

# Unitary in name, unitary in nature?

17 May 2026



Dear Editor

Your criticisms of the silencing of the newly elected Liberal Democrats Councillors by our local MP (8<sup>th</sup> May) is well founded, and will concern residents who may well wonder whose interests those Councillors will represent. However, I wish to raise another issue in relation to the management of the Election Count that I found disappointing and concerning.

Following the announcement of the result for my Division I sought to make the customary speech of thanks to officers, and to the residents who voted for me, but I was told that the Returning Officer in Reigate had determined that there would be no speeches at any Election Count across Surrey. So, hundreds of years of, sometimes, raucous hustings, elections, and speeches of thanks to the election team and voters, all dismissed by officialdom.

It got worse. I sought to have a photograph taken in the room following the announcement of the result, but I was told that was not allowed either, as it might “compromise the secrecy of the vote.” As I watched the news on TV later in the day, with BBC cameras showing footage of a host of candidates in polling stations, and panning out across the counting room, I wondered what was so concerning that required the East Surrey election count to be sanitized and devoid of any of emotion, and the high and lows that come winning and, yes, with defeat.

So, because I could not do this on the day perhaps, through your on-line newspaper, I might be allowed to thank the teams at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council who undertook the work to ensure that on election day, and at the count, all went to plan. To Kerry Blundell, EEBC’s Electoral Services Manager, whose tireless work over many years ensured a smooth and successful election outcome. My thanks also to the Polling Station teams, many up at 5.30am and not home until after 11.00pm. It is a long day, yet they maintained their welcoming and efficient presence through to the end. And to those undertaking the count which, whilst being more complex by voters having two votes, was completed in good time.

Finally, my colleague Cllr Peter O’Donovan and I wish to thank all those residents in Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington who voted for us on 7<sup>th</sup> May. We will work hard to repay your trust in us by following through the promises we made, but also by being accessible and responding swiftly to your enquiries. We will also be working for all the residents in the Ward, and look forward to working with and for them over the next five years

Yours faithfully,

Cllr **Eber Kington** (Surrey County Council and East Surrey Unitary Council)

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