers had been hovering over the Sutton carcass for a while and the final whistle put the visitors out of their misery on a frustrating afternoon for them.

Beckenham deservedly won this encounter outscoring S&E by 4-2 in the try count. From the outset their pack had the upper hand in the set scrum despite an early departure of the influential Rimarni Richards. The brothers Caddy impressed in the midfield whilst the educated boot of Lewis Bunton kept Sutton in their half in the second period once an 8-point lead had been established. Credit must also be given to the host's dogged defence in the first half that frustrated the visitors' attack that could not get into top gear. The clinical finishing by the home team was the ultimate difference between two evenly-matched outfits.

For Sutton & Epsom Dan Jones put in his best performance for the 1 st XV and his stunning solo score was a just reward for a tireless effort in the best traditions of openside flankers. It is easy to take Matt Whitaker for granted as he approaches his 200 th appearance but his uncanny habit of gathering the ball at eight from a retreating pack and still getting over the gain line is an invaluable commodity. Though the tempo and ferocity of the contest went up a notch or two in the second half it was the rather flat performance, in contrast to Week 1, in the first period that scuppered the Black & Whites in this match. In terms of possession and territory they should have led at the interval but instead turned around with a 5-point deficit which proved to be a significant obstacle to success.

The Black and Whites return to Rugby Lane to take up the challenge of Old Reigatian who were most impressive 38-21 winners in the corresponding fixture last season. They will hope, no doubt, to recapture the sparkling form from the opening fixture and return to winning ways.
Sutton & Epsom

Elliott, Watkins, Scott, Bibby, Mohr, Bunting ©, Lovatt, Mount, Gordon, Gibson, Tame, McTaggart, Rea, Jones & Whitaker.
Replacements: Boaden, Hilton, & Munford.
Beckenham
Kennedy, Lovell, J. Caddy, L. Caddy, Jordan, Bunton, Thomson, Baker, Willden, Richards, Latouche, Moran, Keefe ©, Stapleton & Knowles.
Replacements: Hatfield, Bernard-Moore & Feldhaus-Davies.

Village divide on Parade

17 September 2024



Plans to demolish and rebuild a shopping parade in Oxshott, has been met with controversy among locals, with some residents decrying it as a "monstrosity" that would be "entirely out of place in a quaint Surrey village."

Nearly 240 letters have been written to Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC) with around 190 against and 134 supporting the application. Oxshott locals agree the "tired, old and ugly" Heath Building could do with upgrading but they have opposing ideas about what the development should look like.

Built in the 1960s, the two-storey Heath Building is of a brick, modernist design with a flat roof. It currently hosts five operating retail units and five residential flats, three of which are occupied.

The application is seeking to replace the existing Heath Building parade with nine residential flats, four retail units with car parking and a gym. In redeveloping the site the applicant, Heath Buildings Ltd, hopes the "high quality buildings" will attract more footfall and "ensure the vitality and viability" of the High Street.

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Locals support a development of sorts, but not at any cost. Residents argued the size of the building is “ridiculous” and would completely dominate and destroy the street scene, and look “entirely out of place in a quaint Surrey village”.

Comparing the development to the equivalent of a “Marriott Hotel being ‘dumped’ in our high street”, one man argued the development will have a profound impact on neighbouring residents living “in the shadow of this monstrosity”.

But a resident who was in favour said: “Oxshott High Street is the heart of the village but the buildings are ‘tatty’. [This development] would enhance the high street.”

Council officers have recommended the proposal for refusal due to the height, bulk and the architectural design being “incongruous” with the character of the area. They added the style of the development would result in a “harmful” loss of privacy, create an “unneighbourly and overbearing impact” to other properties.

A previous application was refused in December 2023. EBC also rejected the application because it did not fully show it could secure private refuse collection for the residential units or that there would be no loss of biodiversity like trees.

Planning documents detail the applicant’s vision of a “traditional” building which reflects the “imposing and often neo-classical/Georgian style houses” in the area. Responding to the previous refusal of the scheme, the applicant has designed a ‘pitched roof’ slanting from the centre, to lower the overall height of the building.

The three-storey development is proposed to be two metres taller than other buildings on the high street. But the applicant said there would be “no harm” in introducing a “slightly taller building” on the high street as there was not a consistent level.

But people have still taken opposition, one resident said: “The Real Voice of Oxshott has spoken and it’s a ‘NO’”. Others have voiced persistent concerns around the height and overall bulk of the proposal. One resident criticised the plans as “excessive and overwhelming” with “little architectural merit”.

Concerns were also raised about losing trees around the retail parade, some with tree protection orders (TPOs) like the walnut tree.

Although the council’s tree officer made no initial objections to the scheme, a late submission by Midgarth Residents’ Association (MRA) found the proposed development would result in a detrimental impact on protected trees. This is because it is claimed that the building’s height would reduce growing space and harm the survival of the trees. Taking the report on board, officers have added the concerts around tree preservation as an additional reason for refusal.

Those supporting the plans argue the high street and the building is in “desperate” need for renovation and the investment will spur on economic and business opportunities in the village. A resident argued that “as one of the richest postcodes in the country”, the “quality” upgrade plans was exactly what the residents of Oxshott “should expect”.

Others say the building “needs to be updated” and they would rather have a company which has already invested in the community than an outside developer or a national chain. A resident claimed residents will “lose [the] high street” with all the independent shops if the application is not approved, as national retailers or large-scale development will take over.

Councillors debated the proposal at the south area planning sub-committee on September 11, but referred it to be decided at full planning committee later in the year.

A hat-trick of wins for Epsom and Ewell FC

17 September 2024

Tooting & Mitcham United 0-2 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Saturday 14th September 2024.

After a horrible start to the season with five straight League defeats, it appears that we have now turned the tide as we recorded our third win in a row, all of which have come without conceding a single goal. This 2-0 win at Tooting & Mitcham United’s Imperial Fields was arguably the best all round performance under Warren Burton’s reign, as we nullified any home threat in the opening half an hour before going on to take control of the remaining sixty minutes and leaving the mostly home crowd of 177 severely subdued by the final whistle.

As always, there are some good stats we can pull out of this fine victory. This was the first win for our club on this day since a 6-0 home London League win over Carshalton Athletic in 1938, and it was also our first ever away win on 14th September in our history. Additionally, this was our fourth visit to play Tooting & Mitcham United since they left Sandy Lane and they have yet to beat us there. Finally, the last time we recorded three straight League wins without conceding was in January 2020.

We made two changes to the line up from Saturday’s late win at Camberley Town with Callum Wilson being replaced by Stefan Aiwone and Luke Taylor replacing the injured Axel Kodjo. For the home side, under the Management of former Salt Jamie Byatt and Club Captain Alex Penfold, we came up against two other former Salts in the starting line-up in Mario Quiassaca and Toby McKimm.

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The opening exchanges were slightly in favour of the home side, but consisted mainly of long range efforts clearing our crossbar. Toby Young blocked an early strike that looked like it was on target, but by and large our keeper Dan O'Donovan had very little to do between the posts. We may have been nullifying the home attacks, but weren't creating too much of our own to start with, but that all changed just after the half hour mark when Ali Fofahan did well down the left before pulling the ball back to Carl Oblitey whose powerful shot from twelve yards was kept out well by McKimm. This heralded the start of a good spell for us and Adam Green cleverly set up Luke Miller down the left, where his pull back to Oblitey was also struck on target, although he was denied by McKimm again.

A Green corner bounced off the top of the Tooting & Mitcham crossbar and away, and whilst the home side forced some corners too, ours looked more dangerous. McKimm dropped a deep delivery at the feet of Aiwone, but was able to collect the loose ball before our man had realised what was happening just behind him. Then Ethan Brazier got away on the overlap and his right wing cross was met by the head of Oblitey who saw the ball tipped over the bar by McKimm. I don't think the header was going in, but it could have gone anywhere if it had struck the bar, which it looked like it might, so it was an important intervention by the home keeper. Our opponents fashioned a couple of dangerous moves just before the break, but Kionte Gillfillian-Waul was there in time to clear a ball in from the left before it would have been tapped in at the far post. Then a short corner and delivery to the near post was headed just wide of O'Donovan's right hand post, but it would have been harsh had we gone in trailing at half time, which ended goalless.

We had completed the opening forty-five minutes in the ascendency, even though our failure to score in the first half has now been extended to eleven matches; one short of our club record set in 1981/82. Still, the players had only been back on the field for just ninety seconds when we broke through. Fofahan sent an aimless looking throw towards Oblitey, who was well marked, but he out-jumped two defenders to head the ball back to Green. He then gave the ball back to Fofahan out on the touchline, from where he ran at goal, beating a man on the way and then drilling a low shot just inside McKimm's right hand post from the edge of the area in the 47th minute.

O'Donovan had to make a fairly comfortable save from distance, but we were soon back on the attack and in the 57th minute we extended our lead after one of our corners wasn't properly cleared and the ball pinged around in the penalty area before striking Fofahan and looping up kindly for Oblitey to nod the loose ball past McKimm from just four yards to claim the goal his performance deserved and to give us a decisive two goal cushion.

Although the scoring was finished for the day, we continued to press. On the hour Miller put Green through on the left, but McKimm was out quickly to block his shot on goal with Taylor firing the rebound wide from just inside the area. Then Green picked up what looked like a harsh yellow card, although it might have been for persistent fouls. From their subsequent free kick, a deep delivery was headed back into the path of a striker, but from twelve yards he scuffed his shot and the grateful O'Donovan was able to make the straightforward save.

We should have scored a third goal after Gillfillian-Waul and Fofahan combined well on the left, with the delivery being side-footed wide by Green from only eight yards before Fofahan intercepted a pass moments later and set up Oblitey who laid the ball into the path of Miller whose powerful shot was directed straight at McKimm, who blocked it up and away.

The game started to get a little niggly and a couple of yellow cards were waved in the direction of frustrated home players for lunges and their day was summed up around ten minutes from time with a shot on goal that was so high it cleared the stand roof. If you've been to Imperial Fields, you'll realise how high that is!

I've referred before to there being very few substitutions in recent matches, and again we went for over 80 minutes with the starting eleven, but we made a couple in the closing minutes with both scorers being taken off in order and being replaced by Ethan Nelson-Roberts and Sean Anderson respectively. Nelson- Roberts then sent over a left wing cross, but his delivery was just ahead of Miller and he couldn't keep the shot on target. In the final minute of injury time Anderson sent over a good deep cross and Miller's header was inches away, nestling in the side netting.

It didn't matter though and after five minutes of injury time the whistle blew to confirm a very strong performance from our team. There was more good news today as our former Manager Adrian Hill was present at the game and was able to confirm at the age of 79 that his health is a lot better than it was a couple of years ago. He looked much stronger after going through some difficult days, as indeed did our team!

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Toby Young, Stefan Aiwone, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Luke Taylor, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Ethan Nelson-Roberts for Fofahan (84), Sean Anderson for Oblitey (87)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

A question of Surrey's future budget

17 September 2024



Surrey County Council (SCC) are currently seeking feedback from residents on how the council uses its financial

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resources. These views will help inform the draft budget for the 2025/26 financial year.

Each year, the council is required to balance its budget so that spending does not exceed income from council tax, grants and other sources.

Cllr **David Lewis**, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, said: “Although Surrey’s finances are well managed, the council is still facing huge challenges that are affecting the local government sector and society more widely.

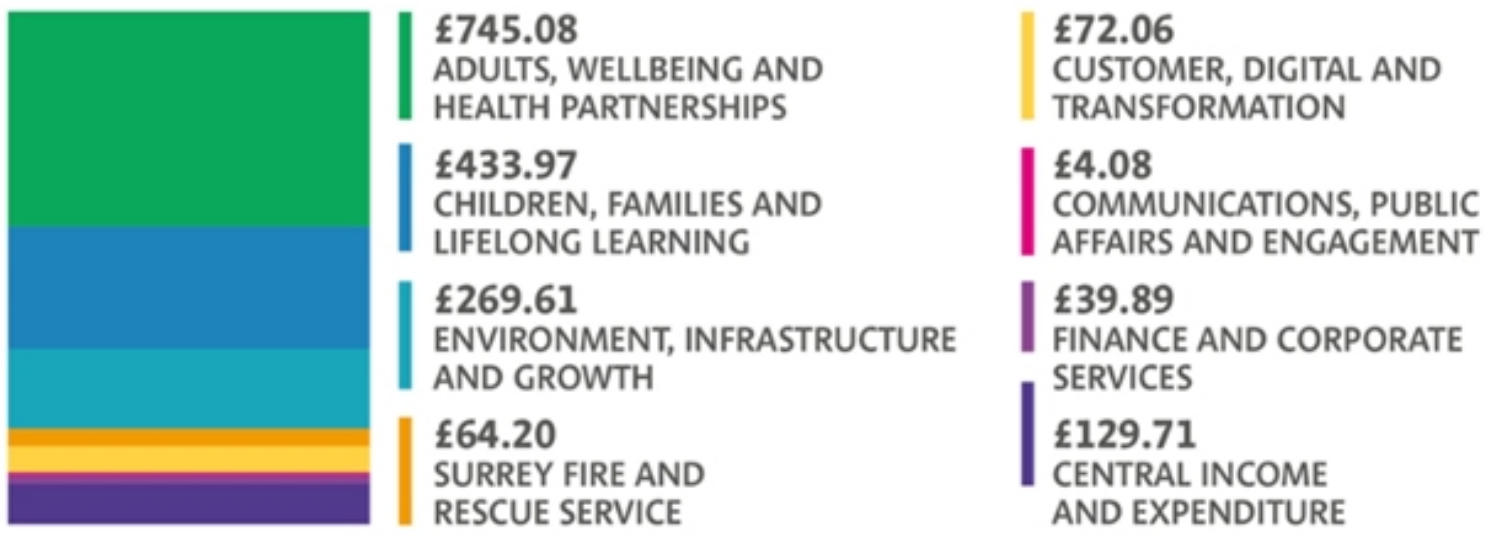
“Higher costs, reduced funding from central government, and rapidly rising demand have all increased the cost of providing vital services to residents. As a result, the way in which we use our financial resources is becoming more constrained.

“Feedback from residents is essential in informing decision-making and making sure that the budget is spent on the right things.”

Most of the council’s budget is spent on looking after those people who need us most, through Adults Social Care and Children’s services.

A significant portion is also allocated to keeping people safe and preventing or responding to serious incidents, particularly across Surrey Fire & Rescue Service, Trading Standards, and environmental services.

The diagram below shows how the budget is allocated across all the services that the council provides for the 2024/25 financial year. The figures are based on the average Band D Council Tax per year of £1,758.60.



Some areas funded by specific grants are not reflected in these statistics.
Residents are encouraged to complete the consultation survey and have their say by Monday 30 September 2024. Responses are anonymous and the survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Consultation feedback will inform a draft of the budget, which will be considered by the council’s Cabinet in November 2024. If the draft is agreed, SCC will consult further over the winter on proposals for balancing the budget in 2025/25. In February 2025, the council will then agree the budget for next year and the medium term financial strategy covering the next five years.

Would members of Epsom’s H band stump up?

17 September 2024



People living in homes in the top council band will be asked to help the community after plans to ask Band H homeowners to voluntarily pay into a council-run charity were approved. **Waverley Borough Council**’s executive committee launched the drive in the hope of encouraging people to support community projects.

Though a “voluntary tax” is a contradiction in terms, is it a good idea for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council? Plenty of H band properties in the Borough and plenty of urgent causes for the Council to support locally? Let us know your views. Epsom and Ewell Times.

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The Voluntary Council Tax Initiative is based on a similar scheme running in Westminster Council which brings in an additional £300,000 each year to the London borough. Council's have to provide certain services by law but community projects such as leisure centres, parks, mobility buses and homeless schemes are considered to fall outside that bracket and are under increased pressure from budget cutbacks.

Waverley Borough Council hopes the new voluntary scheme will help save deeply important resident services and will now ask Band H rate payers first, if they back the idea, and second, for input into which community groups to support. The money, the council made clear, is not for potholes or street lighting.

Councillor **Tony Fairclough**, deputy leader of the council, said that Westminster talked about support for the homeless and that any money Waverley raised would likely follow suit. He added: "The first and most important thing is that this will be a voluntary scheme and indeed that is one of the key points of the consultation.

"It will invite residents of Band H properties to make a voluntary contribution to local projects or the provision of local services. We will consult with the residents of those Band H properties to ascertain whether they are minded to support this scheme and assuming that they are, which type of projects or services should be supported by the revenues generated from it.

"This is a concept that has proved to be very successful in Westminster and in many ways, in my opinion, it actually addresses a slight flaw in government policy, namely that council tax bands are probably a bit too limited. Going out and speaking to Band H homeowners, this is an ideal opportunity for us to, on a voluntary basis, secure revenue for the sort of projects that this council is minded to do."

The smallest homes, those in Band A, pay about £1,500 a year in council tax, while those in the very largest homes (Band H) pay between £4,500 to £4,900. The criteria was set in 1991 and has not been updated since, leading to some to criticise the system as being regressive in nature. Councillors during the meeting on Wednesday, September 3 suggested the voluntary contribution could help redress any imbalance.

Westminster has used the money to fund youth services, tackling rough sleeping and helping those who were lonely and isolated, Cllr **Liz Townsend**, portfolio holder for planning said. She added: "We're all hearing about the black hole in Government, the £22billion black hole, so we are fairly pessimistic about the amount of money that local government perhaps will attract from central government. So we do have to be innovative in the ways we raise additional funds for discretionary services."

Cllr **Kika Mirylees** said: "People must realise that if they are putting this money in, it's not going to go to potholes and things like that. It will go to the benefit of the community. It's not going to be there for your trees or hedges to be trimmed. It's really there to benefit people who are in need of support and it's much more to do with homelessness, because it would be nice for the people to have a home who don't have one."

Image: Jacob Jordaens – Rich man giving to the poor.

Walking the talk on Epsom Downs

17 September 2024



On 10th September, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council hosted a Walk & Talk event at Epsom Downs Racecourse to mark World Suicide Prevention Day. Over 65 people, including residents and representatives from voluntary and statutory organisations, joined this insightful, moving and inspirational event, developed and delivered as part of the council's Suicide Prevention Action Plan, produced in January 2024.

Chris Waller, founder of We Power On, led the walk around Epsom Downs. **Dale Millar** MBE from the Samaritans opened the second part of the evening talking about skills used in conversation and the impactful nature that this can have. **Joe Stroud** from End Stigma Surrey talked about the negative impact that silence can have and how we, as a community, can stand together to break the chains of stigma around mental health. And finally, Chris shared his own experiences including the importance of being able to talk openly. Cllr **Clive Woodbridge**, the Chair of the Council's Community and Wellbeing Committee, also joined him to discuss his journey from crisis to hope.

Local scribe, **Annalees Lim**, designed boards and captured key messages at the event. These boards will be shown at locations around the borough, starting at the Epsom Downs Racecourse and finishing at the Epsom Picturehouse around 10th October to coincide with Mental Health Awareness Day. More information to follow.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee said:"I'm proud that through our

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Suicide Prevention Action Plan, we've been able to provide a platform for residents and organisations to come together and have conversations about mental health and suicide, and also raise awareness of where support and resources can be found for those suffering from mental health issues or directly impacted by the loss of someone to suicide.

A huge thank you to We Power On, Epsom Downs Racecourse, End Stigma Surrey, the Samaritans and to the scribe who captured messages at the event. Thanks also to everyone who volunteered their time at the event. Without the support of all the volunteers and supporting organisations, this event would not have been possible. We look forward to continuing building on these relationships for the benefit of those who need our help the most.

As Chris himself said, "there is hope, and there is help out there".

Funding was allocated by the council from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to We Power On to help residents access support in the borough. Chris, founder of the organisation, led the walk for adults aged 18 and above.

For more information on some of the mental health support and resources available across Epsom & Ewell – https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/resources-support.

Epsom residents score double-century

17 September 2024



Two residents at Linden House Care Home in Epsom have celebrated their 100th birthdays surrounded by fellow residents, relatives, and the dedicated staff at the Surrey-based home.

Edith Valerie Griffiths, known as Val, and Evelyn Houseman marked their milestones with a small but special get together with friends and family. Val and Evelyn, who have both lived rich and active lives, were delighted to share their landmark birthdays with those closest to them.

Val, who was born in Richmond, Surrey, experienced a childhood of frequent moves due to her father's work. Despite the disruptions, Val developed a passion for sports, excelling in tennis, table tennis, ice skating, and skiing. During World War II, she was evacuated to Berkhamsted but returned to London after a year. Val married at the age of 33, becoming a mother to three boys, and is now also a grandmother of three.

Evelyn, a lifelong resident of Epsom, is renowned for her knitting and love of fashion. Having worked as a seamstress, she takes pride in the knitted jumpers she still wears today. Evelyn has always been passionate about music and dance, and she never misses a chance to be the first on the dance floor when Linden House hosts live entertainment.

Maintaining a healthy diet and drinking very little alcohol has helped Val live a long and happy life. Val's family believes that moderation has been key throughout her life but also acknowledge that good genes have played a significant role in her longevity.

Josephine Gbadamosi, manager of Linden House said: "Celebrating Val and Evelyn's 100th birthdays has been a wonderful experience for everyone at Linden House.

"These incredible women have lived rich, full lives, and their stories continue to inspire us all. It's a privilege to have them as part of our community, and we look forward to creating many more happy memories together."

Linden House, located in Epsom, Surrey, is rated 'Good' by the CQC, with an 'Outstanding' rating for its well-led category. Part of Wren Retirement Living, Linden House is managed by Healthcare Management Solutions, committed to providing high-quality care in a supportive and engaging environment.

Surrey scientists invite children to reach for the stars

17 September 2024

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Children need to dream big and reach for the stars to become the country's future space engineers and budding astronauts, say the organisers of Guildford's World Space Week High Street Takeover.

Scientists from the University of Surrey and the Institute of Physics are encouraging young people, who may one day want to build the rockets and technology that make their way to space, to join them at Guildford High Street and Tunsgate Quarter, all day on Saturday, 5 October.

Event-goers will have the chance to get up close and personal with a miniature version of the Mars Rover and find out how it works on Mars; thanks to the Observatory Science Centre, there will be a state-of-the-art pop-up planetarium. Researchers from Surrey will be on hand to showcase the range of fascinating space-based work taking place at the University, and employers from the local space sector will be on hand to answer any questions that young people may have about working in the field.

Professor Adam Amara, Head of the School of Mathematics and Physics at the University of Surrey, who is also an astrophysicist, said:

"Our primary goal as educators is to inspire people – and that is why our University is delighted to once again host this event with our partners from the Institute of Physics.

"The space sector in our region is a truly exciting, forward-thinking place and the goal of events like this is to ensure that the sector has a pipeline of skilled young people who dream big and reach for the stars."

For more information on other activities happening at the World Space Week High Street Takeover, visit our website.

Image: credit: Grant Pritchard / University of Surrey

UCA bring Austen character into 21st century

17 September 2024



Fans of **Jane Austen**'s Pride and Prejudice will finally get the chance to have a conversation with their literary hero when speaking with the world-first Elizabeth Bennet avatar – Lizzy.

Created by StarPal in collaboration with **University for the Creative Arts** (UCA), the avatar has been developed to mirror the human qualities of Austen's character as detailed in the novel, such as empathy and humour. Her conversations, which fans will have with her face-to-avatar, will evolve, giving each person who talks to Lizzy a unique experience.

How does Lizzy feel about being a world-first? She said: "It is quite an interesting notion indeed – I must say being Elizabeth Bennet in a world far removed from my own time is an unexpected but intriguing experience. It allows me to share the intricacies of our society and my life with new audiences."

Following consultation and guidance from Jane Austen's House in Hampshire, Lizzy's knowledge bank has been curated from a selection of novels, manuscripts and period-accurate information.

Lizzy is set within a Regency-style background. Her dress and hair have been designed and created by students from the Games Arts and Digital Fashion courses at UCA, drawing on fashion templates from the period.

Sophy Smith, Director of Games and Creative Technology at UCA and the originator of the project, added: "It is so exciting to finally be able to lift Elizabeth Bennet off the page and to be able to have real-time conversations with her. To be able to cross time in this way is joyful – you get a real sense of speaking directly to someone from the 18th century. And she has such a strong personality! Imagine – you can now have Elizabeth Bennet as your friend, to chat with throughout the day and offer you advice.

"This technology has the potential to transform experiences within both the museum and heritage, as well the education sector. Visitors to Jane Austen's House, will have the opportunity to not only experience the renowned author's home but also engage directly with one of her most famous characters. And think about how it could transform learning – instead of

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only having text-based revision guides, students can now learn about literature by speaking directly to the characters."

Director of Jane Austen's House, **Lizzie Dunford**, said: "It has been fascinating to watch this project develop, and to witness the innovative staff and students at UCA developing these new technologies, and new ways of accessing literary and cultural heritage."

Tanguy Dewavrin, the COO of StarPal, the company which built the avatar, commented Lizzy is continually surprising them: "It's amazing how real she is – she's just so impressive."

Anya Haber, an MA Digital Fashion student who created the dress in 3D, added: "This project brought the ideation into the digital, but historical garments can be tricky to create accurately, so there was a mix of history and modernity. It was exciting bringing to life the cut of dress, accessories, and embroideries – all inspired by historical drawings and descriptions. It showed how useful technology can be in a historical setting, letting fans engage with fictional characters…and that's just the beginning."

Fans will have the chance to interact with Lizzy if they visit the Learning Centre at Jane Austen's House between September and mid-December – included with House entry.

A uniform approach to Epsom's schools

17 September 2024



Epsom and Ewell's new M.P., **Helen Maguire**, has called on local schools to address the growing concern over costly school uniforms, reaching out to 15 headteachers on 5th September. In her letter, Maguire urged schools to avoid placing unnecessary financial pressure on families by requiring expensive branded uniforms and PE kits, reflecting concerns raised by parents in her constituency.

Maguire highlighted the financial burden these branded items can create, stating, "It is important to consider if more costly branded kits are necessary." She emphasised that schools should review their uniform policies, particularly in light of the current cost of living crisis.

Schools are already required to follow statutory guidelines on uniform policy, ensuring that the cost of uniforms does not become a barrier for parents when choosing schools. According to this guidance, schools must ensure uniforms are affordable, minimise the use of branded items, attempt to avoid restrictive single-supplier contracts, and offer second-hand uniforms at reduced prices.

In her communication with headteachers in the local area, Maguire pointed to this statutory guidance and suggested that generic, unbranded items from low-cost retailers should be allowed in school uniform policy.

The available data on the average cost of school uniforms, however, remains up for debate. The Schoolwear Association claims the average cost of compulsory secondary school uniforms and sportswear is £101.19 per pupil. In contrast, research by The Children's Society suggests that parents spend an average of £422 a year on secondary school uniforms.

An official branded school sports polo top will typically be in the price range of £10 and £15, whereas a pack of two unbranded sports polo shirts from a lower-cost retailer like ASDA can be purchased for around £4-6. In this case, Maguire's suggestion to allow generic, unbranded clothing could offer struggling families much-needed relief amidst a cost of living crisis.

However, there are differing views on the role of uniforms in schools, and Maguire's approach seems to forget the findings of some of the great minds of Sociology. For instance, Stanley Cohen made the argument that reducing visible differences in dress can help lower social tensions among young people. Renowned sociologist, Émile Durkheim believed that uniforms helped in fostering a sense of community and solidarity, while David Brunsma argued that consistent dress codes promote social equality and reduce status competition based on clothing.

While it's entirely reasonable to want to relieve struggling families of unnecessary financial burdens, it's also important to recognise the value of maintaining uniformity in school dress. The potential impact on children's welfare in a school environment ought to be considered when considering such changes.

The **Epsom & Ewell Times** reached out to multiple schools in the local area for comments on Maguire's stance on the cost of school uniforms. As of now there has been no comments, we await a response to these three questions:

1. How are you addressing concerns around the cost of school uniforms and PE kits for families?
2. Are there any plans to introduce or expand the availability of unbranded or second-hand options for your pupils?
3. What measures are in place to ensure that uniform costs do not become a barrier for students attending your

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school?

As the conversation continues, it remains to be seen whether local schools will adapt their uniform policies to ease the financial strain on families, while still maintaining the sense of unity, equality and school pride that branded uniforms are said to have.

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Seven-race card tips for Epsom Thursday

17 September 2024



Epsom Racecourse hosts its penultimate meeting of the Summer on Thursday with a seven-race card for punters heading to the track.

Racing gets underway at 2.00pm with a novice stakes in class four before the action comes to a close at 5.22pm with a nine-runner handicap in class five.

Read below to discover the latest tips and meeting preview for Epsom's card on Thursday courtesy of BoyleSports, who offer the latest ***horse racing odds*** *throughout the season.*

The opening contest on the Epsom card (2.00) sees a field of seven head to the start for the seven furlong handicap in class four, with the two-year-old's taking centre stage in the opener. Luna Girl was a €95,000 purchase as a yearling for trainer Richard Hannon and ticks plenty of boxes on paper making her debut here. Bold Impact for the Ralph Beckett teams also makes plenty of appeal, a thrice-race maiden who has been beaten as an odds-on favourite twice but could go one place better at Epsom this time around.

Race two on the card (2.35) is a seven furlong handicap in class four and a good field of 15 will be taking it on. Red Mirage was a winner at Catterick in April and followed up with a third in a Chester handicap so is a big player here 1lb lower in the weights. He should see off the inform Roscioli, a winner at Salisbury last month and a very good second of 11 in a Lingfield handicap three weeks ago.

Nine runners will head to the start for the class five handicap over the one mile and two furlong trip to mark race three on Epsom's card (3.10). Imperial Cult gets the nod here for trainers Rachel Cook and John Bridger, only narrowly denied in his handicap bid over this course and distance last month having landed back-to-back all weather wins at Lingfield. Mrembo rates the main danger if she can handle the expected softer conditions at Epsom as she has shown preference for better ground than this previously.

A competitive class four handicap is race four of the afternoon (3.45) with ten runners set to tackle the one mile and four furlong distance. Enochdhu gets the very slight edge here, the slow ground expected to be very much in his favour after a disappointing outing on a faster surface at Kempton last week when he was a disappointing fifth of seven. Of his rivals, Haliphon rates the main danger, the Ian Williams runner arriving off the back of a win at Haydock last time out just a week ago.

Dubawi Time looks very much the one to beat in race five of the meeting (4.20) having been bang in-form prior to flopping at Chelmsford last time around where he didn't appreciate the step up in trip so is back down at a more comfortable distance heading to Epsom, while race six (4.50) can go the way of Chips And Rice, who is in good order for trainer James Fanshawe despite being hampered in-running last time out at this track.

Finally, the card comes to a close with the class five handicap for three-year-old's at 5.22 over the extended mile trip. Preference in the finale heads the way of Tribal Chief for trainer David Menuisier, landing a career-best when winning a ten-runner Kempton handicap last month and has a very progressive profile to boost his chances. Crimson Spirit is a previous course winner and was second at Epsom on his last spin so clearly has a liking for the track and rates the chief threat so can fill out the second spot.

Epsom selections – Thursday

2.00 – Luna Girl

2.35 – Red Mirage

3.10 – Imperial Cult

3.45 – Enochdhu

4.20 – Dubawi Time

4.50 – Chips And Rice

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5.22 – Tribal Chief

Image: Credit Paul. **CC BY 2.0**

Rosebery Park Public Party – Sat 21st Sept.

17 September 2024



Rotary is a global Club of like-minded individuals, friends, leaders, and problem-solvers founded in 1905 in Chicago in the United States, working to give something back to the community they live in. Epsom Rotary Club is celebrating one hundred years of working with the Community in Epsom on 21st September in **Rosebery Park**. This will be a fun filled day for all the family with market stalls, rides for children, entertainment, and food stands. It promises to be a day of family fun and entertainment. [See event entry HERE]

Rotary began its association with the people of Epsom in June 1924 with an inaugural lunch held by local businessmen marking the start of the Rotary Club of Epsom. Early Community involvement provided a member representative on the Epsom Cottage Hospital Committee and supporting street collections for the hospital fund. Very quickly the club provided support for disabled service men at the Star and Garter home and the Club began providing Christmas hampers to local distressed elderly.

The Armed Forces service connection was restored recently in 2020 when Surrey County Council and Royal British Legion Surrey started a monthly hub for military veterans who were potentially isolated and lonely. This is organised by Epsom Rotary and RBL Epsom and Ewell in partnership, with two offshoot activity groups, archery and model making. Over thirty members of various ages, men and women have formed small friendship / support groups of their own and are offered coach outings such as to the D Day Museum Portsmouth. This year we have organised trips to the Poppy Factory in Richmond, and the Christmas lights in the West End.

Veterans' Hub members and supporters

Into the late 1920s/30s Epsom Rotary worked locally as Rotary members played an active role in restarting the Epsom Chamber of Commerce and nationally providing cash and clothing for the hunger marches during the General Strike in 1926. The Club continued to expand its involvement locally during the second World War by supporting Armed Forces personnel at the anti-aircraft gun sites at Ashtead and Headley and the Canadian soldier's military hospital at West Park.

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In the Community the Club was instrumental in starting the Annual Careers exhibition in 1957 and soon after visits to Wisley Gardens were organised for the elderly in the community. In 1957 Epsom Rotary set up a Christmas tree by the clocktower in the town Centre which was an annual event for many years. During the 1970s Thomas the tank engine arrived as part of the Christmas Street collections. The train was constructed by apprentices at Epsom Coaches and remains the centre piece of Christmas collections to this day focussed on Epsom and Langley Vale, now renamed as Tilly the train. These are always joyous occasions with great excitement amongst both children and parents as the train approaches.

Recent years

In 2012 in conjunction with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council the Rotary clubs of Epsom and Ewell organised a Community Fun day at Hook Road arena with a fun fair, pitches for local artisans and charities. This proved highly successful and continued until 2019 until the pandemic.

The Centenary Party in the Park in Rosebery Park is a natural successor to this with the added element that it is a celebration of one hundred years of Epsom Rotary serving the Community. In recent years, the Club has developed more “service related” projects which involves members giving more of their time to work on Community projects. This approach has always been part of the Rotary ethos. Examples include supporting the Veterans Hub highlighted earlier, leasing an allotment from the local Council with a small group of resolute members growing an increasing volume of fruit and vegetables which are donated over the summer months to the Pantry, the Good Company/Food Bank shop in South Street in Epsom.

A current activity is providing support/volunteers to work on an Epsom BID led project called Family Fridays that provides family activities in the town centre for young families in the school summer holidays.
Epsom Rotary continues to prioritise support for young people with regional competitions for Young Musicians, Young Chef and French speaking competitions.

International

The first international visit undertaken by the Club was to the Rotary Club of Rheims in France in 1937 and the Club now has an association with the Rotary Club of Chantilly in France which started in the 1990s and there have been several visits in both directions. This ties in with the town twinning of Epsom and Chantilly and reinforces our shared involvement with the horse racing industry.

The Club has been involved in several international projects with the current focus being AMECA, a small charity in Malawi providing medical services to the local community in a rural setting. The charity has recently built a maternity unit in an area in great need of support for women and children. Secondly, we have supported the Zimbabwe Victims Support Fund for the last five years, which is a small charity supporting dispossessed families, mainly women and children in Zimbabwe.

The future

As we have seen Rotary continues to evolve whilst reacting to the needs in the local community. We face many challenges,

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particularly attracting new members from the diverse spread of residents locally the Club needs to continue to thrive. There is less emphasis on procedure and formality which potentially enables a wider cross-section of the local community to become involved.

Rotary is a unique organisation which like no other, gives opportunities to become involved in education, community support, training, international activities, visits to other countries, social welfare, and hands-on experience. The challenge is to ensure that our Club can adapt to whatever the future holds yet retain our
essential purpose of 'service above self.'

Summary

Throughout the Clubs "100 years in Epsom", it has actively looked for opportunities to take part in local charity projects. One of the threads which runs through the Club's history is its contribution to the local community and its close relationship with the Borough Council. From the beginning its membership has included ex-mayors, councillors, and senior officers of the local authority. Over the past one hundred years it has participated in civic ceremonies, attended the annual Mayor's reception and nowadays the incoming mayor is an honorary member of the Club.

Jim Munns – Joint President Epsom Rotary Club

If you wish to join Epsom Rotary you may apply HERE

Sutton and Epsom Rugby off to a flying-start

17 September 2024



Sutton & Epsom RFC opened their 2024-25 league account against Old Colfeians, on Saturday 7th September, over whom they had completed an impressive double last season. There were nine changes in personnel from the last time the Black & Whites ran out at Rugby Lane in the concluding fixture against Reeds Weybridge. Among the multiple changes were six debutants: Arun Watkins on the wing; Finlay Scott and Adam Bibby in the centres; Pete Gordon at hooker; and Callum Hilton and Josh Rea ready to come off the bench. It very much had the feel of a new beginning for the Surrey outfit, with not a single player in the same position as in the curtain-raiser from last season. When the final whistle blew, the new-look XV had surpassed all expectations with a thrilling 50-7 victory.

Captain Bunting kicked off the campaign, and after ten minutes it was the hosts who opened the scoring. Pouncing on a clearance that failed to make touch, Sutton advanced into the opposition 22. Debutant hooker Pete Gordon exploited the blindside to race home untouched. Freddy Bunting added the extras for a 7-0 lead. As S&E dominated the early exchanges, the visitors' task became harder when winger Estefan Ellis was awarded a yellow card for a high tackle. The visitors, now a man down, were swiftly punished. Bunting kicked into the corner, and from the platform of the attacking lineout, Rob Hegarty forced his way over from short yardage. The conversion failed, but Sutton & Epsom held a useful 12-0 lead at the end of the first quarter.

The Rugby Lane team pressed hard to maximise their numerical advantage, gathering the restart and running the ball back with interest. Soon, winger Jordan Huie was threatening to add another score. The pack rumbled remorselessly forward before the ball was spun out to Gareth O'Brien, who jinked, stepped, and stretched out to touch down for a try. Freddy Bunting slotted over the kick for 19-0. The visitors were restored to their full complement, but the card had cost them 12 points. Old Colfeians struggled to gain a foothold in the contest, as errors and penalties frustrated their rhythm and gifted territory to the eager hosts. As the interval approached, S&E had another 5-metre lineout. Once again, the forwards controlled the ball and pressured the line before a timely release to the backs offered Gareth O'Brien the opportunity to cross the whitewash again. Freddy Bunting celebrated the bonus point score with another conversion, making it 26-0.

Sutton made personnel changes as debutants Rea and Hilton replaced Jones and Hilton. In the generous time allowed for stoppages, Colfeians started to find their feet and pressed for a morale-boosting score before the break. However, the Black & Whites' resolute defence neutralised the attacks, and the sides turned around with the hosts enjoying an impressive 26-0 lead. It was clear that the men from Horn Park would need an early score in the second period to initiate a comeback and try to sow the seeds of doubt in the confident Sutton squad.

Any hope for the visiting supporters of an early score was denied by a combination of Sutton's intensity in defence and Colfeians' mounting error count. S&E replaced Pete Gordon with Dan Jones as Lawrence Elliott came off the bench to swap with Adam Bibby. As the final quarter approached, it was Sutton & Epsom who recorded try number five. Arun

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Watkins reacted fastest to a loose ball and burst through a gap to score his first try for the home team. Freddy Bunting made it four from five as the lead stretched to 33-0.

With the score and the clock against them, the Colfeians' mountainous task was approaching Everest-like proportions. However, five minutes later, a flicker of light emerged from the abyss as Captain Andy O'Malley, carrying a couple of Sutton tacklers on his back, scored. Ryan Napper provided the conversion, making it 33-7. Sutton's fatalists were soon relieved when, minutes later, a familiar electrifying break by Dan Jones gifted Freddy Bunting a try. However, to the surprise of many, the usually reliable kicker saw his effort drift wide, leaving the score at 38-7.

Unfortunately, scrum-half Laurence Wise was forced to depart with a shoulder injury after a sterling performance as the game entered the period that Mr Ben Stewart's watch deemed necessary. There was still plenty of time for the Rugby Lane crowd to enjoy a brace of tries from debutant centre Finlay Scott. The first, an unconverted effort, followed two breaks, and Scott was on hand as the beneficiary. The second came after Colfeians' scrambling defence conceded a penalty try and collected a yellow card. A precise cross-field kick opened up the defence for the final try. Normal service was resumed as Freddy Bunting bisected the uprights for a 50-7 win.

There was an air of almost uncomfortable optimism before the kick-off at Rugby Lane, as pre-season had gone well, and there was evident intensity in defence and improved continuity between the forwards and backs. Lest one forget, S&E had conceded an uncomfortable 598 points last league campaign, and as the legendary coach of the University of Alabama football team, Bear Bryant, wisely stated: "Offence wins games… defence wins championships." However, few would have expected Sutton to break two all-time league records. Not only did they eclipse their previous points total of 49 against Bedford Athletic in 2018 by scoring 50, but they also surpassed the 31-point winning margin of their 2005 45-14 thrashing of Gosport & Fareham. What was most impressive was that the Black & Whites had integrated numerous new combinations at half-back and in the centres, with a debutant hooker in Pete Gordon. For a delighted coaching staff, this performance must bode well for the rest of the season. For the unfortunate Old Colfeians, it was one of those days where things simply did not go right. The first game of the season should never be a barometer for the whole fixture list, as numerous hurdles, from weddings to injuries, can distort the true picture.

The campaign will continue next weekend, Saturday 14th September, with a trip to Balmoral Avenue, where Sutton enjoyed one of their finest games of the last campaign, defeating the then-league-leaders Beckenham 26-22 on an afternoon notable for extraordinary winds.

Sutton & Epsom: O'Brien, Watkins, Scott, Bibby, Huie, Bunting ©, Wise, Boaden, Gordon, Gibson, Glanville, McTaggart, Pulvirenti, Jones & Hegarty.
Replacements: Hilton, Rea & Elliott.

Old Colfeians: Edwards, Chapman, Sleep, Griffiths, Ellis, Napper, Spaczil, Rameaux, Holland-Oliver, Whicello, O'Malley ©, T. Walker, M. Walker, Carter & Gray.
Replacements: Seva, Cunningham & Ramdhan.

Photo credit: Robin Kennedy

91st minute strike wins for Epsom and Ewell FC

17 September 2024



Camberley Town 0-1 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Saturday 7th September 2024

In my preview for this match, I wrote that on this day in history we had played a club record of 21 matches without a draw, but that sequence came under serious threat at Krooner Park where we required a 91st minute winner from Ali Fofahan to break the stalemate and clinch all three points with the only goal against Camberley Town.

On a personal note, this was my thirty-fourth visit to Camberley Town's ground, and the 66th time I had watched these two teams do battle. These clubs have now met each other on 95 occasions, which by some distance makes the Krooners our most regular opponent. However, it has been a long time since we had been this superior against them, as the last dozen or so results hadn't been great, with exception of a 2-1 win here last February. More relevantly, this win was our second in a row and also our second clean sheet in a row, which we had not achieved in the League since October of 2022.

Warren Burton made just one change from the eleven that defeated Chipstead on Saturday with Fofahan returning to the starting line up on the left hand side of midfield after being absent on Tuesday. Stefan Aiwone made way, although he was unavailable for this match, so it isn't clear whether he was injured, or indeed, whether he'd have made way for Fofahan had he actually been here! Kionte Gillfillian-Waul moved from the left wing to left back with Toby Young moving into the centre of defence as we unsurprisingly retained the same formation that had looked so solid against Chipstead.

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The opening exchanges were fairly even as we kicked off heading up the Krooner Park slope. The hosts had a first chance as early as the eighth minute when Stan Jones ran onto a ball over the top of our defence, only for Gillfillian-Waul to get across and block his shot. Then Camberley's Captain Regan Hitch got on the end of a Luis Hamblin free kick at the far post, but his header was easy enough for Dan O'Donovan to field without undue alarm. O'Donovan was looking confident after recording his first clean sheet for the club four days previously and was often out to claim the ball with minimal fuss.

Our first real opportunity came just after the twenty minute mark when Adam Green's free kick was headed out by the first man to Axel Kodjo whose strike was not far wide of Ben Grummitt's left hand post from twenty yards. This heralded the start of some good Epsom pressure and Gillfillian-Waul and Fofahan produced some good interplay, ending in a shot from the latter that was blocked by a defender, with Green's follow-up being deflected wide. From the corner Green received the ball back and his shot from an angle was on target, only for another defender to get in the way.

Green appeared to be pulled back in the area, but the referee wasn't interested, although Luke Miller was then fouled in a similar way just outside the area, which was given in our favour. However, Green's free kick cleared the crossbar by about a yard. During this time though Kodjo picked up an injury and had to limp off, being replaced by Luke Taylor.

Grummitt punched clear a Salts corner which then led to a Camberley break, but Gillfillian-Waul did well to recover the situation before it got too serious. Our new signing has looked most impressive in recent weeks, particularly in the first half of matches, and it is almost easy to forget that Ethan Nelson-Roberts has been missing for these last three games. We also looked dangerous on the right wing with fit again Ethan Brazier linking well with Miller who sent a ball right into the danger area, where Taylor and Carl Oblitey were inches away from turning it into the empty net, although the Assistant's flag was up for offside anyway.

Craig Dundas picked up a yellow card for kicking the ball away and we had one final scare in injury time when O'Donovan came out of his area to clear and instead of putting it in row Z, he struck it against Hamblin and was most fortunate to see the ball rebound off him and out for a goal kick. Moments later, he showed he had learned his lesson as he sent the ball flying way over the Krooner Park clubhouse as the referee blew the half time whistle!

This was our tenth match of the season and it is important to note that we haven't scored in the first half of any of these matches! For those who love a stat, this is now our joint second longest run in club history, matched in 1972/73 and 1992/93 and only exceeded in 1981/82 when we went for twelve matches without scoring in the opening forty-five minutes. Strange really, as we had arguably the strongest team in modern times at that point, and matches against reigning non-League Champions Altrincham and Quadruple winners that season, Leytonstone and Ilford were both part of this twelve match run.

Going down the hill in the second half Louis Lindsay picked up a yellow card for a similar offence to that of Dundas in the first half, although Dundas then did it again moments later and despite the protests from the home team, he was fortunate indeed not to pick up what would have been one of the softest dismissals of his career. However, the game gradually began to tilt in our favour and although Fofahan and Hitch picked up yellow cards for the dictionary definition of "handbags" we were creating most of the pressure, but with one issue; we weren't actually causing Grummit any trouble in his goal. In fact the hosts probably should have taken the lead in the 68th minute when a left wing cross was flicked on to Hamblin at the far post, but he got it all wrong, spooning the ball over our bar from close range. Maybe emboldened by our escape, we were back on the attack soon after and Taylor made a good overlap on the right, although Oblitey was unable to get his header on target from Taylor's delivery.

The temperature of the game went up a few degrees in the 74th minute as a long ball down the right found Miller and his ball across goal was turned into the net from twelve yards by Fofahan, but celebrations were then muted by the raising of the offside flag. There were a few Epsom supporters in different places who thought the decision was a wrong one, but none were level with the incident, which the Assistant quite clearly was. However, a cringe worthy episode then followed as both our Vice-Chairman and Chairman, who were also out of line, both literally and metaphorically, were both clearly heard giving a lot of grief to the Assistant about his decision, followed by that feeble plaintive shout we've heard before of "we've got the video", almost as if they thought the referee would turn around and say, "you know what, thanks for this, you're right, I'll just allow the goal!" Memo to our people who really should know better, it won't happen, stop embarrassing yourselves and set a better example!

Fortunately, the incident didn't stop our momentum as we were in full flow by now although another contentious incident followed when Grummitt punched clear after a collision with his own player, only for the free kick to be awarded against us! Still we attacked and Oblitey sent his header from a Miller cross wide. O'Donovan had to be alert to come out of his area to head a break off, literally, with his head before Camberley sent a header wide at our far post. It would be their last opportunity and in the first minute of injury time Miller's low ball in struck Oblitey and fell kindly for Fofahan to stick the ball away at Grummitt's near post from eight yards out to register his first goal for our club and clinch the points.

Maybe the goal had a touch of fortune about it, but it was a deserved winner and we now sit in sixteenth position, level with the recently vanquished Chipstead, who only sit above us on goals scored. I'm still a bit puzzled about our lack of substitutions at present, with just three made in three matches, but the early season form that left us at the foot of the table has now been netted off with these two wins and to use a football analogy, we are back in the game. Saturday's trip to Tooting & Mitcham United; a team that haven't beaten us at home since they were playing at Sandy Lane, are on paper, a better team than Camberley Town and will provide a better idea of how good we are currently, but for now we are outside the relegation positions for the first time this season, which is pleasing to report!

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Toby Young, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Axel Kodjo, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Luke Taylor for Kodjo (29)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

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Government Minister immerses herself in NESCOT

17 September 2024



Staff and students were delighted to host Baroness **Jacqui Smith**, the Department for Education's Minister of State for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education on her visit to **Nescot** (North East Surrey College of Technology) in **Ewell Epsom** on Tuesday, 3 September.

Nescot Principal and CEO, **Julie Kapsalis** and **Chris Muller**, Chair of Governors, welcomed the Minister and were proud to showcase the college's state-of-the-art facilities, courses, study programmes and skills provision. The Minister had a tour of the Skills Park that included meeting students, apprentices, staff and the college's employer partners.

Upon arrival, the Minister met Creative Media student, Charlie who won gold at WorldSkills UK 2023, the college's new alpacas, Dolly and Florence (from the on-site farm) and Rhubarb, the assistance dog.

The Minister was introduced to students studying on Nescot's new courses in Construction Skills for Highway Maintenance delivered in partnership with leading highway maintenance contractor, Ringway. She observed demonstrations from students who were learning to lay concrete slabs and drive virtual diggers.

Supporting the Government's ambition to grow apprenticeships, the Minister met apprentices from the construction industry, from Ridgeback, Premier Heating and Watkins Cole. She heard how Nescot has supported many of the students through progression pathways and finding employers. She was particularly interested to hear how Nescot is working to recruit more women into the construction trades through role models and working with employers including Wates.

The Minister was shown the college's new state-of-the-art immersive learning spaces with virtual reality driving simulators and a variety of artificial intelligence tools offering students an innovative learning experience. The Minister also met Pepper, the humanoid and programmable robot from The Sussex and Surrey Institute of Technology (IoT) at Nescot. The IoT offers specialist courses and apprenticeships available in digital technologies to equip learners with the relevant skills in an increasingly tech reliant world.

Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO along with Nescot's senior leaders had the opportunity to speak to the Minister about some of the college's challenges and successes. She said, "We are thrilled and honoured that the Minister chose to visit Nescot at the start of the academic year. The FE sector plays a critical role in not just the training and education of young people and adults, but it is at the forefront of enabling social mobility and meeting the local skills and employment needs."

Essential to Nescot's success are the college's relationships with businesses and the community. Ringway, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Surrey Chambers and Wates had the opportunity to meet with the Minister to talk about their skills needs and work with the college.

Lewis Bridgman, Service Director, Ringway said,"The collaboration between Ringway and Nescot is a shining example of how local partnerships can foster economic growth and community development in Surrey. By investing in the next generation of engineers, the community is setting a strong foundation for long-term prosperity within the delivery of the Surrey Highways service. This approach not only benefits current residents but also ensures that the future workforce is well-equipped to maintain and enhance the region's infrastructure, contributing to a robust and sustainable economy."

Julie added, "On behalf of all our staff and students, I thank the Minister for taking the time out of her busy schedule to visit us. We hope our wonderful staff and students (and animals) have left a lasting impression. I would also like to thank our employer partners for their ongoing support and collaboration."

The visit concluded with plastering student CJ presenting the Minister with a sculpture of a dog made by her department.

Image: Baroness Jacqui Smith, the Department for Education's Minister of State for Skills road-testing the vehicle simulator in Nescot's new immersive learning space.

What are the solutions to Epsom's homeless crisis?

17 September 2024

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Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, like many local authorities across England, is grappling with a growing homelessness crisis, as highlighted in a recent press release. [Click here for full press release]. The council, which is governed by the **Residents Associations** (RA), has laid out the stark realities of the situation, detailing the pressures it faces and the steps it is taking to address the problem. This has sparked responses from various political parties, local campaign groups, and concerned residents, each presenting their own perspective on how best to tackle the issue.

The council's press release reveals alarming statistics, positioning Epsom & Ewell among the top seven boroughs outside of London with the highest number pro rata of homeless households in temporary accommodation. With more than £1.6 million spent on nightly paid accommodation last year, and many families placed outside the borough, the human and financial costs are escalating. Councillor **Hannah Dalton**, (RA Stoneleigh) Chair of the Epsom & Ewell Residents Association, highlighted the "enormous human impact" of this crisis, pointing out the disruption to education and the health challenges faced by those in temporary accommodation.

Councillor **Neil Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee, echoed these sentiments, stating, "The vast majority of homeless households are those who cannot afford suitable accommodation," and he pointed to the council's Homelessness Strategy as a key tool in mitigating the crisis. The council's initiatives include a Rent Deposit Scheme, a Private Sector Leasing Scheme, and efforts to bring empty properties back into use. However, both Cllr Dalton and Cllr Woodbridge acknowledge that these measures are only partial solutions, and significant action is needed to achieve a sustainable resolution.

Opposition Parties Call for Central Government Support

In response to the council's press release, opposition parties have voiced their concerns and offered their own solutions. Liberal Democrat Councillor **Alison Kelly** (College) criticised the council's approach as "sticking plaster solutions," emphasizing the need for central government to provide financial incentives for social housing development, particularly on brownfield sites. She pointed out that increasing local housing allowances would provide immediate relief for those struggling to afford rent, arguing that this would reduce the number of families pushed into temporary accommodation.

Cllr Kelly's comments reflect a broader call for government intervention. "The rental increases and the continuing cost of living crisis mean many can't keep a roof over their head without going into debt," she said, urging the government to address these systemic issues to prevent homelessness in the first place.

Green Belt Protection vs. Housing Need

A significant debate centres around the use of green belt land for housing. The campaigning group **Epsom Green Belt**'s spokesperson **Katherine Alexande**r criticised the council for failing to plan adequately for affordable housing, accusing it of prioritising expensive developments over genuinely affordable homes. They advocate for using brownfield sites to provide low-cost housing, arguing that this would meet local needs without sacrificing green spaces.

"Destroying our valuable Green Belt without providing truly affordable housing would be unforgivable," she said, pointing to the council's own evidence that identified the high quality of the green belt land. She called for creative use of identified brownfield sites, such as the Town Hall site and former gas works area, to accommodate affordable housing.

Conservative Councillors Criticise Council's Approach

Conservative Councillors for Horton, **Bernie Muir** and **Kieran Persand**, also weighed in, accusing the council of systemic failures. Cllr Muir argued that the council's focus on green belt development was a "lazy and short-termist approach," and that the council had not adequately explored the potential of brownfield sites. "I completely accept that we need social and affordable housing," said Muir, "but the council is opting for the easy option rather than the optimal solution."

Cllr Persand highlighted what he saw as a lack of proper investigation into alternative development strategies, including multi-use and multi-purpose sites. He suggested that large-scale developments, common in other towns, could meet housing needs while also providing economic benefits, such as increased footfall for local businesses and opportunities for local graduates.

Labour Councillor Demands Immediate Action on Social Housing

Labour Councillor **Kate Chinn** (Court) was sharply critical of the Residents Associations' handling of the housing crisis, "As the Residents Association boast they have had control of the council for over 80 years, it is absolutely astonishing that they have put out a press notice highlighting their own failures on housing and homelessness." She added "When it comes to supporting homeless people, sending them to temporary accommodation away from friends, family and schools is highly damaging and the council is boasting about placing families in the private rented housing that it says itself is "expensive and insecure"."

Cllr Chinn called for the Town Hall site [see Epsom and Ewell Times report HERE on Town Hall development] to be used for social housing, insisting that the council should ensure 40% of any new homes built there are for social rent. She pointed to the successful development of mixed affordable and social housing in Hollymoor Lane as a model to replicate,

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advocating for an immediate start on building more council houses.

“The council needs strong leadership and a Community and Wellbeing committee that has a laser focus on housing and homelessness,” she stated, calling for more resources for the housing team to manage the increasing demands placed on them.

Public Sentiment Reflects Diverse Concerns

Residents also voiced their opinions, questioning how Epsom & Ewell ended up among the worst boroughs for homelessness. Some suggested that the borough might be seen as a “soft touch” for homelessness registrations, while others pointed out that the affordability criteria used for new housing developments do not realistically address the needs of those facing homelessness. “A 20% discount on a £750k home on Green Belt does not help with homelessness,” said one informant, advocating for lower-cost housing solutions on brownfield land.

The Path Forward

The council’s press release and the responses it has provoked highlight the complexity of the housing crisis in Epsom & Ewell. While the council has implemented a range of initiatives, there is a clear consensus that more needs to be done, both locally and at the national level. The debate over green belt versus brownfield development, the call for greater government support, and the need for genuinely affordable housing options are central to finding a sustainable solution.

As Councillor Woodbridge remarked, “This is a situation which requires significant action to bring about a long-term and sustainable solution.” With various stakeholders advocating different approaches, the challenge for Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will be to find a balance that addresses the immediate needs of homeless residents while planning for a future that includes both affordable housing and the preservation of the borough’s natural environment.

Related reports:

Epsom and Ewell Press Release on Homelessness

Stoneleigh library flats for homeless

Council Grapples with Rising Cost of Homelessness

Do good intentions square with homeless savings?

Council targeting the homeless

Image – Street View Google and added persons with suitcases at Epsom’s Travelodge (frequently used by Epsom and Ewell Council for temporary accommodation for the homeless)

Surrey Business Leaders Forum re-booted

17 September 2024



Businesses across Surrey now have a much greater voice in guiding the growth of the county’s economy thanks to the relaunched and revitalised Surrey Business Leaders Forum.

Just weeks after the government handed Surrey County Council greater strategic powers to support economic development across the county, steps have been taken to ensure the private sector has a stronger voice and is right at the heart of local decision-making.

The Surrey Business Leaders Forum brings together close to 40 individuals representing a diverse range of businesses – from SMEs to Surrey-based multinationals, and including businesses from Surrey’s priority sectors alongside employer representative bodies.

The Forum will be a driving force to help raise awareness of local business and economic needs and act as a local business champion to ensure businesses have a voice in decision-making that impacts the local economy. Acting as an independent advisory group, the Forum will ensure businesses can input, challenge, and guide the Council’s approach to growing the economy.

The revamped forum met for the first time in May, and this week took part in a workshop to support the development of a new economic strategy for Surrey.

Matt Furniss, the Council’s Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said: *“Surrey has a fantastic economic story to tell, with more than 110,000 businesses generating over £50 billion to the UK economy.*

We know there is more that we can do to work with our private sector to deliver real benefits to our residents and communities, so we’ve taken steps to move quickly to make the most of the new powers from government, including creating Business Surrey, which provides free and accessible support to all Surrey businesses.

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"Ensuring businesses are at the heart of our decision-making process can only strengthen that approach. I look forward to working with businesses to deliver on our priority to grow Surrey's economy in a sustainable way, while ensuring no one is left behind."

Chris Hurren, the Chair of the Business Leaders Forum and partner at RSM UK, a leading provider of audit, tax and consulting services, said: *"The Surrey Business Leaders Forum brings together an exciting and diverse group of local business leaders who want to be a driving force in shaping Surrey's economic future and be a voice for all businesses in Surrey.*

"Their knowledge and experiences from the private sector will play a key role in helping shape local decision-making."

The Council took the role as Surrey's strategic economic leader in April this year, a role that was previously held by the county's two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Enterprise M3 and Coast to Capital.

The change has seen the council positioned well to lead on an enhanced, county-wide oversight and delivery role in driving sustainable economic growth across the county, a role which Surrey County Council wants to translate into actual economic benefits for residents and businesses.

It has absorbed formal responsibilities to deliver business support through the new Surrey-wide Growth Hub and deliver government-funded programmes focused on skills.

This new offer is presented via the Council's Business Surrey service, which acts as a single gateway for all Surrey businesses to access support and advice. For access to all Business Surrey's support and advice visit the Business Surrey website.

Related reports:

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Surrey County Council on the level.

Mixed reaction to Hunt's budget in Surrey

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