

Meet Epsom & Ewell's new Mayor, Robert Geleit.

24 June 2023



Epsom and Ewell Times welcomes the new Mayor. Labour Councillor for Court Ward, **Robert Geleit**.

EET: The main thing I wanted to discuss was charities, I see that you are championing three charities in your Mayoral year, could you expand upon why you chose those particular charities?

Robert Geleit: I chose to champion these three charities because I want to help make sure each one of them receives sufficient funds to be able to carry on what they are doing so they can continue positively impacting our community.

Age Concern Epsom and Ewell was an easy choice because of the essential services they offer our pensioners: practical support, help in accessing services and opportunities to increase quality of life.

Citizens Advice Epsom and Ewell have faithfully continued to offer desperately needed advice services in the Borough. I have seen personally the impact it has had in Court Ward as volunteers advise people how to access benefits they qualify for, how to best seek employment, how to deal with money and credit issues, their consumer rights, immigration issues and how best to tackle relational issues with neighbours or family (or anyone else). Often people don't know where to start when it comes to tackling these things and CAEE is a wonderful resource.

Last, how could I not support **Love Me Love My Mind**? They are a small local charity offering support to those in our community with mental health difficulties, including providing information, offering depression support groups and a drop-in group that offers a weekly meal and all sorts of social and educational opportunities. I have suffered with mental health problems myself, so mental health support is near and dear to my heart.

EET: Next question I wanted to ask was what are your priorities for your year in office?

Robert Geleit: I so enjoyed my year as Deputy Mayor and I'm enjoying being Mayor even more. I want to work hard serving the borough and have fun! I intend to be promoting the ward I represent as Councillor, Court Ward, since it has a lot to offer. And I really want to offer young people in Epsom something to do that builds and grows positive community. Watch this space!

EET: What do you think could be improved about the Borough?

Robert Geleit: Youth provision. When I was growing up on the Longmead Estate in the eighties there were all number of offerings for us. I remember the Ace Disco in particular. Now there is so little offered for our youth. This needs to change. There must be more we can do.

EET: What are you most looking forward to in your new role?

Robert Geleit: I'm really looking forward to Armistice day. Last year I had the privilege of laying a wreath at St Martins and found it really moving. This year, to have the opportunity as Mayor to lay a wreath at St Mary's in Ewell is going to be a once in a lifetime opportunity.

EET: If you were just named Fulham's manager, who is the first player you would sign?

Robert Geleit: I really don't follow sport. But, like my father who was a lifelong Fulham supporter, I do go to Craven Cottage on the odd occasion. If I had to sign a player I think I'd sign up my mate Dodgy to play in goal for Chelsea just before they played Fulham - then he could be Fulham's secret weapon as he let in loads of goals!

EET: What hobbies of yours might suffer during your busy Mayoral year?

Robert Geleit: So much of my spare time has been spent on being a good Councillor (or Mayor!) that I don't have much time for hobbies. However, in the past I tended to flip between working on hardware and software projects. Sometimes I still manage to find the time for the odd bit of soldering. My main passion is working with old fashioned valves to create sublime sound systems - I could actually make a living out of it but I'm saving that for if I ever lose my seat ☹️

EET: Thank you very much Mr Mayor. We hope you enjoy your year in office.

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Epsom and Ewell's 7th Labour Mayor?

Meet Epsom & Ewell's new Mayor, Clive Woodbridge. (2022-2023)

Image: Robert Geleit at the Epsom Derby Races June 2023.

Surrey Council ‘blamed me as a parent’ after asking for help

24 June 2023



A mother of an (Special Educational Needs) SEN child claims **Surrey County Council** “blamed her” as a parent after she asked for help and support, according to a local government watchdog report.

The revelation came in reports published this month by the **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman**, which also found the authority’s failings caused a second child to miss suitable education for a year, and that a boy had to be held back a year after it failed to identify his special educational needs.

The three cases meant the county council had to pay out a total of £4,900 to the aggrieved families. Surrey County Council said it apologises for the distress it has caused and has put in “robust” auditing measures to learn from its mistakes.

The first case dates back to April 2021 when a mother, referred to as Mrs X raised a complaint about the lack of support the council offered her as well as the actions of two social workers. She said the council failed to offer help , including respite to her and her child. She also said the council blamed her as a parent and recorded false information about her in the social care records.

The ombudsman said there was “fault in the council’s actions” but that the local authority had already remedied the injustice when it offered her £100 for its delay and £400 to recognise the distress. He did not take the matter further.

The council’s costliest error came after a father complained that his son was not receiving full-time education between April 2021 to March 2022. The council’s lack of action, the ombudsman found, was because it “simply overlooked” key information resulting in the boy missing out on education, causing the family distress and uncertainty.

The ombudsman found Surrey County Council at fault and recommended it apologise for the harm done as well as pay £200 for the time and trouble, £300 for distress and £2,200 for missed education and SEN provision.

The final finding against the council involved its delays in identifying a boy’s special educational needs and finding an appropriate school for him. The delay meant he missed eight months of education and was held back a year. It resulted in the ombudsman ordering the council to apologise to the mother and child for the distress caused by its failure to provide the boy with an appropriate education.

Surrey was also told to pay the mother £1,500 as a symbolic gesture to recognise the distress and impact on the youngster’s wellbeing and personal development. It must also pay the mother £200 for the frustration and distress caused to her.

Surrey County Council’s cabinet member for education and learning, Councillor **Clare Curran** said they took ombudsman findings very seriously and apologised for the distress caused. She said: “I am aware that the council has not always got things right and that the support and service that we give some children with additional needs and their families is not always of the standard that we would expect and I am sorry about that. We are working hard to improve our services.”

Cllr Curran said they had put in a programme of ongoing professional development for education staff as well as what she described as a “robust audit system”. She said: “All SEN case officers are required to attend Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) writing training, which clearly sets out the local authority’s duties, and additional guidance has been written for staff to reiterate these duties.

“Further bespoke training around writing EHCPs will be delivered and be a requirement for all SEN staff when joining Surrey. We also recognise the significant issues that confront the SEND system nationally. We have seen a 64 per cent increase in education, health and care needs assessment requests across Surrey since 2020, at a time of a national shortage of Educational Psychologists (EPs).

“We are doing our utmost to recruit more to meet this demand, and we are filling this gap as best we can, but we hope to see the shortage in trained EPs and other issues addressed soon through the government’s improvement plan. We remain committed to improving our services and outcomes for children with additional needs so that they are happy, healthy, safe and confident about their future.”

Related reports:

Council pays £3,900 to mother of SEND child

Surrey County failed SEND boy

Surrey to SEND £40m for special schools

Epsom and Ewell's refugee talent

24 June 2023



Celebrating World Refugee Week (19th - 25th June) Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network has been celebrating the talents and success of refugees the charity has supported.

Nataliia Zadorizhna is a concert pianist who started playing the piano at the age of 4. She graduated from the Glier Kyiv Academy of Music and also has a PhD in Linguistics. She arrived here in May to flee the war in Ukraine.

Natalia has been appointed as a peripatetic piano teacher for Surrey Arts and also gives private piano lessons. She has formed a Ukrainian choir in Epsom and is a top-class musician who has played in several concerts in and around Epsom.



Ksenia Bugrimova is an award-winning film producer and creative director who has made many films and tv programs in Ukraine. Since arriving in the UK, she founded Talented U - <https://talented-u.com/en> - a Ukrainian-British Association of screen industry professionals. Here is an example of her much acclaimed work <https://youtu.be/ayVgCK-3f00>

Samira is a 17-year-old Afghan girl who came to the UK in summer of 2021 and moved to Epsom in May 2022. She is a gifted artist and doing a dressmaking course at college. EERN provided her with a sewing machine and one of our volunteers helped her learn how to use it (as she had never used an electric machine before). Within 2 weeks she had made 4 traditional Afghan dresses and she hopes to become a professional tailor.

Samira has been working very hard at her English, supported by EERN, and was very pleased to pass her driving theory test first time!



Helin Konyar was studying singing at Kiev Municipal Academy of Circus and Variety Arts when, at the age of 20, she had to leave Kyiv last May. When she arrived here, she auditioned for the famous Laine Theatre Art College in Epsom and was awarded a 3-year scholarship. This week she appeared in her first show at Epsom Playhouse.

Yuliia Komyshan is a professional bandura player from Poltava, Ukraine (a bandura is a Ukrainian plucked-string folk-instrument). She has degrees from Poltava Professional College of Arts and from Glinka Dnipropetrovsk Academy of Music

and a PhD in Educational and Pedagogical Sciences.

Yuliia came to the UK when the war started in Ukraine. She dreams of introducing people all over the world to the interesting and rich Ukrainian culture and traditions. She loves giving people the opportunity to listen to the bandura and to connect with Ukrainian musical culture, both traditional and modern. She performs at concerts whenever she can.



Yuliia says that she is very grateful to the government, sponsors, volunteers and new friends for the support which she has received here.

For more information about the work of Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network visit their website.
<https://epsomrefugeenetwork.org>

Related reports:

Flight of refugees: history repeating?

Ukrainian refugees made welcome by King's rep.

Cllr Alex Coley: Refugees in Epsom and Ewell

Local talent showing up for charity

24 June 2023



EPSOM ROTARY CLUB will again be hosting the **EPSOM & EWELL SHOWCASE** at **Epsom Playhouse** at 19.00 hr on Tuesday 27 June 2023. Tickets at £25 each support an amazing variety of local talent and in turn local charities and local good causes in and around Epsom. The acts consist of:

Cam Brown is a well know local guitarist and singer. He enjoys performing songs by Jake Thackray and often performs in local pubs and halls.

Rhea is the winner of the local Young Musician award and will play “Against All the Odds) Phil Collins and Albright on her saxophone.

Kasumi Brooker, a soprano who sings with Epsom Choral Society will sing Puccini, Mozart, Gershwin, Bernstein, Lloyd Webber and Loewe.

Relive the experience **Girlguiding Epsom** will bring the Camp-fire to the stage with music!

Protègèm Dance School will perform contemporary dance on stage.

Brass Quintet Come and see a great performance by the Brass Quintet of the Epsom and **Ewell Silver Band**.

Bharathakalalayam Dance Southern India brings us lots of great Dancing and these dances are based on the Hindu religion -Radha Krishnan, Dandia and Thillana.

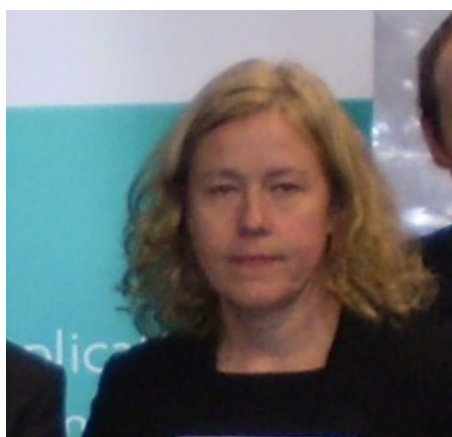
Ambition School of Dance Ballet, Modern, Disco/tap dancing brought to the stage by these young performers. They wowed us last year so come and see them this year.

Leatherhead Link Who of us could ever forget the emotional, joyful and committed performance by Leatherhead Link last year. They have come back to repeat the performance and we are looking forward to a stunning evening.

Tickets available [HERE](#).

County CEO’s pay rise triggering strikes?

24 June 2023



A pay offer giving **Surrey County Council**’s chief executive almost 10 times more than the authority’s lowest paid workers has prompted a strike action ballot.

Social workers, teaching assistants and bin collectors are among the thousands of county council staff voting on industrial action. It’s over a pay offer public sector union Unison says falls far short of covering the increase in the cost of living.

UNISON’s Surrey county branch secretary **Paul Couchman** said: “After years of below-inflation pay increases and with the soaring cost of living, staff are struggling. There’s still no end in sight to spiralling bills and staff feel strongly that enough is enough. It’s not too late for the council to think again and improve its pay offer.”

According to the union about nine in 10 members rejected the county council’s offer which it said would increase the overall wage bill by 5 per cent.

If accepted it would have worked out as an additional £1,300 and £1,700, to low-paid staff with the chief executive **Joanna Killian**’s £234,600 salary topped up by up to £10,000, the union said.

Surrey County Council leader **Tim Oliver**, said the council recognised the financial pressures people were living under and labelled the decision to turn down the pay increase “disappointing”.

He said: “ That’s why we have worked really hard to find extra money for staff pay this year, increasing our offer to make sure that for the second year running we are focussing the largest percentage increases on our lowest paid employees to

reflect the increased costs staff are facing day by day.

“This years’ offer is between 7.8 per cent for the lowest grades, and 4.5 per cent on the highest, with a Surrey minimum wage of £11.05 per hour -15p per hour higher than the Real Living Wage. This represents an increase of 16.3 per cent over the past two years for staff on the very lowest pay grades, and is in addition to a one-off lump sum payment for business mileage and a Real Living Wage adjustment for lower paid staff paid in January this year.

“However, it’s imperative that the offer is within our means. The council is not immune to the challenges of the current economic landscape, rising costs and inflation pressures. Put simply everything is more expensive for us to buy as a council too, and we must ensure we remain in a position to deliver vital public services and protect the most vulnerable in our communities throughout. It’s within this context that discussions will continue, and we will be reviewing our next steps accordingly.”

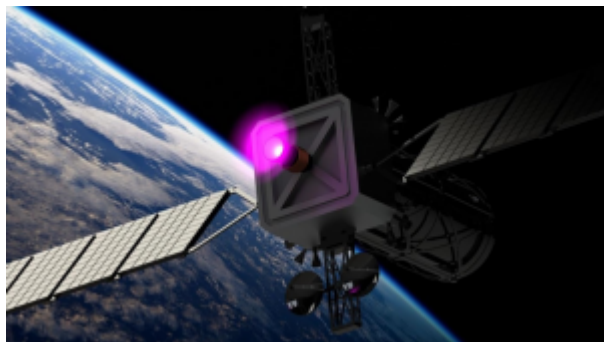
Addressing the increase to the CEO’s salary a spokesperson for the council said that its focus was on providing the best possible services to 1.2m residents of Surrey, and to ensure it does this, needs to have the best people in senior positions.

They said: “The scale of our work means we employ 10,000 staff, and have an annual budget of £1bn, and in order to attract the best people from both the public and private sector for this, we need to offer competitive salaries.”

Image: Julian Killian SCC CEO. Credit: User:Dollfussguy CC BY-SA 4.0

Surrey’s “Tugs in Space!”

24 June 2023



Thanks to £250,000 of government funding announced today, a new type of electric space propulsion system will be developed by the **University of Surrey** in partnership with the University of Leicester. The new thruster would be used to service and reposition satellites in space via agile space tugs.

The **PLasma Torch Rocket** (PLATOR) project will fill a gap in current propulsion options, offering a balance between the high thrust typical of chemical propulsion engines and the propellant efficiency of electrical propulsion ones.

The project has been awarded £250,000 from the **UK Space Agency**’s Enabling Technologies programme.

Dr Andrea Lucca Fabris, Senior Lecturer in Electric Propulsion at the University’s Surrey Space Centre and project lead, said:

“Our PLATOR rocket could be used as the main way to move spacecraft after launch, or it could be used in space transportation vehicles, or space tugs, for delivering satellites to specific orbital slots, refuelling satellites to prolong their service life and removing space debris.”

As well as designing the propulsion system, the project will explore potential uses for PLATOR through flight dynamics simulations, identify the optimal size and design of space tugs and, in partnership with researchers at the University of Leicester, develop a piloting system.

Dr **Nicola Baresi**, Lecturer in Astrodynamics at the University’s Surrey Space Centre and project co-Investigator, added:

“PLATOR will increase the options available to mission planners and could be particularly useful when the UK develops its own launch capability. UK launches will only be able to reach high-inclination orbits, but our proposed space tugs could hopefully expand their reach, opening the door to new and exciting mission opportunities from the UK soil”

Surrey Space Centre is where the era of small, low-cost satellites began with the successful spin-out company SSTL. Today, Surrey Space Centre is a world-leading academic centre of excellence for space engineering research and education which regularly leads on experimental orbital payloads. Surrey Space Centre is globally renowned for its Space Engineering education courses at Masters and Undergraduate level. It is part of the Space South Central regional cluster.

The PLATOR project will make the most of the advanced vacuum facilities and instrumentation in the Space Propulsion Laboratory at Surrey Space Centre.

Image: An artist’s impression of PLATOR: Oliver Hitchens, University of Surrey.

Surrey University Press Office

The knives are out in Woking

24 June 2023



The Epsom and Ewell Times has covered the bankruptcy of Woking Council. Recently we have received daily updates from our partners at the BBC's Local Democracy Reporting Service but spared you from the flood. This report, however, demonstrates the importance of a vibrant quality local media. The baffling commitments that were made by Woking are unlikely to be made by our Epsom and Ewell Borough Council. Nevertheless, a free press reporting on Council business is an important contribution to sensible decision making. Chris Caulfield reports:

Woking Borough Council's bankruptcy crisis is so insane the authority even agreed to be responsible for "buying the Hilton Hotel's cutlery".

It is the first of many revelations to come as the authority agreed to an "asset disposal strategy" as part of its efforts to cut into its £2.6billion projected debt on Tuesday (June 20).

Many eyes were immediately drawn to the council's flagship town centre development in Victoria Square - a central driver behind the council's £1.2bn deficit.

But the recent news that it had been written down in value to almost half what it cost to build means it is unlikely to be sold at a massive loss straight away. It's the assets inside the building that made many drop their spoons.

Addressing the extraordinary council meeting was borough leader Cllr Ann-Marie Barker. She said: "Let's have a look at a couple of projects. Victoria Square going from £150 million to £460m to £700m. Huge difference in the scale of what went on there. Huge changes to the project as it went through. Much that wasn't known by opposition councillors as that project developed.

"I found out at a very late stage that Woking Council was responsible for buying all of the cutlery for the Hilton Hotel. That was where the hotel was run, we've got to buy all the stuff that goes inside there. It just seems quite astonishing that that was the approach and how much responsibility and risk the council has taken on. That's where the huge issues lie."

The opening of the Hilton Hotel, part of the Victoria Square development, is already about three years overdue. It was originally set for completion in November but the pandemic and other delays pushed this back 16 months. Later remedial work to address cladding issues added another 20 months on to the opening date.

Meanwhile the knives and forks have sat unused in drawers.

Cllr Barker added: "To get things under control you have to understand the totality of the problem."

Residents' complaints about anti-protester measures ahead of Derby

24 June 2023



Epsom Derby organisers faced an "awful lot of complaints" from residents as they put up fencing and closed footpaths to minimise disruption caused by Animal Rising protesters. The activists had made clear before the event they planned to disrupt this year's Derby, and one did make it to the track.

The Jockey Club, which owns **Epsom racecourse** among others, applied for an injunction ahead of the event on Saturday, June 3.

It also asked a special meeting of the **Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators**, held behind closed doors just days before the event, for permission to put up 4,000 metres of fencing across the Downs and suspend footpaths.

Simon Durrant, representing the Jockey Club at a meeting of the Conservators held on Monday (June 19), spoke of his “disappointment” at the fencing having to go up and that organisers were “constantly fearing the worst”. But he said due to the “unique” nature of the Epsom Downs, organisers quickly realised “it wasn’t about avoidance it was about how we were going to react to it”.

Mr Durrant set out the challenges ahead of this year’s event and addressed “frustrations” residents may have had. Adding that he knew there would be councillors at the meeting who had heard from residents about their “frustrations and disappointment” he called it a “different and difficult” event this year.

He said: “It was made even more difficult because, for obvious reasons, we didn’t want to communicate why we were putting fencing up, why we were suspending the footpaths. We didn’t want to give the protesters too much information before that Saturday morning. We’ve had comments in from residents as well.”

He told the meeting that the Jockey Club had seen what the protesters were capable of when they disrupted the Grand National at Aintree in April. He said there were three types of protesters, the “really pleasant” peaceful protesters outside the grounds, those “intent on causing a scene in and around the racecourse” and then those who were trying to gain access to the racetrack.

Councillor **Bernice Froud** (Residents’ Association, Woodcote and Langley Vale) thanked Mr Durrant for the explanation of the security issues. She said: “I did have an awful lot of complaints where I think people just didn’t quite understand what was happening. I fully understand that none of us in this room that knew about it could really publicise that. So I think it’s really helpful that you’ve actually explained in detail what the reasoning was, and I hope that goes some way to actually reassuring the residents.”

At the meeting it was also confirmed that no working royals attended the Derby, and that as the late Queen Elizabeth II used to attend in a private capacity, it was not something that was “naturally be passed along” through the family.

Mr Durrant pointed to other complications across the weekend, including train strikes, and the FA Cup final between Manchester United and Manchester City that was played at Wembley on the same day.

He told the meeting: “Two Manchester clubs, playing in London. It was great for the Manchester United fans because most of them live in London.”

With an event that he said gets “better and better every year”, Mr Durrant said of the Derby weekend: “As ever, in general, a fantastic, iconic event that puts Epsom on the map again.”

Image: Preparations for the Queen’s Jubilee celebrations underway on the Hill seen from the Epsom Downs Racecourse. Credit: LDR Emily Coady-Stemp

2700 cubs and brownies came to Epsom

24 June 2023



Cub Scouts and Brownies from **Epsom & Ewell districts** joined over 2700 Cub Scouts, Brownies and leaders from across Surrey for a day of fun and adventure at an activity day called SCRAM at **Hook Arena, Epsom** on Saturday 17th June 2023.

Cub Scouts and Brownies were able to try many new and large activities that cannot be organised in groups or districts as well as being able to mix with Cubs and Brownies from other districts.

Over 200 activities were on offer including pedal karts, high ropes, bungee trampolines, Assault course Wire, bungee running and zorbing as well as smaller activities like making popcorn, Grand Prix table game, firing water rockets and much more. As well as having fun and enjoying the activities on offer, many activities taught them #skills for life.

During the day, a number of local Mayors from around the County visited to see what was on offer as well as **CJ Ledger**, Deputy UK Commissioner (Support) who spoke to the young people during the day as well as seeing what Surrey Scouting had to offer.

Oliver a Cub Scout from Surrey aged 9 said “I liked the inflatable that you had to jump over so you don’t get knocked over, I think it helped that we played a similar game at Cubs which helps with co-ordination skills”

Lauren a Cub Scout from Surrey aged 10 said “I liked the bungee trampoline because it was fun and exciting”.

Max a Cub Scout from Surrey aged 8 said “I liked the zorbing because it was fun and I haven’t done it before”.

Sarah a Brownie from Surrey aged 8 said “I liked the activities and the excitement of the day, there was lots to do”.

Ali Tickett, Organiser of SCRAM for Surrey said “What a day! 2,700 cubs, Brownies and leaders came to Hook Road Arena to celebrate just how brilliant being a Cub Scout and Brownie is! The cubs and Brownies had an incredible range of activities to try including a cave bus, metal detecting, pancake making as well as a high ropes course and many, many more. Some activities were just for fun and other were a real challenge all supporting the fact that Scouting helps young people develop Skills For Life.”

Related reports:

Epsom Beavers away in Surrey woods

Dutch scouts go English in Epsom & Ewell

Cub Scouts are for Boys and Girls aged 8 to 10.5
Brownies are for girls aged 7- 9
Brownies are part of Girlguiding UK
Pre-pandemic youth membership was 479,000 (2020)
Up until the pandemic, The Scouts enjoyed a sustained period of growth, with total membership rising by nearly 200,000 between 2006 and 2020
2020 to 2021, youth membership fell from 480,083 to 362,752 – a 24.5% decline – and adult membership fell from 155,907 to 141,863
2021 to 2022 membership growth is 362,668 to 421,852 – an increase of 16%

Should have gone to the Surrey Youth Games?

24 June 2023



On Saturday, children in **Epsom & Ewell** who took part in the 2023 **Specsavers** Surrey Youth Games and their families came together to celebrate the Games at the Surrey Sports Park in Guildford. Around 70 children from Epsom & Ewell aged 7–16 took part in the Games this year, having a go at a fun across a range of activities – from boccia, boxing and street basketball to judo and rugby, all at no charge.

The Specsavers Surrey Youth Games is the biggest multi-sport youth programme of its kind in the south east. The Games were open to all but were actively promoted to encourage those who might not normally get the chance to join a sports club or are otherwise inactive.

The Games would not have been possible without the 12 young ambassadors who helped promote them in their schools, encouraging young people to find out more and sign up to take part.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee said “We were overjoyed to see so many children from Epsom & Ewell take part in the Specsavers Surrey Youth Games this year.

“We know that building positive habits in early life is vital for the long-term health of our children and the Games are a great way for children who may not previously have had access to some of these sports to join in and have fun taking part.

I was honoured to meet the young ambassadors who volunteered their time to help promote the Games to their peers earlier in the year while I was serving as Mayor of Epsom & Ewell and was delighted to see the positive outcome of their efforts this weekend.”

The Specsavers Surrey Youth Games were coordinated by Active Surrey and sponsored by Specsavers.

Anonymity justified by acquittal?

24 June 2023



A service Surrey Police officer who allegedly ‘harassed two female colleagues’ has been cleared of misconduct. The hearing’s chairperson said they had looked into allegations that a police constable carried out a series of acts of harassment against two female officers but misconduct thresholds had not been proven, or were not reached.

The police officer, who has not been named and is referred to as “PC X”, escaped sanctions after the five day hearing which took place last week at the force’s Guildford HQ.

[Image is illustration only – it is not the officer in question.]

PC X was accused of “shouting” at an officer during the first coronavirus lockdown, and attempted to hug another officer twice despite being warned about his behaviour.

Summing up, chairperson Eileen Herlihy said that on July 3, 2020, PC X got involved in a work-place argument that continued at the female officer’s desk. Describing the altercation, which was said to have lasted a matter of seconds, the chairperson said: “He shouted at her” and approached “ her in an intimidating manner” and that his actions were said to cause “intimidation and embarrassment” over a matter of “police policy”.

The argument was said to have started before she was at her desk but that the tone was “abrupt” and “brusque”. He then “placed himself close to her face” and “she had to put her hands up to create some space”. After the argument the pair continued their day as normal. The woman’s initial reaction was that it “was not a big deal but felt embarrassed”.

The chairperson said that it was “not the officers intention to intimidate” and that there was no evidence the PC made any reference to her gender or sex. It was a “genuine disagreement between colleagues that led to an argument”.

The other two matters related to attempts to hug the same woman. The first incident was said to have occurred on January 13, 2020. The panel heard two conflicting reports about the exact details surrounding the PC asking a female colleague for a hug outside their office. The dispute was over the timings of when he went in to hug her, and that he didn’t stop when she pulled away.

The female PC said she regarded him as having a “reputation” as being “over friendly”, “creepy and uncomfortable”. Two months later when she was alone inside the office he again asked her for a hug. He put out his arms and she said no before walking away. He had already been warned about his behaviour.

The panel found he had failed to treat her with respect and courtesy but the chairperson said there was no motive of sexual gratification.

The panel found two of the allegations unproven; the argument and outdoor hug. The third, in the office, was proven but “but fell short of the threshold required for formal disciplinary action”.

Surrey Police Headquarters in Mount Browne, near Guildford, hosted the police misconduct procedure between Monday, June 12, and Friday, June 16.

The male PC can not be named after his identity was protected by the committee chairperson to protect his welfare.

The hearing was brought by the Professional Standards Department as it felt there were cases to answer over potential breaches of authority, respect and courtesy, equality and diversity.

A spokesperson for Surrey Police said “thresholds for referral to disciplinary proceedings are necessarily set lower than that necessary to prove the misconduct, to ensure transparency in the police disciplinary regime.”

During the course of the hearing, an application to withdraw certain allegations against the PC were also agreed.

Related report:

Anonymity for Surrey policeman

Prevention costs less than cures.....

24 June 2023



Opinion by County Councillor **Eber Kington**:

It goes without saying that, if local councils prevent something untoward happening, that will save the higher costs of repairing the damaged caused. Fill in the potholes quickly and damage to vehicles and bigger potholes is prevented. Build the flood defences, and you do not have deal with the physical and emotional costs of lost homes and possessions.

And what applies to tarmac, bricks and riverbanks also applies to our young children and families. Ensure they have a good start, and you avoid the higher costs of intervention and support in later years. That might seem obvious, but I am not sure that **Surrey County Council**, with its responsibilities for children and families really understands that.

Many **Family Centres** were closed by the Conservative administration in 2019 on the basis that SCC would target those most in need. But Family Centres, with its universal provision and encouragement of all to attend, were designed to ensure that families did not fall into need in the first place. A strategy focussing only on those that have already met the threshold for support is neither preventative nor sound.

In this year's Budget, the ruling group decided against even an inflationary increase in budget for the supportive and therapeutic **Short Breaks Services for Children** with SEND and their families. This was despite the Council's own the **Equality Impact Assessment** telling them that:

"Any reductions in capacity of short breaks services due to either or both inflation linked price increases [or] reduced current levels of investmentare likely to: reduce positive outcomes for children with disabilities and their families; and increase pressure within families of children with disabilities, which is likely to, in some cases, contribute to family breakdown if this is not mitigated - leading to increased cost for the local authority"

Short Breaks is a service that makes a real preventative difference, and even a standstill budget is likely have future financial consequences. And SCC continues to fail some of our most challenged young people in another way. Support for them comes, in part, through the development of an EHCP (**E**ducation, **H**ealth and **C**are **P**lan) within their school setting. But SCC has a backlog of 937 new applications which, at the current rate of action, will take until March 2024 to clear.

I understand that there are pressures, with more young people in need of an EHCP, and those with the expertise to develop them not readily available. But, all the while there are children whose needs are not being met, the longer-term costs of meeting their educational needs are rising.

SCC has to value and fund preventative services, and **Residents Association** and Independent Councillors are committed to highlighting the removal and reduction of those preventative services when that happens.

However, we are also seeking to work positively with the ruling administration to ensure that Surrey's children and families get the best start in life and that the balance of funding between prevention and cure starts to be more clearly tipped in favour of the former.



County Councillor Eber Kington (RA Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington)

Top image: Epsom Family Centre within Pound Lane School.

Uncommon commitment to the Common

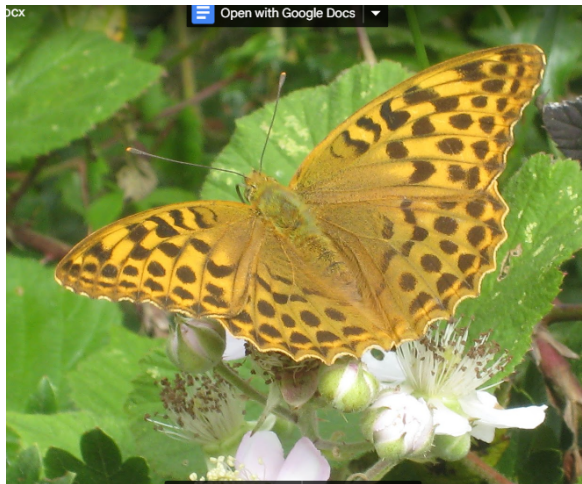
24 June 2023



The **Epsom Common Association** (ECA) has a membership of around five hundred households, and works closely with **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's** Countryside Team and the **Lower Mole Partnership** to protect and improve the Common.

On Tuesday evenings, from June until the end of August, ECA will be hand-pulling bracken for a couple of hours to prevent selected areas of heath or grassland from becoming smothered. During the autumn they will hold the three remaining conservation tasks of the year's programme of eight. Each task runs for two days, usually the third Sunday of the month

and the following Monday. The programme is agreed with the Countryside Team, guided by the Council's **Hundred Year Management Plan**. The work typically involves removing scrub and small trees to maintain and improve areas of grass and heath or rejuvenate scrub.



Female Silver-washed Fritillary

Sustainable Epsom and Ewell in partnership with St Martin's Church are looking forward to hosting their 3rd Eco Fair on Saturday July 1st between 10:00 and 14:00. The event is free for all to attend and will include activities for children. Hot food and cakes will be available on the day.

Sustainable Epsom and Ewell is delighted to welcome again to our 3rd event the the Epsom Common Association. Further details about the work they do can be found on the website

<https://www.sustainableepsomewell.co.uk>.

Around fifteen cattle will be grazing across three separate pastures, following in the footsteps of their wild and subsequently domesticated ancestors. Every day the cattle must be checked for health, as must the fences and water troughs. Each week the ECA provides four of the daily checks; without this contribution it is unlikely that grazing could continue.

As well as conservation work, each year ECA publish three newsletters, hold two public meetings with guest speakers, and arrange several expert led guided walks. Of this summer's programme, walks for: butterflies (2nd July) and bush crickets (6th August) are still to take place; and residents are very welcome to come along.

Finally, ECA make excellent hardwood charcoal from logs harvested during conservation work. Two years ago, thanks to funding from the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy, they were able to take delivery of a modern charcoal retort, which has greatly reduced the smoke whilst increasing the yield. Their charcoal is available at local retailers, the sales help finance activities.

Last September, funded from a generous legacy in memory of **Dave Berry**, a volunteer on the Common, ECA worked with the Lower Mole Partnership to create a new pond. Despite a dry start, by early spring it was full and should provide a new habitat for invertebrates and amphibians. Some funds remain and ECA are considering overgrown and silted ponds for future restoration.

In February ECA funded the installation of two Kestrel nest boxes high up in Oak trees. At least one now appears to have been occupied. Might this suggest a shortage of natural nest sites, despite the substantial number of large trees? Many organisations, including the Countryside Team and members of the ECA, contribute significant effort to monitoring a wide range of animals and plants on the Common.

Previously unrecorded species including various dragonflies and the Black Hairstreak butterfly (probably introduced but now breeding); the third year of Grey Herons nesting at Great Pond; and continuing good numbers of many species all suggest that in many respects the habitat management is successful.

However losses such as breeding Willow Warblers, declining across the south and east of the UK, demonstrate the limits of individual nature reserves, which have only a tiny impact on climate change and none on damage to other areas of the planet that may be essential for a particular creature's life cycle.

Next year will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Association. ECA are considering what celebration might be appropriate, suggestions welcome. If you would like to help the ECA on its next fifty years please do get in touch. It is not all outdoor work, there is also plenty to be done in organisation, publicity and the like.

Details of activities and contacts can found at: <https://epsomcommon.org.uk/>

or

Facebook: www.facebook.com/EpsomCommonAssociation

David King

Top image: Berry Pond - Epsom Common

Related reports:

Flagging Up Epsom Common

Storm Eunice – Can the Epsom Common Ducks handle it?

Epsom Common Bird Walk Poem

Sustaining Epsom and Ewell's trees

24 June 2023



The **Epsom and Ewell Tree Advisory Board** (EETAB) founded in 1994 is a partnership of environmentally minded volunteers from the local community who work together to safeguard and promote the value of trees in the borough.

EETAB operates via volunteer **TREE CHAMPIONS** who feel that trees matter and who help to care for trees in their road or local park. Their aim is to ensure that they pass on to future generations a borough that is at least as leafy as the one we have inherited. EETAB is part of the wider Surrey Tree Warden Network.

One of the key roles EETAB has is to monitor Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Conservation Area planning applications. EETAB seeks to ensure that major planning applications include appropriate soft landscaping requirements and tree planting to enhance the townscape. They provide scrutiny to these applications and this role is vital to maintain mature trees and ensure leafiness is maintained within the Borough. Both these activities often require site visits or follow up reviews to ensure any tree work or developments are aligned with the planning application.



Planting of hedge at the Epsom Riding for the Disabled site.

Sustainable Epsom and Ewell in partnership with St Martin's Church are looking forward to hosting their 3rd Eco Fair on Saturday July 1st between 10:00 and 14:00. The event is free for all to attend and will include activities for children. Hot food and cakes will be available on the day.

One of the aims of the Eco fair is to highlight the work of the many fantastic local green groups and businesses active in the Borough and provide an opportunity for our residents to find out about the work they do and how they can support these groups and businesses. Sustainable Epsom and Ewell are therefore delighted to welcome again to our 3rd event the **Epsom and Ewell Tree Advisory Board**

Further details about the work they do can be found on the website
<https://www.sustainableepsomewell.co.uk>.

In addition to this work, EETAB also undertakes many practical tree planting work within the borough working both in establishing tree planting projects in local communities and supporting **Surrey County Council** to get more street trees planted. Some of the ongoing projects include:

Allotment Tree Nursery

EETAB operates a small tree nursery at the Alexandra Road allotment site. They use this site to care for young trees so

that there is ready stock for tree planting projects. They have several hundred trees in pots at the nursery. A team of volunteers look after the saplings there and help maintain the plot and we are always in need of extra help with this work.

Planting Projects

Over the past year EETAB has been involved in planting projects at various sites in the borough, the largest of which has been helping to plant a 120m long section of hedge at the **Epsom Riding for the Disabled** site in January, followed by a further 25m section of hedge in March this year. Species planted included hazel, field maple, hawthorn, hornbeam, willow, rowan, ash, dogwood, and dog rose.

Street Trees Planting

When familiar trees are lost (due to age/disease/extreme weather) and not replaced, the appearance of a neighbourhood is altered, so the topic of street trees stirs some strong emotions amongst residents. In the planting season 2021/2022 just 10 new street trees were planted in our borough, a figure far lower than the number of street trees lost. EETAB ran a campaign highlighting the loss of street trees and the increasing numbers of stumps left in our verges to put pressure on Surrey County Council to plant more trees.

As a result of this campaign progress has been made and almost 30 street trees were planted in the borough in the 2022/2023. They worked with Surrey County Council to get 44 planted in the 2023/2024 season. There is still concern in some areas about a continuing decline in numbers of street trees, particularly in the tree lined 1930s estates of the north eastern side of the borough. EETAB appreciate residents' frustration about the reduction in the number of trees. Replacement trees are not being planted in some of these verges as they do not pass the criteria set by Surrey County Council for street tree planting, often due to the narrow width of the verge, or due to the presence of utilities underground.

Tree care and watering

Although there is often much focus on tree planting in the media, the ongoing care and watering of these newly planted trees is equally important. EETAB volunteers regularly check on the newly planted trees in the borough, clearing vegetation around the base of the tree (to reduce competition for water and to prevent strimmer and mower damage), putting down mulch and checking the tree ties and supports. Young trees need watering regularly for the first few years after they are planted with increased frequency during spells of hot dry weather. In the summer months there is a huge need for Tree Champion volunteers to help with watering young street trees. They have a list of trees in need of a champion and would welcome additional help with this.

If you would like to find out more about the **Epsom and Ewell Tree Advisory Board**, please check their website: www.eetab.org.uk, follow on Facebook @EpsomEwellTreeAdvisoryBoard or email them at epsomandewelltab@gmail.com

Vicki Rees

Top image: EETAB Allotment Tree Nursery at Alexandra Road allotments.

Related reports:

Council Meeting: Does Epsom need more trees?

More trees please for Surrey

Any more trees please?

Ex MPC, now Epsom PPC, tackles Surrey PCs

24 June 2023



Epsom and Ewell Liberal Democrat prospective parliamentary candidate and former Royal Military Police officer, **Helen Maguire**, is pushing Government to spend more on policing in Surrey given the “dire” state of policing in the County.

Using figures culled from various public sources by the LibDems, Ms Maguire points to the 1,412 burglaries that went unattended in Surrey last year, as another example “.... of the Conservative Government suggesting it is tough on crime with the facts telling a different story”.

Figures uncovered by her Party show that of the 2,768 burglaries reported in Surrey, the police only arrived at the scene in 1356 instances – accounting for just 48.99% of cases. The number of unsolved burglaries in Surrey also soared, with 2195 cases being closed without a suspect even identified. This is equivalent to 79.3% of all cases.

The Liberal Democrats are calling for a new “Burglary Response Guarantee,” which would create a guarantee that all domestic burglaries are attended by the police and properly investigated.

This will require a return to proper community policing, the LibDems urge – where officers are visible, trusted, and have the time and resources needed to focus on solving crime. Yet since 2015, Ms Maguire claims, the Conservatives have taken over 4,000 Police Community Support Officers off the streets, while they look set to have broken their key promise of having recruited an extra 20,000 police officers by the end of March 2023.

“The number of PCSOs has fallen to just 69 by the end of March – down from 136 PCSOs just over a year ago in February 2022. It’s worse in **Epsom and Ewell** where we should have 8 and now have half of that number. That’s hardly a good track record for a (Tory) Party which makes out to be supportive of policing! Hardly surprising then that so many burglaries in our community are not being attended by police officers. No family should be denied justice after suffering the distress and trauma of being burgled”, said Ms Maguire.

“Car theft is also a scourge across the county with a staggering 79.2% of car thefts going unsolved last year with just 5.3% resulting in a charge or summons. Lib Dem analysis, based on the latest Home Office statistics on crime outcomes, showed that a grand total of 1503 car theft cases in Surrey were closed in 2022 without a suspect even being identified – equivalent to 4 car thefts going unsolved every day.

“The priorities of this government are clearly not on our public services with our police officers, like the NHS, being starved of resources. In such a dire situation, enough is enough – we need a change of regime – one that puts the focus on our communities, on law and order, and the health and wealth of our people,” said Helen Maguire.

“Many families across Surrey now feel unsafe in their own homes, because this Conservative government has left our police forces overstretched and under-resourced. It means far too many victims are being denied justice and far too many criminals are getting away with it.

“Meanwhile, it has been revealed that the Surrey Police budget for 2022/23 was underspent by at least £7.9 million, enough to pay for the entire 5.1% council tax increase imposed by the Police and Chief Commissioner Lisa Townsend for 2023/24.”

Surrey Police responded to Ms Maguire’s claims:

Exclusive to the **Epsom and Ewell Times** a spokesperson for Surrey Police rebuts the LibDem candidate’s claims:

“We are committed to deploying officers to all home burglaries. We recognise how invasive and traumatic it can be to be a victim of burglary, and this is why we are already investing significant resources in preventing and tackling these offences, alongside providing the appropriate support and advice to victims.

Each of our three divisions in Surrey has its own proactive team that reviews all burglaries in that division. These teams monitor ongoing burglary trends and patterns, identify hot spot areas and target prolific and repeat offenders and organised crime networks to ensure that patrols are directed in a targeted and most effective way.

Changes to how burglaries are classified, which were introduced on 1 April 2023, will enable officers to give a greater focus on home burglaries and help to meet the NPCC pledge of attending all home burglaries.

Burglary offences had previously been divided into two categories of “residential” and “business and community”. A residential burglary previously included sheds, garages, outhouses and summer houses, as well as the dwelling itself.

The changes will mean that residential burglaries are split into two categories – residential burglary of a home and residential burglary of an unconnected building. All sheds, outhouses and garages with no connecting door to the home will be classed as unconnected buildings.

Our figures show that we have solved 81 more offences than the previous 12 months and so far have had 125 less offences (106 less offences between April 2023 and today v April 2022 and June 14/06/22).

Work also remains ongoing to prevent burglaries from occurring in the first place by ensuring effective prevention measures are in place. Many of the residential burglaries reported are shed or garage break-ins and we continue to run awareness-raising campaigns in our local communities to remind homeowners of the steps they can take to avoid becoming a victim.

More advice on protecting your home/outbuildings from burglary can be found on our web site <https://www.surrey.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/protect-home-crime/>

In some cases, there may not be enough intelligence or positive lines of enquiry for police to act on. This does not mean that a crime is closed indefinitely or that intelligence or information is ignored. This information will be collated and monitored to identify emerging crime hotspots and any trends or patterns.

If an investigation is closed, and we then receive information to link an offender at a later date we will always pursue this to seek closure for victims.

The public can also help in the pursuit of offenders by reporting suspicious activity, and also by reporting to the police those selling stolen property or those involved in burglary offences via 101, by webchat on our website <https://surrey.police.uk/online> and <https://www.surrey.police.uk/tua/tell-us-about/cor/tell-us-about-existing-case-report/> or anonymously via the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Residents are also able to upload video footage and images that they think could assist our burglary investigations through the use of a public CCTV submission portal <https://surrey.police.uk/suspiciousactivityportal> “

And on the claims about reductions in PCSOs the police spokesperson continued:

“In 2022, to contribute to savings across the force, we reduced the number of Police Community Support Officers in Surrey Police to 96, 22 posts fewer than our previous staffing level of 118 full-time equivalent PCSOs. This reduction did not involve redundancies and achieving this staffing level did not result in a reduction in overall numbers in our Safer Neighbourhood Teams; we maintain a strong blended mix of police officers and PCSOs in these key frontline posts in

every borough.

In September 2022, Surrey Police employed 88 PCSOs. This is lower than our desired number of PCSOs, so it is inaccurate to say that 35 PCSO roles have been cut by the Force. We are actively recruiting to bring our establishment level back up to 96.

We know how important a visible police team with local knowledge is to residents in each of our boroughs. A trusted, knowledgeable, and proactive local policing presence is just as important to us, and PCSOs are a valued and integral part of that."

Adding to the local force's rebuttal Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey **Lisa Townsend** said: "The suggestion that policing in the county is in a 'dire' state is once again entirely misleading – the reality is that Surrey Police is now the biggest it has ever been.

"The Force has not only met but exceeded its target for extra officers under the government's programme to increase numbers by 20,000 across the country. An extra 395 police officers have been added to the ranks since 2019 – this is 136 more than the target set by government for Surrey which is fantastic news for residents.

"Last year, in order to help achieve its savings target – Surrey Police made an operational decision to temporarily halt the recruitment of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). "These posts were replaced with new warranted officers and there were no redundancies or loss of numbers to Surrey Police's frontline teams.

"PCSOs continue to play a crucial role in policing our communities – recruitment has been reopened and the Force are seeking applications right now. We expect their numbers to back to the previous levels within three years.

"Over the last year, Surrey Police have achieved an increase in the number of residential burglaries solved and have since coupled this with a commitment to attend all reported house burglaries in Surrey. The outcome rate for residential burglary in Surrey remains above the national average.

"I'm proud that Surrey is the safest county in the south east, and the fourth safest county in the country."

What is your experience of policing in Epsom and Ewell? Write to us at Epsom and Ewell Times. Via the contact page or by email to admin@epsomandewelltimes.com

Stretching Epsom taxi ULEZ exemption

24 June 2023



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's **Licensing and Planning Policy Committee** decided Thursday 15th June to put out to public consultation a change to licensing requirements for taxis seeking operating licences from the Council. The change will require applicants' vehicles to meet the ULEZ charge exemption criteria as set by the Mayor of London for the ULEZ zone. That zone is due to be expanded to Epsom and Ewell's London Borough borders (i.e., the boroughs of Sutton and Kingston) on 31st August this year.

Cllr **Julie Morris** (LibDem College) welcomed any measure that pursued the Council's climate change agenda but was concerned on the devastating impact the requirement may have on some drivers. She gave as an example a driver near retirement who could not afford to change his vehicle. Is there discretion she asked?

An officer said all policies had to have some discretion or legal challenges could be made. However, he did not address the example given but mentioned the large Cadillac limousine he had seen recently. The Mayor of London's ULEZ policy has some exceptions to cater for such special party cab-hires.

Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) in the chair stated that the draft policy would be open to amendment in the light of responses to the consultation and the matter would be returning for decision by the committee on a future occasion.

Related reports:

Emissions a taxing issue for Council