

# Party Leader visits Epsom to launch East Surrey election campaign

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The Liberal Democrat leader Sir Ed Davey visited Epsom yesterday to officially launch the start of the East Surrey election campaign, promising a “fresh start” to the county after years of Conservative rule.

Visiting Epsom alongside local MP Helen Maguire, Dorking & Horley MP Chris Coghlan and Esher & Walton MP Monica Harding, Mr Davey met local party members and called for a “fresh start” for East Surrey.

The Lib Dem leader also called the local campaign a “moral responsibility to win and a historic opportunity for the party”. He told members: “Reform is a threat to our country [...] The Conservative Party has run out of road here, and Nigel Farage’s Reform offers no solutions to the problems people face.”

East Surrey Council is being created as a result of a major shakeup of local government in the county, with Surrey County Council and the county’s borough and district councils being abolished. Moving from a two-tier to a unitary model, East Surrey Council will oversee all local services in the area. People can look forward to casting their ballot on May 7.

“After years of Conservative failure here in Surrey, it is time for a fresh start,” Ed Davey said. ““Liberal Democrats will deliver the real change people are crying out for with our bold plan to fix the NHS, cut energy bills and tackle the sewage crisis in our rivers.”

When asked about the possibility of raising council tax to fund services, Mr Davey made no promises: “I think you’ve got to look at the books.”. He told the local democracy reporting service (LDRS): It will be challenging initially because of the financial situation we have inherited but over time, people will notice real differences: parks and local services improve, investments continue and cuts are avoided.”

Local MPs stressed the urgency of change and importance of local engagement. Helen Maguire said: “Voters want to know that the people they elect will make a real difference in their day-to-day lives- whether that is improving schools, clearing bins, or securing social care they need. When politics delivers for them, they will be motivated to vote.”

The Lib Dem MPs drilled the three most important issues in Surrey, issues they will no doubt be campaigning on, as: finance budget, potholes and special educational needs provision (SEND).

Monica Harding pointed out some tangible results already being delivered by Lib Dem Surrey MPs like moving the derelict boats away on the River Thames. She said: “People want a fresh start and they want change. They want to stop having to fight the system and get things more easily and things they deserve.”

Chris Coghlan criticised the Tories’ record, saying: “Surrey’s Conservative Council has appallingly managed local services and traumatised SEND families. They must go.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Liberal Democrats launch East Surrey election campaign, with leader Ed Davey. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)