#### Spanish fiesta came to Epsom

Epsom Symphony Orchestra - Epsom Playhouse - 4th May - Review by Sarah Haines.

What an uplifting and colourful music evening put on by Epsom Symphony Orchestra. Their May concert at Epsom Playhouse was a rich and colourful Spanish Fiesta overseen by Musical Director and Conductor Darrell Davison.

A wonderful start to summer with its promise of outdoor living. Our party had pre performance tapas and spirits which nicely set the stage for what was to come. Chabrier's Espana captured the Spanish way of life in music. Full of character, and contrasting themes including parts that were really powerful and tempestuous. Elsewhere light and springy with happy harp playing. Ending in fantastic fanfare.

Turina's Procession of the Lady of the Dew was a charming little piece: a fantastic soundtrack to a fiesta in Seville. We listened to music from a procession – sedate and respectful; building to a joyful and jubilant end: trumpets playing the Spanish national anthem – this one really was like a film score overture.

Richard Scholfield then treated us to two wonderful pieces playing the solo saxophone (supported by the Orchestra). The first was Ravel's Pavane (arranged by Darrell Davison) – a slow Spanish dance. This was superb playing – soulful and light, a silken sound, romantic, demonstrating the repertoire of the saxophone.

The second was Borne's marvellous Fantaisie Brillante on Themes from Bizet's Carmen - a demanding soloist piece played beautifully and with flair - it was phenomenal, at times racy, playful, a powerful Tango, rapid scales with wonderful percussion joining at the end. At points it was like listening to a horse race.

The second half began with de Falla's Three Cornered Hat Suite 2. This piece depicted melodies from cafes, bars and street musicians. A throbbing intensity from the cellos and double basses interspersed with movements of lightness from the violins and violas and augmented by colourful music from the brass and woodwind. This really caught the essence of Spanish life.

Rimsky-Korsakov's Capriccio Espangnole was joyful piece: containing two morning songs, a gypsy song and a Fandango (animated Spanish dance). So many wonderful solo parts throughout the orchestra as they played this colourful piece.

The concert ended with the unforgettable Ravel's Bolero – an extremely popular piece. The familiar tune gradually built and built as more members of the orchestra came in. Two snare drummers stood like sentinels either side of the stage, reminiscent of Torvill & Dean's legendary gold winning ice-skating performance at the Sarajevo 1984 winter Olympics.

Sarah Haines

# Surrey Arts appointed to lead Surrey Music Hub

Surrey Arts, part of Surrey County Council has been appointed by Arts Council England to lead the Surrey Music Hub from September 2024, as part of an ambitious national programme to provide high-quality music education for all children and young people.

Surrey Arts will receive £1.42 million in funding from the Department for Education to coordinate music education in the local area, plus an additional £469,000 to invest in new musical instruments, equipment and technology tailored to the needs of children and young people in Surrey, including those with special educational needs and disabilities.

Surrey Arts will deliver high quality music education accessible to all children and young people in Surrey through diverse partnerships between educational, creative and community organisations in the local community and throughout the country.

The appointment is part of a major investment in a new generation of the nationwide network of Music Hubs. This investment will help to deliver the Government's National Plan for Music Education, and give all children and young people the opportunity to develop their musical interests as far as they wish, including helping them to begin careers in the music industry.

**Denise Turner-Stewart, Surrey County Council Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities said:** "We are delighted that Surrey Arts, part of Surrey County Council will be able to continue its work in leading the music hub in Surrey. The music hub is a network of music organisations and schools working together to bring musical opportunities to young people. This funding will ensure that we are able to continue championing music and support thousands of young people across Surrey to experience the joy and pleasure of participating in musical activities."

**Darren Henley, Chief Executive of Arts Council England, said:** "Music education is enormously powerful – it can enrich young people's lives, help them connect with the people around them, and start them on the pathway to fruitful and fulfilling careers. We are excited to announce this investment in a new generation of Music Hubs, which will support the brilliant work of our dedicated music teachers across the country, and help bring high-quality music education to even more children and young people in every part of England."

#### Visit www.surreymusichub.com to find out more.

#### **Notes to Editors**

Surrey Music Hub is a network of music organisations and schools working together to bring more musical opportunities to children and young people in Surrey, both in schools and in the wider community. Led by Surrey Arts, the county council's arts service, the Hub will act as an advocate for music education, encouraging participation in music across the county. They will work to ensure that children and young people from all backgrounds receive music education that is high quality, wide ranging, sustainable and accessible to all and that there are clear routes for progression. https://surreymusichub.com/

**Arts Council England** is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in **Let's Create** that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. We invest public money from Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. **www.artscouncil.org.uk**.

Image Corey Seeman

## Cyclist death prompts A217 review

The death of a "fit and active" cyclist has prompted a coroner to raise concerns over paths near a main road in Tadworth.

A man named John Bass died after falling from his bike following an incident involving a van on the A217 at Tadworth in December 2022.

Encroaching mud, twigs and grass more than halved the width of the popular cycle path which poses a risk of further fatalaties, a coroner said at Mr Bass's inquest.

The 80-year-old was considered a "fit and active cyclist". While the footpath from which Mr Bass fell was 1.4 metres wide, due to encroaching mud, grass, twigs and acorns on the pavement space, the space where he was able to cycle was reduced to only 0.6 metres wide.

Weeks before his death, a highways inspector visited the path and did not consider the narrowing of pathway as a safety concern.

Assistant Coroner Krestina Hayes found in a Prevention of Future Death Report: "There is a risk to future pavement users if clear guidance is not provided to inspectors to identify safety concerns regarding vegetation growth on footpaths."

The report, published May 14, 2024, also expressed concerns that the frequency of the yearly road inspections should be reviewed.

Speaking at the inquest, Mr Bass' family advised the footpath by the Tadworth Road is used regularly by cyclists to avoid the vehicles on the busy road, where the speed limit is up to 40mph.

As the highway authority, Surrey County Council (SCC) is responsible for maintaining public highways. Although there is reference to trees and vegetation in SCC, there is no clear guidance on encroachment on pavements.

Inspected yearly, the stretch of highway was examined by car on November 14, and on foot on 22 November. No safety defects were found to meet intervention level by SCC. The family said the pavement was cleared shortly after the accident.

A spokesperson for SCC said: "Our deepest sympathies remain with John's family and friends, and we will respond to the Coroner's report following careful consideration of the concerns raised."

SCC has been given until 3 July to respond to the report.

Image: A217 Road, Near Tadworth, Banstead. (Photo Google)

#### Non-political and all-political

Dear Editor,

It is good to see that, despite stepping down as a Borough Councillor, Vince Romagnuolo has lost none of his enthusiasm for historically partisan approach to local politics. Labelling Resident Association councillors closet Conservatives is nothing new. Vince and the Labour Party have never understood the concept of local volunteers whose national voting patterns are often diverse, but who come together in a non-ideological commitment to promote a shared view of localism, civic duty and what is right for all residents in Epsom and Ewell.

If only Vince knew the real national preferences of RA councillors, he might be surprised. Although I never discussed national political allegiances with my RA colleagues, it is sometimes not difficult to know them. There were and are councillors who nationally support the Labour Party, and at least one RA Councillor who was a Labour Party Councillor in another local authority.

So come on Vince, by all means criticise Residents Association councillors if you disapprove of their policies, but please don't use labels and unfounded accusations of national party-political bias to explain the clear voting preferences of residents, the long absence of Conservative councillors, and the actions of Epsom and Ewell MPs over the last 87 years.

With all good wishes

County Councillor Eber Kington

Residents Association Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington

[Ed: A right of reply was warranted but we now draw this particular debate to a close on our pages.]

#### **Epsom and Ewell's new Mayor**

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has appointed Councillor **Steve Bridger** (RA Stamford) as the new Mayor for the year 24/25. In a ceremonial meeting Tuesday 14th May, speeches were made to propose the new Mayor, to thank the outgoing Mayor, and by both the incoming and outgoing Mayors themselves.

Councillor **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington) proposed his appointment. He said "I hope I will achieve at least one of these requirements," referring to the traditional brevity and humour expected in such speeches. Cllr Neale detailed Cllr Bridger's extensive background, highlighting his early career in the family-owned wholesale fish business and his long tenure at Tesco, where he achieved notable success. "Steve proudly states that he managed every department... all except working the tills," Cllr Neale quipped. He also mentioned Cllr Bridger's dedication to family, particularly his support for his late son Richard, who battled Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

Councillor **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) paid tribute to the outgoing Mayor, Councillor **Rob Geleit** (Labour Court), lauding his achievements over the past year. He highlighted the Civic Celebration of Culture as a significant event and praised Mr Geleit's fundraising efforts. "A charity dinner brought a year of fundraising for his three well-chosen charities to a successful conclusion," Cllr Ames remarked. He also expressed eagerness to have Cllr Geleit return to his duties with the Labour group, emphasizing the importance of his presence in the upcoming general election.

Councillor Rob Geleit reflected on his tenure with gratitude, sharing various highlights from his year as Mayor. "I've had a fantastic year serving Epsom and Ewell and its people," He expressed deep appreciation for his consort, Tina, and the support team, particularly Lolli from the Mayor's office. He recounted memorable events such as the Derby, Christmas carols at Downview Prison, and the Buckingham Palace garden party. He proudly announced that over £15,000 had been raised for his chosen charities, exceeding expectations. "We managed to keep it all together until the end, which may or may well be unprecedented," he said, praising the charity committee's efforts and in particular the dedication of Cllr **Dr. Graham Jones** MBE (RA Cuddington).

In his address, new Mayor Councillor Steve Bridger expressed excitement and gratitude for his new role. He acknowledged the challenges and opportunities ahead and looked forward to serving the community alongside his wife, Carol.

Cllr Robert Leach (RA Nonsuch) will serve as Deputy-Mayor.

Image: L to R Cllr Robert Leach (Deputy Mayor), Mayor Steve Bridger, CEO Jackie King. The New Mayor takes the chair in Council chamber. Credit EEBC YouTube

#### **Annual audit of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**

The annual Grant Thornton Auditor's Report on the workings of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has delivered a positive assessment of its performance across financial sustainability, governance, and value for money, despite acknowledging the ongoing challenges the Council faces. The report was formally presented and noted at the Council meeting of 14th May.

**Financial Sustainability**: The report highlights that the Council operates in a challenging financial environment with prudent short and medium-term planning. While financial stability remains dependent on continual savings plans, the forecast indicates a need to deliver approximately £1.4 million in savings by 2027/28. The auditors emphasized the importance of finding alternatives to using reserves to manage budget gaps, noting no significant weaknesses in financial sustainability arrangements.

**Governance**: The Council's governance structure was praised for maintaining appropriate arrangements and compliance policies. An updated Risk Management Strategy and adherence to CIPFA's Good Governance Framework were noted as strengths. However, the auditors recommended prioritizing the completion of management actions and reviewing the composition of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee to potentially include independent members.

**Value for Money**: The Council's efforts to ensure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness were aligned with delivering value for money. Recommendations were made to develop a partnership governance framework and to address underperformance in processing minor planning applications, despite improvements seen in 2023.

Overall, the audit reflects positively on the Council's operations, suggesting continued disciplined financial management and strategic governance enhancements.

| က်<br>Criteria<br>သိ                                     | 2022/23 Risk assessment                     | 2022/23 Auditor judgement on arrangements |   | 2021/22 Auditor judgement on arrangements |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Financial<br>sustainability                              | No risk of significant weakness identified. | G   | Our work did not identify any areas where we<br>considered that key or improvement<br>recommendations were required                                       | Д   | No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but two improvement recommendations have been made. |
| Governance   | No risk of significant weakness identified. | А   | No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but three improvement recommendations made  | А   | No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified but two improvement recommendations raised.          |
| Improving<br>economy,<br>efficiency and<br>effectiveness | No risk of significant weakness identified. | А   | No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but one improvement recommendation made to support more effective partnership working arrangements. | G   | No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and no improvement recommendations raised.           |
| G No signi   | ficant weaknesses in arrangement            | ts ide                                    |   |   | raised.   |

The four key recommendations in more detail and the responses of EEBC management:

Grant Thornton Recommendation 1: Timely Internal Audits.

The auditors suggested that internal audits focusing on financial controls should be completed before the end of the financial year to aid the Head of Internal Audit in forming their opinion.

EEBC Management Response: Acknowledging the importance of timely audits, management noted past challenges due to staff turnover and long-term sickness, which have now been resolved. With a fully resourced team, management is confident in meeting the audit schedule, with progress monitored by both the Strategic Leadership Team and the Audit & Scrutiny Committee.

Grant Thornton Recommendation 2: Monitoring Framework for Audit Actions

The council was advised to develop a framework to monitor management actions identified in internal audit reports, ensuring these are completed by the agreed due dates to enhance clarity and accountability.

EEBC Management Response: Management emphasized that a robust monitoring framework is already in place, with the Business Assurance team logging all actions and requiring quarterly updates from Heads of Service. Additionally, new performance management software has been procured to further improve monitoring capabilities.

Grant Thornton Recommendation 3: Audit & Scrutiny Committee Composition

Auditors recommended reviewing the composition of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee to exclude Strategy & Resources members for independence and considering the appointment of independent members.

EEBC Management Response: Management revealed that a review of the committee's operations is already planned following a Corporate Peer Challenge in March 2024. The audit recommendation will be considered during this review in consultation with relevant members.

Grant Thornton Recommendation 4: Partnership Governance Framework

To enhance partnership working, the council was advised to develop a governance framework to guide and evaluate the success and effectiveness of these collaborations.

EEBC Management Response: Management expressed a commitment to positive partnership working, acknowledging recognition from the recent Corporate Peer Challenge. This recommendation will be considered in conjunction with the Action Plan resulting from the Peer Challenge.

#### Leatherhead Women top their league

**Leatherhead Women's FC** finished the season on a high, winning the league without losing a single game. The team finished with a record of 15 wins, one draw and not a single loss in the league securing promotion into the Premier Division.

Specsavers have championed the team since its introduction into senior women's football, with new kits and banners and continued support from the team of opticians and audiologists.

The team plays every home game in Fetcham Grove where you will be able to see the new kits in action.

Specsavers retail director, **Mihaela Ovadiuc** said: "At Leatherhead, we strive to be a shining light within our local community, whether that be directly or indirectly. Supporting Leatherhead Women's has been such an honour, and we are all over the moon that we are extending the sponsorship. The club aligns with our commitment to promoting healthy and active living and takes pleasure in offering a secure environment for the local community."

## A cloud followed by silver for Old Glynonians

**Old Glynonians** are the new holders of the Papa Johns Community Cup Counties 3 South Shield, having overcome Cranleigh in a thrilling 22-21 victory on Sunday 12th May.

After an emotional minute's silence was held in honour of former Old Glynonians player **Ben Rollinson**, who sadly died aged just 42 last Friday, Glyn started with a fire in their belly and scored two early tries to take a 10-0 lead within the first 20 minutes, but the next 60 minutes would not be as straightforward.

Cranleigh responded with two converted scores to lead 10-14 and appeared to be heading towards half-time full of confidence, but OGs captain Tim Laughton-Scott crashed over the whitewash in the last play of the half to restore the Epsom & Ewell-based side's lead.

With temperatures rising to an annual peak of 25c down at Shaftesbury Park in Bristol, home of the Bristol Bears Women, and just a point separating the teams at 15-14, everything was set for an exhausting second 40.

Five minutes into the second half, Man of the Match Michael Hume showed speed, power and calm to break through the Cranleigh defence and juggle a back-and-fourth pass with his fellow centre before dotting down to extend Old Glynonians' lead. The try was converted by fly-half Sam Smith to make the score 22-14.

And that kick that would prove the difference between glory and gut-wrenching defeat, as 35 minutes of gruelling Glyn defence

was finally broken by Cranleigh who got over the line to make it 22-21. But as the Crane's conversion sailed through the sticks, the full-time whistle was blown. The match would end 22-21 in favour of the Old Glynonians.

The 2024 Papa Johns Community Cup Counties 3 South Shield now sits alongside three Surrey Bowls (2008, '09, '12) in the Old Glynonians trophy cabinet.

**James McFarlane, Chairman of Old Glynonians RFC, said:** "Firstly, huge credit has to go to Cranleigh. They have given us one of the hardest-fought games I can ever remember. The one-point winning margin is a fair representation of how tight the game was and how well-matched the sides were, so they should also be proud of their performance.

"Winning this competition is hugely satisfying. There are so many people that have been mucking in both on and off the pitch for so many years, and now it all feels worth it."

**Tim Laughton-Scott, Captain of Old Glynonians RFC, said:** "We really had to dig deep out there to win this, so it feels like a very sweet victory. We knew we could do it, but when the score flipped against us in the first half, it tested our belief for sure. We stuck to our game, fought bravely on what was an exhausting day under the sun, and just about came away on top.

"I never expected to be picking up silverware in my first season as captain, but the support from the players and the backroom staff has been great. It's a big win for everyone involved."

**James Kennedy-Myers, Head Coach of Old Glynonians RFC, said:** "I didn't play but I'm still exhausted! To win our first trophy in over decade and to do it less than 48 hours after the devastating loss of a former player stirs up so many emotions. Rollo [Ben Rollinson] was a great friend of mine, and this win will be well and truly dedicated to him.

"I'm thrilled with the squad that we have, probably our strongest ever, and look forward to defending our crown next season."

Image: Old Glynonians lift the Papa Johns Community Cup. credit Lisa Banning/Old Glynonians

#### Redrawing Surrey's political map - literally

Major boundary changes could see some Surrey residents change wards for the next local elections in a redrawing of the political map of the county.

Council wards in Surrey are to increase by over 1,000 residents per councillor by 2029 in new county boundaries which have been drawn up.

Around 70% of ward boundaries will change as the Local Government Boundary Commission estimates an increase of nearly 90,000 people who are reigstered to vote.

The commission says the new layout - which would retain the 81 elected councillors we have today - would help the council to carry out its functions more effectively as it would even out the populations within each division.

The commission is the independent body which draws these boundaries based on community ties, similar electorate numbers and which facilities (e.g parks, leisure centres) it makes sense for people to share.

Varying levels of public consultation on draft proposals took place between February 2023 and March 2024.

Professor Colin Mellors, Chair of the Commission, said: "We are very grateful to people in Surrey. We looked at all the views they gave us. They helped us improve our earlier proposals. We believe the new arrangements will deliver electoral fairness while maintaining local ties."

Recommendations from the Commission cannot affect the Surrey county's external boundaries, or result in changes to postcodes. It does not have an effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. However, it may affect which ward someone is in.

The Commission is required by law to consider not the number of households, but the number of electors within each division. For instance, residents suggested East and West Molesey should be combined in a single council ward division. However, such a division covering the two borough wards of Molesey West and Molesey East would have 36% more electors than average. it was therefore not accepted because it would have a disproportionate number of eligible voters compared to other wards.

County councils elect its members once every four years. Surrey's next election is taking place in 2025. Currently, the Conservatives are the largest group with 49 councillors out of a total 81 seats. There are also 16 Liberal Democrats, two Green Party, two Labour (and Co-operative) councillors, four Independents, and 13 from different resident associations and groups.

Changes to ward boundaries will be made so each councillor represents roughly the same number of electors. Recommendations are based on how many electors (ie people registered to vote) there are "likely" to be in five years after the publication of the Committee's proposal.

Approximately 876,454 eligible voters lived in the county in 2022, averaging at 10,820 electors per councillor. The Commission estimates this number will increase by nearly 90,000 by 2029: Around 964,825 Surrey electors will be divided up to roughly 11,911 residents for each councillor. Just 24 ward boundaries out of 81 will stay the same.

Over 900 comments were made by people and organisations to help decide the new divisions. Changes in response to what local people said include altering the divisions in rural areas of Guildford, in response to fresh evidence on the 'community identity'.

For example, the village and civil parish of Ash was seen as more urban than rural, consequently moving out of the Worplesdon division and into Shalford. Additionally, Jacobs Well village was reviewed as having stronger community identity and rural connections with Worplesdon parish rather than neighbouring areas of Guildford."

The Commission opted against having two councillors representing one ward in the Elmbridge borough as SCC argued that larger divisions had the potential to "dilute democratic accountability". The Molesey Residents' Association said locals would find a two-member division confusing and that councillors might have difficulty representing a division on this scale."

The changes become law once Parliament has approved them. Staff at the council will ensure that the arrangements are in place for the 2025 elections.

Review and report: https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/surrey

Image: Proposed Surrey County boundaries (Credit contains Ordnance Survey data Crown copyright and database rights 2024)

# Up to 2003 MPs happy no Conservatives on Epsom and Ewell Council

Dear Editor,

I note with interest the letter from Mr Kington "Epsom and Ewell was the first Conservative free Council" outlining the dire electoral fortunes of the Conservative Party in Epsom & Ewell. But he doesn't tell the full story.

With the odd exception, despite sporadic efforts by eccentric Tory candidates, it is true that it is only since 2003 that the Tories have made a concerted effort to gain seats on the council. The truth is that successive Tory MPs for the area seemed quite happy with the composition of the council due to the fact that, on the whole, the ruling group was made up of small 'C' conservatives and in some cases, card carrying Conservative and UKIP members.

It was during the Labour government, with local government being property funded, that they embarked on a spending spree with taxpayers money. But they gleefully reverted to type when the austerity obsessed Tory/Lib Dem coalition government came to power in 2010 that budgets were slashed following Tory edicts.

Yours faithfully,

#### Vince Romagnuolo

Former Epsom & Ewell Borough Councillor, 1999-2007, 2015-2019