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Surrey’s Police and Crime Commissioner re-elected

4 May 2024



The result of the 2nd May 2024 election for Surrey’s Police and Crime Commissioner was announced Friday and the Conservative Candidate, **Lisa Townsend**, was re-elected despite a substantial drop in turnout.

The re-elected Commissioner vowed to continue supporting a “back to basics” approach to policing in Surrey. She received 95,538 votes in Thursday’s PCC election. **Paul Kennedy** for the Liberal Democrats closed the gap significantly. Trailing by 12% points in 2021 he narrowed Lisa Townsend’s lead to 5% points this time round.

Epsom and Ewell‘s own candidates fared honourably with **Kate Chinn** for Labour narrowly ahead of independent **Alex Coley** with 42, 813 and 42,052 votes respectively. Ms Chinn is Borough Councillor for Court Ward and Mr Coley for Ruxley Ward.

The result was announced in Redhill Friday afternoon after votes from across the county were counted.

Ms Townsend, who has served as Commissioner for more than three years since winning in 2021, vowed to continue supporting Surrey Police’s renewed focus on issues that matter most to residents, such as tackling anti-social behaviour, shoplifting, and targeting persistent offenders.

She said the Force now has more officers than ever before, and under the leadership of new Chief Constable Tim De Meyer, they are concentrating on combatting those crimes that matter most to the Surrey public.

Chief Constable T**im De Meyer** said: “Surrey Police warmly congratulates Lisa Townsend on her re-election as Police and Crime Commissioner. We look forward to continuing to work with her on challenges such as tackling violence against women and girls, improving our response to calls from the public and bringing more offenders to justice.”

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Conservative	Lisa Townsend	95,538	36.4
Liberal Democrats	Paul Kennedy	82,213	31.3
Labour	Kate Chinn	42,813	16.3
Independent	Alex Coley	42,052	16.0
	Turnout	265,682	29.9
	Rejected ballots	3,066	
	Total votes	**262,616**	

Turnout was 29.9 per cent, compared to 38.8 per cent in the last Police and Crime Commissioner election in 2021. The total number of verified ballot papers was 265,682 from a total electorate of 888,083.

Related reports:

Surrey’s next Police and Crime Commissioner will be?

Epsom and Ewell candidates dominate Police Commissioner election

Clash Over Funding and Priorities in Surrey PCC Race

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From blow your hair to blow your mind?

4 May 2024



Nescot college in Ewell, Surrey is investing £650,000 to transform a hair studio on campus into a virtual reality (VR), immersive space for its students. The state-of-the-art technology, currently being installed, will be used across a wide range of courses on offer at Nescot and includes driving simulators and immersive learning spaces which work with a variety of artificial intelligence (AI) tools. This will allow students to gain specialist skills and experiences, like driving a forklift truck, or navigating a busy A&E ward, without even leaving the classroom.

Nescot will have a range of cutting-edge technology, including an Igloo, immersive room, and vehicle simulators. The Igloo is cylindrical, six metres in diameter and features a 360-degree projection system that can 'transport' groups of students around the world. It offers things like virtual field trips, design opportunities and gaming development. It can also recreate complex activities or hazardous environments so students can safely learn.

A suite of four advanced simulators will provide vehicle handling training for a wide range of machinery, from cranes to fire engines. These simulators, alongside virtual reality headsets, will mean students can work together to refine their driving or operation skills in a realistic scenario where multiple machines or vehicles are in use.

The immersive room has a projection system which equips all the walls with screens. Two of the screens are interactive and respond to touch, creating a hands-on learning experience. Two ultra-high-definition screens are also incorporated, and cameras enable instructors and students to magnify objects of interest and project them onto any of the four screens, facilitating discussion. The technology also brings remote learners into the classroom via a dedicated video call screen.

The facility further cements Nescot's reputation as a hub of innovation, having recently opened robotics, AI and cyber security facilities as part of its Institute of Technology. The staff/student hair studio, which was a commercial salon and not a learning space for students, has already moved out of the space and has been relocated nearby. There is no impact at all on the Nescot hairdressing course, which is still a valued part of the curriculum.

Julie Kapsalis, CEO and Principal at Nescot said "We pride ourselves on innovation, and giving our students the best experience at Nescot, so we're adopting this cutting-edge technology which will be a game changer. It can virtually transport students around the world to learn, allows them to safely practice dangerous scenarios, and is a fun and exciting way to boost motivation, creativity, and engagement. We can't wait to get it installed."

Somayyeh Clifton, Head of Quality Improvement & Innovation at Nescot said "This is not just for students doing IT related subjects, we expect it to be used across the whole curriculum, giving students the skills and experience they need to succeed in the modern world. We've come a long way since teaching from the front of the room and we really value the importance of learning through experience. We're keen to get prospective students along to our open days to find out more about this, and what we'll have to offer in the next academic year."

Julie and Somayyeh are both part of AI in Education initiative, with Julie sitting on the Strategic Board and Somayyeh on the Practitioners Panel. AI in Education aims to support and advise schools and colleges so they can maximise the benefits of AI and minimise the risks.

The funding to create the immersive space has been provided from the Government's Local Skills Improvement Fund, a project which aims to support local people into work. Nescot is working with other local colleges and universities to better support the skills needs of the labour market in key areas identified by local businesses – CreaTech, Advance Manufacturing, Engineering and Construction, Digital, and Employability and Professional skills.

As well as being beneficial for Nescot students, the college will be encouraging local businesses to get involved, by using the technology to train staff. Partnerships with business and enterprise are invaluable for both parties as organisations get to access cutting edge training and learning resources, plus a pool of talented, experienced students who can enter the workforce via apprenticeships, work placements and post-college recruitment.

Nescot offers college courses for school leavers and adults, with a wide range of career-focused vocational courses including Animal Care, Business, Computing and IT, Construction, Performing Arts, Childcare, Health & Social Care and Beauty Therapy. The college has two events coming up, where prospective students can see what's on offer, and learn more about the immersive classroom as it's being built.

- Open evening, Wednesday 22 May 2024, 4.30 – 7.30pm
- Summer fair, Saturday 15th June 2024, 10.00am – 2.00pm

To find out more, call 020 8394 3038, visit www.nescot.ac.uk or email adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk

Local businesses interested in using the immersive classroom for training, or working with the college on apprenticeships, work placements or recruitment should contact businesscentre@nescot.ac.uk or call 020 8394 8593.

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Meat-free Mondays coming to all Surrey schools?

4 May 2024



Meat-free and plant-based options could be mandated across Surrey schools every Monday according to new council guidance. Only some Surrey schools currently participate in a form of ‘meat-free Monday’ so the new food strategy would expand its remit.

The new policy forms part of the so-called Surrey Healthy Schools initiative. The initiatives aims to address food insecurity, reduce climate impact of the local food system and support the local population to keep a healthy weight by improving the accessibility and affordability of nutritious food.

Speaking at a Surrey County Council (SCC) meeting on April 29, Officer Marisa Heath said: “I don’t think meat-free Mondays is too much to ask for one day a week. We’re still giving six days a week for people to make other choices so I don’t think it is draconian or heavy handed.”

Council officers said the preferred menu would prioritise fruit, vegetables and legumes- rather than processed, plant-based meat alternatives. Only schools signed up to the Surrey Healthy Schools will be part of the initiative, including all SCC public schools and some private schools.

Framing the programme as being to “educate and not dictate”, Cllr Mark Nuti (Conservative/ Chertsey) said the policy is empowering individuals and families to make informed and healthy food choices.

The committee discussed the importance of sustainable and locally sourced farming, as well as cutting meat to decrease carbon emissions and environmental resources. It was noted that ‘plant-based’ food was not always “nutritional”, but that children needed fibre from fruit and vegetables.

The new strategy aims to increase children’s nutrition and combat obesity, as well as increasing sustainability and environmentally conscious eating. Around 1,210 of 9,355 Year 6 pupils measured in Surrey were classed as obese or severely obese in 2022-23, NHS figures show.

Healthy food, such as fruit and vegetables, are often out of reach for many parents on low incomes who prioritise affordability over nutrition. The amount of vegetables being purchased in the UK has fallen to its lowest level in 50 years, according to The Food Foundation.

“Levelling up is not just about buildings, it’s about people,” Officer Marisa said. “It’s about their wellbeing, mental and physical, and allowing them to reach their [potential].”

Councillors argued the strategy must be adaptable to children who may suffer with eating disorders, have neurodiversity requirements or medical issues, and not be able to eat (or do not want to eat) plant-based food.

In a heated debate, concerns were raised about the policy going ‘too far’. Cllr Trefor Hogg (Conservative/ Camberley East) said an extension to adults and elderly people with dementia could mean “being confronted with things they just can’t cope with”.

He added: “My particular concern of those who are in any form of social care have had their liberties and freedom restricted to some degree. It’s very very important that they have a full choice. This is particularly important where there are neurodiverse and mental health issues as well. I think we should be very explicit on the subject. I would be very concerned about the adults and the elderly being confronted with things they just can’t cope with.”

Meeting documents stated the eating environment should be inclusive and social as restricting to plant based only options may make some feel excluded.

Image: Creator: Chris Radburn | Credit: Pa Photos, NTB scanpix License details

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Clash Over Funding and Priorities in Surrey PCC Race

4 May 2024

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On the eve of the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner election, candidates are locked in a battle of ideas over funding allocations and the strategic direction of law enforcement in the county.

Independent candidate Alex Coley, former barrister Paul Kennedy of the Liberal Democrat Party, and Kate Chinn representing the Labour Party have all weighed in on the key issues facing Surrey's police force and incumbent Commissioner Lisa Townsend for the Conservative Party responds.

Alex Coley, (Residents Association Councillor on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council for Ruxley Ward) a vocal critic of current spending practices, has campaigned on the issue of financial management within the force. "Over the past six weeks Surrey has been my treadmill, six weeks of walking and talking to residents all over this county," Mr Coley stated. He emphasized concerns raised by residents about the allocation of resources, particularly in light of a significant underspend by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) office. "The number one question from residents has been: 'how are you going to pay for more police?'" Coley highlighted, pointing to unutilized funds that he argues should be directed towards bolstering the police force.

Furthermore, Mr Coley raised eyebrows with his critique of what he termed "casino politics in policing," alluding to financial dealings between the PCC and Surrey County Council. "I don't think residents want a PCC acting like an investment bank that dabbles in the gilt markets, backed by your council tax," he asserted, painting a picture of fiscal irresponsibility that he vows to rectify if elected. Full statement HERE.

In contrast, **Paul Kennedy** of the Liberal Democrat Party takes a different approach, drawing on his legal and financial background to advocate for prudent fiscal management. "The challenge of funding more community policing requires professional discipline, not simplistic solutions," Kennedy remarked. With experience as a barrister and an accountant, Kennedy positioned himself as a candidate with the expertise necessary to navigate the complex financial landscape of law enforcement.

Mr Kennedy defended the current funding structure of Surrey Police, stressing the importance of maintaining a buffer to address cash flow fluctuations. "Temporary surpluses can't just be run down as some have suggested," he cautioned, echoing sentiments of fiscal conservatism that have resonated with some voters. Full statement HERE.

Meanwhile, **Kate Chinn** (Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillor for Court Ward) of the Labour Party emphasized the human aspect of policing, focusing on recruitment and retention as key priorities. "Of course the budget needs scrutiny and increasing, but as Alex Coley identifies it is ensuring enough officers are recruited and retained that is the real priority," Ms Chinn argued. She outlined a series of measures aimed at bolstering recruitment and supporting existing officers, including streamlining the recruitment process and providing adequate mental health resources.

Ms Chinn's vision for policing centred on valuing and supporting front-line officers, with a pledge to advocate for fair pay and long-term investment in law enforcement. "A Labour government would ensure police pay recognizes the value of the work our officers do and commit to long-term investment," she asserted, positioning herself as a champion of the men and women who serve on the front-lines of policing. Full statement HERE.

As the candidates make their final pitches to voters, the future direction of policing in Surrey hangs in the balance. With each candidate offering a distinct vision for the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner, residents face a critical decision that will shape the county's law enforcement priorities for years to come.

A response from Conservative candidate and current Police and Crime Commissioner, **Lisa Townsend**, was awaited at the time of going to press and just came in minutes after…….

Lisa Townsend refutes Mr Coley's claims: "There is no loan to Surrey County Council. The £43m is the amount of cash held at the 31/8/23. This represents reserves of about £30m as well as cash held due to the timing of council tax receipts, grants, payments out, etc. Rather than holding all our cash in a single bank we pool it on an overnight basis with SCC who add it to their spare cash and invest it in overnight money market deposits with many banks. This reduces the risk as this pooled money is spread over a larger number of institutions than if we were to do this alone, and it also reduces the cost of management."

In respect of underspending the Commissioner points out the small underspend in proportion to the total budget and how it arose from a higher staff vacancy rate than expected. Full statement HERE.

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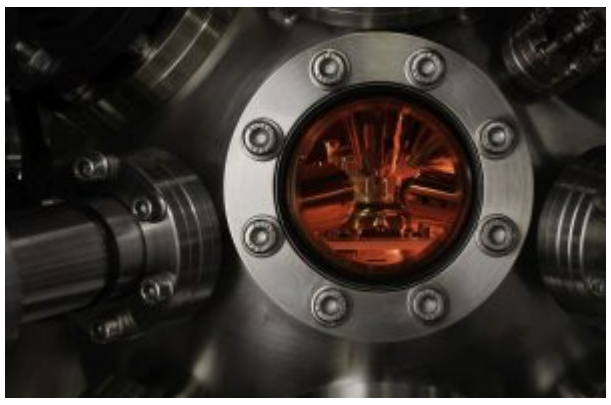
Surrey Uni joins top beam team

4 May 2024



The creation of a first-of-its-kind imaging system at the **University of Surrey** could help the UK lead a revolution in materials sciences. The new facility promises a better understanding of the effects of pharmaceuticals and could eventually lead to better drug development.

Thanks to a £3 million grant from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, Surrey will work with the UK SME Ionoptika and the University of Manchester to deliver a new Multimodal Ion Beam Imaging Facility, which will allow researchers and businesses to understand materials at an unprecedented microscopic level.

Professor **Melanie Bailey**, Principal Investigator of the project from the University of Surrey, said:

“The fact that Surrey and, indeed, the UK has the ambition to build this truly unique facility should not only excite researchers in academia and industry, but it signals that we are serious about breaking new ground in a range of scientific areas.”

The facility will house a “multimodal 3D elemental and molecular imaging system at a sub-micron scale”. This highly advanced system, similar to a powerful microscope, will be able to see the tiniest details of materials and molecules, smaller than a speck of dust.

The new system will be the first in the world to use beams of charged particles at high and low energies to measure biological systems and materials. The high-energy beams will be delivered by a particle accelerator at the UK National Ion Beam Centre, a national research facility funded by EPSRC and led by Professor **Roger Webb** at Surrey. The system will produce X-rays, gamma rays, and particles, and the combination of this information will give a detailed map of the elemental and molecular makeup of materials.

Professor Roger Webb, co-investigator of the project and Director of the Surrey Ion Beam Centre, said:

“This is a really exciting development for the Surrey Ion Beam Centre. We have been a national research facility since 1979, and we support over £100 million in funding from more than 30 universities. This is one of several upgrades to our centre, and we are looking forward to opening our doors to researchers across the UK to make the most of this investment.”

Surrey’s new facility is expected to benefit more than 25 UK universities and companies in health, energy, technology, and engineering.

Professor **Paul Townsend**, co-investigator of the project, said:

“There is currently nothing in the world quite like this new facility of ours. It signals to the global scientific community that the UK means business. We are confident that we will attract researchers worldwide to use this facility, giving the UK an edge in materials science.”

Along with medical breakthroughs, Surrey’s researchers believe the facility could help the energy sector create more efficient solar cells and durable batteries. The team also hopes this project will allow them to understand pollutants better and develop new ways to reduce climate change.

Paul Blenkinsopp, Managing Director of Ionoptika, said:

“Ionoptika is delighted to have been chosen to build the new imaging system in collaboration with Surrey. Whilst an SME, we have established ourselves as global experts in ion beam technology over the past 30 years and will be very proud to bring our decades of imaging expertise to this unique facility.”

This project contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

Image of Ionoptika’s J105

Green signals from prospective parliamentary candidate

4 May 2024

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The most important General Election for 40 years is rapidly approaching and as your prospective Member of Parliament for the Green Party I would like to introduce myself.

I joined the party in 2011, out of disgust for the mainstream parties. The Parliamentary expenses scandals and greed of well-off MPs during the 2008 financial crash, epitomised the gulf between the
governors and the governed. The brazen double standards posed a threat to democracy and switched people off politics. I have always advocated that democratic values of fairness and equity should be front and centre of our politics, and it vital that we carry these values forward in tackling the related environmental and cost of living crises.

Its also always been a key issue for me that nature is not just respected but also restored as ultimately this is our life support system. The Green Party was the first to propose legislation against “ecocide” in 2017 for instance and this is now not only contained in our full policy but is increasingly adopted internationally.

I grew up in West London, in a street where all sorts of families lived alongside each other, in a balanced community where all types of occupations were present including teachers and doctors, builders and craftsmen and other workers on average pay. We believed in the value of education – my father was a train driver who studied and later became a college lecturer and author. In those days everything seemed possible, and in particular homes were affordable in my street for everyone.

Sadly those times have gone and today it would be impossible for a young family to buy a home there. I became a professional Chartered Surveyor and Planner after studying Town and Country Planning at Manchester University and have practised my profession in the public and private sectors for over 30 years.

Epsom and Ewell is a very special place, with its unique and ancient history and really important community and cultural assets that I appreciate which remind me in many ways of the place I grew up in. I know now that these assets cannot be taken for granted. Many of the psychiatric hospitals in the Borough were closed under the Care in the Community legislation years ago and redeveloped for housing. A lot of the precious spaces were lost forever, impacting Epsom’s green character.

Throughout my career, even where it was sometimes difficult to do so, I have championed environmental, educational and community development in my work, protecting heritage, parks and countryside, biodiversity and other assets. I have also worked at several universities designing and delivering post graduate and degree apprenticeship courses as a visiting lecturer and acting as an external examiner. Following the pandemic we now recognise to a much greater extent the value to our mental and physical health of enjoying nature and outdoor recreation as well as that of Lifelong Learning.

I worked hard campaigning to become a Borough Councillor and in 2016 I was elected to the Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, one of three elected Greens at that time. Since then we have built up our numbers across the Borough so with eleven councillors, we are now the official opposition on the Borough Council. We successfully saved substantial Green Belt from unnecessary development in and around Redhill and many of the issues we dealt with are similar to those in Epsom and Ewell.

My commitment to you and local priorities : If elected as your Member of Parliament as well as continuing to seek the best outcomes for protecting the constituency from the aforementioned pressures I would also focus on other local priorities, including investing in the NHS, social care and new apprenticeships, ensuring young people can get skills, good wages and a step onto the housing ladder, meeting safety and security concerns for all ages with more policing.

I would work to strengthen the vitality and viability of our High Streets and village centres, including reform of business rates so monies raised could be reinvested in the area, helping small businesses and maintaining a retail banking presence not just pushing everyone into online services. I would also support measures to help the farming community through targeted grants schemes, with more emphasis on horticulture and organics, including taxes on some imports.

The climate and cost of living crises demand parallel responses, so for example, retrofitting old homes for energy efficiency not only saves money but also creates green jobs, a win-win for both people and the planet. It is time to acknowledge that achieving net-zero emissions doesn’t jeopardize our economy; it revitalizes it.

Politically Greens are making great strides up and down the country, taking control of or acting in coalition to administer some 39 District Councils and have over 700 plus councillors nationally. Our programme is to do the same in Parliament where we need Green MPs to hold the Government to account just as we are doing on local councils. We want to make a real contribution to changing people’s lives and with new Green MPs we can do just that.

Money for change exists: The old chestnut of there being no funds in the coffer is selectively applied by those with vested interests. In the 1950s, despite economic turmoil and the country being on the verge of bankruptcy, governments forged ahead, creating the NHS, and building circa 150,000 Council homes every year as part of a new social contract. We are a wealthy country that can generate significant funds for the right priorities.

he Epsom and Ewell Constituency is a prosperous community, yet this success brings with it development pressure which threatens to encroach on the remaining areas of Green Belt and countryside not just in the Borough but also the other

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constituency areas, Ashtead and Leatherhead.

Home ownership, once a tangible hope, has slipped from the grasp of many. Essential public services are faltering whether this is in the NHS, social care, education or policing. Without action our younger residents will be forced to move away to find cheaper places, we will lose our identity as places experience overdevelopment, leading to a loss of crucial biodiversity and a consequent increase in adverse effects such as traffic congestion in what was once a relatively tranquil district.

My vision is one where these cherished places are protected so our children can enjoy living and working in the area.

Due to the shortage of social housing locally, Epsom and Ewell Council spends a staggering £2m per year on emergency accommodation, with ratepayers footing the bill. The extraordinary high cost of housing is having a corrosive effect on our neighbourhoods, with the elderly unable to afford more suitable accommodation and, as a professional surveyor with a specialist background in urban planning, I know that building expensive unaffordable homes in the wrong place is not addressing need or fixing our broken housing market.

Apart from protecting the Green Belt from unnecessary speculative housing, I have also argued against houses with large gardens being redeveloped since this impacts the character of local towns. We need a balanced community to sustain the whole of this vibrant constituency and to avoid it becoming a run down retirement village with reduced access to a range of public services, boarded-up high streets and where younger people are forced to move away.

Ensuring a positive future for Epsom and Ewell : Local communities are rightly proud of the towns and villages of this constituency and I respect every ounce of hard work that has gone into their creation and upkeep. I want to complement this effort. Greens work with communities across Surrey, and our party is seen as more trustworthy based on the work we do and the increasing support we are getting from voters. We are working tirelessly to deliver Green councillors in Ashtead and Leatherhead now and in Epsom and Ewell.

I believe there are a growing number of voters in Epsom and Ewell who feel taken advantage of and ignored, and I would greatly value the opportunity to champion their causes. While we don’t have proportional representation in this country this election still represents a one-off opportunity to change the political landscape. The usual certainties no longer apply as many voters are dissatisfied with the two main parties and, with so many candidates standing in Epsom and Ewell, a surprise result is entirely possible.

If you have concerns or are dissatisfied about how you have been represented in Parliament, can I ask that you trust me with your vote? It would be an honour and a privilege to become your Member of Parliament for Epsom and Ewell. I will bring fresh thinking not repackaged stale old ideas passed around between the main parties. I want to make a difference, I need your help, your vote most definitely counts.

Umpire pulls up stumps on cricket plan

4 May 2024



A long-standing Surrey cricket club’s ambitious plans to construct modern facilities has sparked controversy in the local community, leading to a tense planning decision.

Banstead Cricket Club’s plans to modernise its ground have been rejected, by the narrowest of margins. The club, which has been in the village for more than a century and a half, had hoped to update its dilapidated changing rooms and clubhouse to give it a home ground fit for the 21st century.

Residents living near the ground objected over the harm it would do to the character of the green belt. In a nail-biting finish it hinged on whether there were exceptional circumstances to build on the green belt. In the end it came down to the chairman to cast the deciding vote after members were split down the middle.

In an unusual turn of events the planning chair voted against officer recommendations and the cricket club’s plans were refused. Councillor Simon Parnall said: “I knew this was going to happen. You have your name on the block sometimes.”

He added: “Given the weight of the meeting, and the way that people have their feelings quite openly expressed, I, contrary to my normal position which is to support officers, I think now I ought to stand and vote for the reason for refusal because this is so controversial and it would need another go.”

Reasons the club had wanted new facilities included money gained by renting out the space for events. It was also in part due to the massive growth of the game among girls and women, and therefore the need for changing rooms for women.

Martin Long said he was representing the 107 objectors who had written in against the development, where he claims the vast majority live in Banstead Village. He said: “The report does not mention that of the 157 letters of support only 10 per cent are from addresses within the borough.

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He said there are three other community venues in the borough, all with better access, and questioned why a fourth was needed. He told the meeting that the Lady Neville park was given to the people of Banstead, not the Banstead Cricket Club.

Opposition focused on the scale of the development and not the club's need to modernise. He added: "A vast two-storey development would be an appalling blot on the green belt, the surrounding treeline and the view from the park itself.

"A single storey cricket club house is all that is needed not a vast function venue with an all round terrace. The impact of noise and traffic that this new facility will have on residents is unimaginable."

The Thursday, April 24, meeting of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council's planning committee heard the primary focus of the club was the provision of cricket but it needed revenue for other activities to survive financially. The club wanted to demolish its current clubhouse and replace it with a new modern facility to conform with "Sport England and the sports governing body standards".

It also wanted to refurbish its pavilion to create a dedicated changing space for women and girls. The plans had been recommended for approval and received more letters of support than opposition during the consultation stage, although it was argued the majority if this came from outside the borough.

Ray Smythe, a resident of De Burgh Park which backs on to the grounds, spoke against the plans. He said they were inappropriate for the green belt and should only be approved if there were very special circumstances.

He said: "The positioning of the new premises will eliminate the only distinct view from the recreation ground that is not currently obscured by buildings in the area." He added that clubhouse's second floor was not needed for cricket and the financial implications were not a planning matter. He said they could also reduce the cost of the project by scaling back the clubhouse.

Arguing for the plans was Ian Thorpe who told the meeting the club had been in Banstead since 1850 and that its facilities were no longer fit for purpose. The new proposals, which had already been scaled back and revised, was needed to fit in with the latest guidelines for sport.

He said the clubhouse was no longer compliant for all players regardless of gender or age and that the site would operate under its current licensing hours with no desire to extend them further. He said: "Its hoped that the facility will be more than just a cricket club to the local community. With this proposal Banstead Cricket Club is seeking to offer its members and the local community a clubhouse to be proud of."

Related reports:

Just not cricket to replace Banstead pavilion?

Image – visualisation of new pavilion and current inset.

Should Nonsuch Park go to the dogs?

4 May 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will launch a six-week consultation on commercial dog walking in Nonsuch Park from Monday 29 April.

The consultation was commissioned by Nonsuch Park Joint Management Committee following concerns raised by visitors about the increase in dog walkers with multiple dogs in the park.

Ahead of implementing any measures to control commercial dog walking, the Committee is keen to consult with the public and stakeholders about this issue to help inform any future decisions.

Officers from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will also be at Nonsuch Park on the following dates and times to answer any questions the public may have:

- 29/04/2024 – Cheam Gate, 8:30am-10:30am
- 15/05/2024 – London Road Gate, 10:30am-12:30pm
- 22/05/2024 – Sparrow Farm Road Gate, 12:30pm-2:30pm.

Councillor **Julian Freeman**, (Lib Dem College) Chair of the Nonsuch Park Joint Management Committee, said: "We are aware that Nonsuch Park is hugely popular with dog walkers and while most dog walkers are responsible, concerns have been raised about the growth of commercial walkers with multiple dogs.

"It is important that as many people as possible engage with the consultation, so the Committee can understand park

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visitors' thoughts, concerns and suggestions about dog control and commercial dog walking. Their input will help us make informed decisions that balance the needs of both dog walkers and the broader park community."

The consultation survey is available on the Epsom & Ewell consultations webpage – Consultations | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (epsom-ewell.gov.uk).

The survey will close on 3 June 2023.

Nonsuch Park is managed and maintained by a Joint Management Committee, comprising an equal number of Councillors from Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and the London Borough of Sutton. The committee Chair rotates between the two councils annually. The two councils fund, on an equal basis, the running of the park, after taking income into account. The committee is covered by the political balance arrangements.

One flat season in Epsom ends as another begins

4 May 2024

Our season concluded in appropriate fashion on Saturday as we laboured to a 1-1 draw against Guildford City at the Spectrum.

Five days prior to this match, Tadley Calleva's win over Colliers Wood United ensured that our two recent wins over Fleet Town and Abbey Rangers had given us enough points to secure our safety, although for some reason our club never made the effort to inform our "Dear supporters" (as they recently called them) of this fact. Either way, Salts players and supporters alike were able to relax a little going into this contest, and I have to say it showed, as we started well but tailed off. Throw in the usual defensive error that confirmed we have to wait until at least August 2024 before we can record our first clean sheet of the calendar year and it meant that the point was enough for our hosts to be certain of confirming their own safety, although as it turned out, results elsewhere meant that they would have survived even had they lost.

We went into this match chasing a third straight win, which would have been the first time all season we had managed this, but it's hard to know how bothered we were about it. Our Manager Warren Burton was absent and we only named thirteen players in our line up; one of whom, Jaevon Dyer, only arrived ten minutes before kick off. There may have been some valid reasons for the absences and delays, but the question has to be asked about how many players we would have been able to name, if we had still required any points from this match.

Our regular supporters were there in decent numbers, including the returning Alex McKay Senior who appears on the mend after being away for much of 2024. The home side were also well supported at the Spectrum, leading to an attendance of 151 and a well-stocked viewing area on what is realistically the only real open side of the ground.

We had the first opportunity of the match in the sixth minute when a square ball from Thompson Adeyemi reached Sirak Negassi on the edge of the penalty area, but the ball bobbled on him and he skied it well over the bar. Our Captain Ethan Nelson-Roberts was flattened by a late challenge that ought to have earned a yellow card, but didn't, before Zach Ingham-Wright saw his strike on goal tipped over the bar by Adam Longman. However, Negassi then received a similar opportunity to his previous one in the 16th minute when an Adam Green corner missed everyone at the near post and found our winger, who curled the ball first time into the far corner of the goal to put us ahead. Negassi has been unfortunate in my opinion to find himself as a substitute so often, and his 21 appearances (from 48 matches) from the bench are the second most in club history, trailing only Dale Marvell's 22 in 2000/01 (from 56 matches) and he turned out to be a very good player!

We may have had a poor season, but it has been our opponents that have been in the worst form of all teams with only eight points collected since the end of September. The only way that they could have gone down was with a four goal defeat here and a Colliers Wood United win against Sheerwater, so it was always an unlikely outcome, but our early goal may well have caused a bit of concern within the home support at that point. However, what we didn't realise was that we had already seen the sum total of our attacking threat for the day. Guildford picked up their level and started to threaten.

The big battle going on was between Reece Tierney and Guildford City's Ben Mitchell and Tierney was lucky to escape without a card of any colour after bringing him down just as he appeared to break through on goal, albeit some 45 yards out. In the course of a normal match I'm sure he would have picked up a yellow card for this, but the referee clearly didn't want to hand any out and he escaped with a warning.

We had a half-chance on the thirty minute mark when Negassi's left wing cross was met by a low header by Carl Oblitey, but Longman kept it out fairly comfortably and in fact things were much more precarious at the other end as a close range header clipped our cross bar, only for a corner to be awarded, much to the dismay of our keeper Dan O'Donovan. The corner then struck the frame of the goal before being fed to the far post where our keeper had to be down quickly to turn a low shot around his post, but from the next corner, another Guildford header smacked against our bar again before being headed up in the air by Ayran Kugathas and into the arms of O'Donovan for a lucky escape.

The second half started with a couple of substitutes for the home team and a third would follow soon after. Negassi struck

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a corner at goal on the volley, but the contact wasn't quite right and the ball dribbled through to Longman. However, the second half belonged mostly to the team that needed the points more and a far post header by James Glover from a corner was only just wide.

A Luke Miller strike went harmlessly past the post, but Guildford were looking the more likely to score and in the 72nd minute that's what happened, although in typical Epsom and Ewell style, we were the authors of our own misfortune as Tierney went to head a goal kick back up the field, only for the ball to fly backwards off his head and into the path of Mitchell. Nelson-Roberts tried to close him down, but the damage was done and he clipped the ball over the advancing O'Donovan from eight yards for the equaliser. We had another scare in the closing moments as a long ball nearly bounced straight over O'Donovan. Fortunately, he got a slight hand to the ball and Tierney was just able to get the ball clear of the menacing Mitchell, who certainly looked as though he should be playing for a team higher up the League.

We just had time in the 89th minute to see our substitute keeper Toby Colwell come on as an outfield player. Whilst it was a novelty to see and a reward for Colwell's loyalty; sitting on the bench for most of the year, it highlighted the dysfunctional nature of our season which started so poorly under James Scott, before we recovered under Steve Springett to a position of relative safety, only for Warren Burton and Gwynne Berry to take over in January and record just four wins. We close the chapter on 2023/24 in a rather surprising 16th place, which was higher than we had been at any time since August, although it really just provides an indication of how poor the bottom five clubs have been this season! It is assumed that our Management team will be back for next term, which would be the first time for three years and it will be interesting to see what new faces appear, as I'll be honest, we need quite a few if we are not to endure another difficult season; one where it must be remembered, two clubs will be relegated, not just one.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Ethan Nelson-Roberts (c), Adam Green, Reece Tierney, Ayran Kugathas, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Carl Oblitey, Zach Ingham-Wright, Sirak Negassi

Subs: Jaevon Dyer for Kugathas (67), Toby Colwell for Ingham-Wright (89)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom UCA alum praised by Taiwan President

4 May 2024



Leo Tsao graduated from UCA in 2017 with a BA (Hons) in Fashion Atelier.

He has just won season 16 of **RuPaul's Drag Race** as his banana-themed glamazon Nymphia Wind.

Chip Harris, Programme Director in Fashion at UCA, who taught Leo for the entirety of the course and helped manage his final collection, said: "Leo developed a great range of skills on the course and as a very conceptual thinker, he was always ambitious and individual in his approach. Leo's graduate collection epitomised this, which demonstrated an exceptional technical and creative skillset that was also selected to show at Graduate Fashion Week.

"I am not surprised to see his ascension within the RuPaul's Drag Race universe, and it is good to see that he used his skills to showcase amazing costumes, styling and visual narratives."

UCA President & Vice-Chancellor**, Professor Jane Roscoe**, added: "The whole of UCA, and especially our School of Fashion and Textiles, is celebrating the unique and incredible talent of Nymphia, and her victory in RuPaul's Drag Race. As 'America's Next Drag Superstar', we are so excited to see what she does next!"

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Among the high-profile people congratulating Nymphia on her win, was the **President of Taiwan, Tsai ing-wen**, who said: “Congratulations to you, Nymphia Wind, for being so accomplished in the difficult art form of drag, and for being the first Taiwanese to take the stage and win on RuPaul’s Drag Race. Right after being crowned queen, you said ‘Taiwan, this is for you’. Taiwan thanks you for living fearlessly.”

Top Image: *Nymphia Wind in her finale outfit. Credit: Entertainment Weekly/Mettie Ostrowski*

Left image: *Leo Tsao, pictured for his final collection shoot at UCA in 2017.*

Surrey County Council’s new CEO defends “unlawful” email

4 May 2024



Surrey County Council’s soon to be in post Chief Executive and current Wiltshire Council’s CEO has insisted that an email he sent to staff in November 2022, which was recently judged unlawful, was to correct a GMB (General, Municipal and Boilermakers) Union lie.

Terrence Herbert, who is preparing to leave his Chief Executive role to transfer to Surrey County Council, has gone on the record to speak about the events surrounding the case.

GMB, the union for Wiltshire Council staff, claims the email intended to deter its traffic wardens from voting for industrial action. The vote was part of a long-running dispute in which Wiltshire Council is seeking to remove contractual out-of-hours pay enhancement.

Written by Mr Herbert, the email claimed that GMB’s representation of the proposals as a “10% pay cut” was “really misleading”, and urged staff to “consider carefully” whether further strikes would support a resolution.

Bristol Employment Tribunal ruled that the correspondence broke industrial relations law.

The leader of the council, Richard Clewer, has reported that £21,395 was spent on defending the case.

Wiltshire Council is currently seeking legal advice as to whether there are grounds to appeal the decision.

Mr Herbert said: “We entered into all of our negotiations in good faith and professionally, with all three of our recognised unions – UNISON, Unite and the GMB. Unfortunately, from the outset, GMB’s behaviour and actions were in sharp contrast to that of UNISON and Unite, and they seemed to have set their course not to agree.”

He described the pay policies which Wiltshire Council is seeking to change as “historical” and “no longer fit for purpose.” Mr Herbert said it was “very hard to justify” – to residents and staff who do not receive the same entitlement – policies that amounts to “£800,000 per year in extra payments.”

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He noted: “The only other way that you can make those savings are through redundancies and the position that I took from the outset, and it’s one that I stand by now and do not regret, is that I didn’t want to make people redundant.” He added: “There are considerably more requirements on local government than there were before, but there isn’t the money. Therefore, we have to make savings.”

Following negotiations, the council offered a four-year pay protection for concerned staff, which was accepted by UNISON and Unite the Union, but rejected by GMB.

Regarding his email, Mr Terence said: “There had been a number of announcements or media statements made by GMB in the run up to another ballot. In those statements, they had said that we had reneged on a promise to offer lifetime pay protection. We were very clear that that was a lie, that we had never offered lifetime pay protection.”

Referencing his staff, he also said: “I didn’t intend for them to feel threatened, I intended for them to be informed. I genuinely believed that what I was doing was informing my staff.

“Whenever you see an organisation like GMB openly misrepresenting what has happened, you think that there is a duty for you to correct the record, and that’s what I was doing.”

Reflecting on the impact of the case, Mr Herbert concluded: “It is stressful, it takes a personal toll, but at the end of the day, I go home and try to switch off. But the personal attacks, which then lead to offensive comments, as a direct result of inflammatory, incorrect statements that have been made by supposedly professional organisations, that takes a toll.”

When approached for comment, a spokesperson for GMB said: “The findings of the tribunal are clear that his arguments are unconvincing. For him to attack the findings of the tribunal is disingenuous and I’m sure residents of Wiltshire will find it equally concerning.”

Jessica Moriarty

Related reports:

New Chief Executive for County

County CEO’s pay rise triggering strikes?

Image credit: Wiltshire Council

Antiques Roadshow’s poor sign of value?

4 May 2024



In my article of 30 July 2023, I reported on the sale of a 4-inch high Japanese cloisonne vase at auction after it had been purchased for only a couple of pounds in an Epsom High Street charity shop.

Readers may recall that the charity shop find referred to sold for many thousands of pounds, so when I discovered that one of my own charity shop finds was identical to a bronze wild boar that featured in an episode of the BBC’s Antiques Roadshow TV programme, I became very excited.

Upon discovering that my ***porcine*** statuette was Roman and potentially worth ten thousand pounds, I positioned it away from Dobby, my cat on a much higher shelf so it would not get knocked over and damaged.

The Antiques Roadshow expert advised the young man who dug up his bronze Roman wild boar as a child to report his find, but who should anyone in Surrey report similar finds to?

Dr Simon Maslin FSA AClfA is the Finds Liaison Officer for Surrey who works on behalf of the Portable Antiquities Scheme for Surrey County Council at the Surrey History Centre in Woking, Surrey.

The role of Dr Maslin is to identify archaeological finds in England and Wales, but this does not include charity shop finds with no secure provenance like my bronze boar.

Dr Maslin is unable to consider finds unless they are archaeological items found (not bought) locally and he cannot provide assistance with valuations.

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The items considered therefore include my metal detecting finds eg the medieval cruciform pendants shown in the photo because Dr Maslin is the point of contact for items that people may find when metal detecting, gardening or out walking etc which may be part of the local archaeological record. He is also the person to contact for any finds which need reporting under the 1996 Treasure Act.

If Dr Simon Maslin had appeared on the BBC's Antiques Roadshow TV programme, he would have been quick to tell the millions of people watching at home that the bronze boar identical to the one I found in a charity shop was not Roman and that it was in fact of far eastern origin, most probably Javanese and a modern reproduction that is only worth a few pounds – not ten thousand pounds as claimed by the Antiques Roadshow expert (pigs may fly).

If nothing else, my miniature, bronze Javanese wild boar figure has become a conversation piece that has enabled me to write this article about who to contact when real Roman artifacts are dug up in a garden.

My bronze wild boar has now been returned to its original position on a lower shelf, as I no longer live in fear of Dobby the cat knocking it over.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme website and database can be accessed through the British Museum's website at www.finds.org.uk.

Related Reports:

Urning a big profit on rare Epsom find

Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy: Healing Through Connection

4 May 2024



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Casey Bradford at: info@deaphealing.org Phone: 07482015154 Instagram: @deaphealing

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Police post taken down before election

4 May 2024



The Surrey Police and Crime Commission social media team were made to remove a graphic from Twitter, now X and Facebook after a complaint it could influence the May 2 elections.

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The post was made during the run up to the election when public bodies are supposed to remain completely impartial to avoid favouring any one candidate or using taxpayer money to look to influence voters.

The message said it had re-opened funding for local services that promote community safety, support children and young people and help reduce reoffending in Surrey. It was accompanied by an image that showed more than £2m had been provided to support local services in the last financial year.

The complainant, the Liberal Democrat Councillor for Bagshot and North Windlesham Richard Wilson, felt this was a breach of pre-election publicity rules.

Writing to the Monitoring Officer, he said: “Any reasonable person would conclude that the post, in particular its use of the graphics, is likely to improve the electorate’s opinion of the incumbent PCC (Police and Crime Commissioner). This constitutes a breach of the guidance and, therefore, of the rules laid out in the Acts.

“It would be possible to direct readers to the funding website without publicising the £2m which has already been provided. This piece of information is wholly unnecessary and its purpose is clearly to promote the PCC. This is a use of public resources to influence an election.”

After receiving the complaint, Alison Bolton, chief executive and monitoring officer of the Police and Crime Commission, told the communication team to delete the images but felt the text was fine to be republished – and did not merit an apology.

Media policies had been reviewed ahead of the pre-election period and the use of social media and their website has been “significantly” limited, she added.

The posts were scheduled, she said, as the funding process opened on April 1 and they wanted to give organisations the greatest amount of time possible to apply. She said: “Your view that the posts are “likely to improve the electorate’s opinion of the incumbent PCC” is arguably a subjective one. I can assure you that the posts were made in good faith by comms colleagues with the intention of promoting a funding opportunity and not, as you suggest, to “promote the PCC. “We had purposefully not made reference to the incumbent PCC or included any images of her.

“That said, I recognise that the aim of promoting the funds could have been achieved with a simpler post and as such, I have asked my colleagues to remove the posts that include the ‘graphic’. We will re-issue the link, but I don’t believe that issuing an apology is necessary.”

A spokesperson for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner said it restricted its output to some “business-as-usual work” in line with pre-election guidelines.

They said: “On April 3, the Communications Team posted a message on social media highlighting the process for which organisations and services can apply to our funding streams which opened for the new financial year two days earlier on April 1.

“These streams provide vital support for some of the most vulnerable people in our communities including victims of crime, young people and domestic abuse survivors as well as funding important projects that enhance community safety across Surrey.

“Allocating these funds and commissioning these important services is a significant role that the OPCC undertakes and we wanted to give local organisations the greatest amount of time possible to apply. The message posted did not name or reference the current PCC or contain any image of her. However the message did have an accompanying graphic which highlighted the amount of funding the office had provided to support local services during the last financial year.

“The post was created in good faith with the intention of promoting the funding opportunity and was not designed to promote the current Commissioner. However upon review by the OPCC Monitoring Officer, the decision was taken to remove the graphic and replace it with one that had removed the reference to the amount of funding given last year to avoid any inference during the pre-election period.

“The current commissioner was not aware and did not have any involvement in the creation of the original message.”

The elections for the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner take place countywide on Thursday May 2. Counting takes place the following day with the results expected around 2pm.

The vote takes place across Surrey with the count taking place the following day with the result expected to be announced between 3pm and 4pm.

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Surrey’s next Police and Crime Commissioner will be?

Epsom and Ewell candidates dominate Police Commissioner election

Surrey Police funding: not a fair cop

The Cost of Surrey’s Crime Commissioner: “It’s criminal”?

Excellence in aging for LGBTQ+

4 May 2024

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More can be done to make sure LGBTQ+ adults age with dignity and their needs are met in the UK, say researchers from the **University of Surrey**. Together with Tonic Housing, the UK's first LGBTQ+ affirmative retirement community, researchers from Surrey are launching The Life House Project – a participatory theatre-based initiative to explore the unique housing and care needs of the LGBTQ+ community in London.

Many LGBTQ+ individuals face anxieties about housing and care as they age. The Life House Project aims to address these concerns by providing a platform for older adults to share their experiences and explore solutions collaboratively.

Through seven workshops and one-on-one interviews, the project will create a space for participants to use creative expression through theatre, scriptwriting, and poetry. This approach will help participants tell their stories and highlight their specific needs and desired forms of support.

Dr **Georgia Bowers**, Lecturer and Programme Leader of Applied and Contemporary Theatre BA (Hons) at the Guildford School of Acting and lead researcher, said:

"We are particularly interested in how creative methods can support LGBTQ+ older adults to not only share their own experiences but also become advocates for themselves and the wider LGBTQ+ community. By communicating their concerns and aspirations through theatre and creative expression, we hope to ignite a conversation that leads to a more inclusive future for individuals in terms of housing and care."

Dr **Richard Green**, Surrey Future Fellow at the University of Surrey, said:

"We are excited about the potential of theatre and creative expression to empower LGBTQ+ older adults to share their stories and advocate for better care and housing options.

"This project goes beyond simply collecting data; it's about creating a space for authentic expression and collaboration. By working together with participants to explore their needs through creative mediums, we aim to amplify their voices and create a lasting impact on how LGBTQ+ care is approached."

Professor **Andrew King**, Head of Sociology and Co-Director of Surrey's Centre of Excellence on Ageing at the University of Surrey, said:

"The Life House Project can make a significant contribution to creating more inclusive and supportive housing and care environments for LGBTQ+ people. It provides a new interdisciplinary and creative approach to highlight often hidden inequalities and issues and we hope it will influence policy changes and inspire service providers to create spaces where individuals can truly feel safe, valued, and supported as they age."

A celebratory event will also be held on Monday 24 June, to coincide with London Pride week. This event will showcase a project film documenting the journey of The Life House Project and its impact on participants. The event will also serve as an opportunity to connect the project's findings with the broader LGBTQ+ community and discuss potential solutions for creating more inclusive and supportive housing and care environments.

Bob Green OBE, Head of Operations at Tonic Housing said:

"Tonic is very excited to take part in the University of Surrey's Life House Research Project. The use of theatre and drama to examine the themes of housing and care in later life has piqued the interest of many residents and it has attracted other older LGBT people from outside Tonic.

"We are particularly interested to learn about residents' experience of living in the UK's first LGBT+ Retirement Community as well as how housing and care services for older LGBT people can be improved.

"Some older LGBT people have had terrible experiences in the past but having worked with University of Surrey researchers, we value their inclusive approach and supportive attitude, so we look forward to exploring challenging incidents safely and positively."

Leatherhead residents call for more policing

4 May 2024

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A serious assault that left a man fighting for his life has left a community in shock – with some saying there aren't enough police officers and others calling for greater CCTV provision.

On Sunday night (April 21) a man was attacked near a Leatherhead nursery by up to four teenagers.

Surrey Police has said an 18-year-old man and a 17-year-old boy have been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder with enquiries ongoing to identify and locate two other people.

Surrey Police say they do not anticipate a wider risk to the public at this time.

The violent attack, in Cleeve Road, comes on the eve of the May 2 Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner elections. with people able to cast their vote on how crime is tackled and to make sure the police provide a good service.

The Local Democracy Service visited the town to get people's views on whether they felt safe, and if they planned to vote in the upcoming ballot.

If the 2021 election is a fair guide then the candidates have their work cut out to get their message to the public with the winning candidate getting 155,116 total votes, out of a Surrey population of 1.19 million,

As a percentage that figure is low but overall it makes them the individual with the highest single vote total in the county, more than any MP.

Leatherhead is one of the main towns in Mole Valley and lies near the M25. This good connectivity has brought its own issues, particularly transient crime.

One shopper in the town felt the area was no different to anywhere else, saying: "It's the same as in most towns. You get young kids. There was a robbery the other day at Leatherhead Station which is worrying, especially if you get a train on your own."

She added that she wasn't aware that elections for the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner were due to take place on May 2.

After the Cleeve Road attack, residents took to social media calling for better CCTV, an issue that has taken greater prominence after it emerged that 77 public-space cameras in Mole Valley were left unmonitored when Reigate Police Station closed due to dangerous RAAC.

Jen Royal said she wouldn't be voting in the elections as she was unaware of who was running or what they stood for, but was not happy with the direction of travel the force was going.

She said: "Policing on the whole….People call them out and it doesn't matter if it's small crimes or big crimes and they don't appear to get a lot of response."

One shopper who has lived in Leatherhead for 50 years was more aware of the four candidates standing for the position.

She told the LDRS: "It's not safe to go out in the evening. That's why I take a stick".

She says the area has changed a lot in that time with many of the smaller shops disappearing, adding "it's like a ghost town…you never see any police officers.

"We used to see them walking down the road and quite a few cars going by, but now nothing. It's a shame. There should be more police on the streets."

Asked if she had heard of the upcoming elections, she said she already voted before suddenly opening her bag saying "thank you for reminding me, I need to post it, I'm carrying it here in my bag."

The Sunday assault happened at night in the north of the town and the victim was taken to hospital and is in serious condition.

According to the most recent published data there were 41 crimes reported in February in Leatherhead, including 11 instances of violence and sexual offences, eight for anti-social behaviour and six for public disorder.

Olive Lee was on her way to the Fairfield Centre in Leatherhead, somewhere she sees as a real asset to the town and where she visits regularly. Some of the people the LDRS spoke with wished north Leatherhead had similar facilities for younger people.

Olive said: "Some of my friends in the centre are worried about going out in the evening but I like Leatherhead as a place.

"I moved in with my daughter about six or seven years ago, I had retired to Cornwall, or so I thought, and I am quite happy here as a place. But I don't go out in the evening."

She said she was undecided about voting though as the polling station was too far from home, though she admitted it was

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an important election.

Olive added: “I think it makes a difference, who is running the police, but I don’t know too much about the candidates.”

The Police and Crime Commissioner is responsible for holding the Chief Constable and Surrey Police to account – on the public’s behalf. They are also tasked with overseeing how crime is tackled and ensuring Surrey Police provides a good service.

All British, Irish or EU citizens, as well as qualifying Commonwealth citizens with permission to enter or stay in the UK, can vote so long as they are over 18 and registered in Surrey can vote, unless legally excluded.

The general feeling in the town is one where it feels safe, particularly compared with London, but Leatherhead is not without its issues.

A woman said: “It feels safe in the town and you don’t hear about too many of these things bar a few very serious incidents and they are very few and far between.

“I don’t know about the Police and Crime Commissioner elections but I will vote, I just need to find out (about the candidates and what they stand for).

“Another worry is always anti-social behaviour but I don’t see it. If you come in in the evening it’s fine.”

The vote takes place across Surrey with the count taking place the following day with the result expected to be announced between 3pm and 4pm.

Related reports:

Surrey’s next Police and Crime Commissioner will be?

Epsom and Ewell candidates dominate Police Commissioner election

Jen Royal Leatherhead (Image Chris Caulfield)

Prairie dogs ‘cock a snoop’ at planning

4 May 2024



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Planning Committee grappled 18th April with the prairie dogs enclosure at Hobbledown Farm in Epsom.

The proprietors of this animal amusement park had established the enclosure without prior permission and were seeking retrospective permission from the Council.

There were several other developments on the site for which retrospective permission was being sought. A number of residents of the adjacent Clarendon Park housing estate objected, being particularly fearful of an increased risk of flooding arising from these unauthorised developments.

The debate began with Councillors complaining of insufficient time to process numerous emails supplied to the committee just minutes before the meeting started.

Cllr **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) protested “I really wouldn’t want to consider these applications this evening. I can’t even say if the information is relevant to the application or not. It was too much information and it came too late.” Later she accepted assurances that the emails did not materially change the application.

Cllr **Julian Freeman** (Lib Dem College) declined to read the emails in question stating: “I made a specific point of not going through all the email exchange, because it doesn’t form part of the papers for this meeting. I can understand that there is ambiguity, and there are questions to be asked and answered, and the place to do that is here and now, not by an email exchange.”

Cllr **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley) gave her opinion “I’ve got a question. And probably everyone sitting here will agree, I hope, but I’m heartily fed up. I want to know how many retrospective blooming applications we’ve had to sit here and go through, only to be told “it’s already there, they’ve done it”. So why do we bother to have a planning committee?”

The Chairman, Cllr **Humphrey Reynolds** (RA West Ewell) responded that her question was not a matter for the Planning Committee.

Later in a further forthright statement Councillor Mason said: “I don’t think there’s anything we can do. This firm knew perfectly well what they were going to do. And they’ve cocked a snook at us. It’s our land. It is on the green belt. They’ve made it like Disney World. That’s what they want. And I’m just angry that we keep doing these little bits of drip, drip, drip. So in the end they get what they want. We’ll all say, “Oh we can’t pull it down”. Me, I’d pull everything down that they’ve

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put in."

The applications had come before the committee in February and been deferred for more information about flood risks. The ward Councillor for Horton, Cllr **Kieran Persand** (Conservative) was invited to speak. He argued: "I do not believe any substantial additional information or clarity has been provided. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out strict tests to protect people and property from flooding, which all local planning authorities are expected to follow. Where these tests are not met new developments should not be allowed. One of these tests the NPPF requires is the application of a "sequential test". Where the test is not performed or not met, development should not be allowed."

A local resident, **Alexander Duval,** was invited to address the meeting and he said: "As the majority of committee members and planning officers will be aware, the residents of Clarendon Park have objected to a significant number of the planning applications submitted by Hobbledown over recent years. The majority of these have been retrospective: build first, get permission later. Numerous compelling planning reasons have been put forward by residents for refusing planning permission. Where the developments have not complied with national planning guidance, local planning policies and precedents set by case law. Despite this, all planning applications have been recommended for approval by officers. The residents, those directly affected by the applications, are at a loss as to why this should be the case. Hobbledown is located within the green belt. According to national planning guidance and local development policies, this is supposed to afford protection against development and seems to elsewhere, but not on this site."

There was controversy as to whether Mr Duval's several other written objections had been made available to Councillors to consider. Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Horton) "The planning committee should, when considering an application, take into account all views on material and planning considerations that are expressed in a way that is openly heard and fairly considered. I'm really worried about this process. This happened last time. Mr. Duval repeatedly asked where his comments were on the website, and they weren't there. They were posted by the council on the day of the meeting. Twelve minutes [the time allotted to Mr Duval to speak at the meeting] is not the same as articulating point by point. You've presumed that every councillor here has received something from Alex Duval."

She added: "To be told something is being received, but it is not uploaded to the website, so we can't see it. That's not acceptable."

Discussions continued long into the night with references to planning policies, flood risk assessments, conditions and other details.

The marathon three and a half hour meeting concluded with a series of votes. Generally, permissions were granted across the board of hitherto unauthorised changes at Hobbledown, some on the casting vote of the Chair.

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