

CHAIRMEN'S STATEMENTS TO COUNCIL

**Councillor Neil Dallen,
Chair of the Environment & Safe Communities Committee**

Climate Change

The working group has met a few times and produced a very good draft action plan that will be finalised and come to committee and Full Council in January. Well done Councillor Alex Coley and the rest of the working group.

Car parking

Since last full council meeting there have been a number of improvements to our car parks –

1. Hope Lodge car park has been increased.
2. Ashley Centre car park level 4 resurfaced and 12 'parent and child' spaces introduced.
3. New pay machines installed in Ewell allowing card payments as well as cash.
4. Ringo free trial has been introduced in non barrier car parks giving a cashless option.
5. Advertising has been introduced in the Ashley Centre car park.

Waste and Recycling

The Government Waste Strategy paper is expected very soon and could make wide ranging changes that will affect the way we recycle and collect waste. For example they are considering a deposit scheme for plastic bottles.

Crisp packets are now able to be recycled in the town hall. This benefits the Air Ambulance service as well as recycling packets that are not able to be put in the recycling bins.

Safe Communities

Joint working is working very well and has had a number of successes. These include

6. Successfully moving travellers on from Horton Country Park.
7. Stopping a major organised fly tipping scheme at the Southern Gas Network site behind Hook Road car park.
8. A successful joint operation in the Town Centre following reports of prostitution and human trafficking.

Council

18 December 2019

Meetings have been held with Chief Inspector Fiona McPherson and Borough Inspector Jo Easterbrook to discuss slow 101 responses and difficulties with web reporting. We also discussed CCTV and await a further response from Surrey Police.

Transport

Heathrow – Two letters have been sent (MP and Chief Exec of Heathrow) expressing disappointment at the complexity of the consultation on Heathrow Airport expansion. Responses tried to be reassuring but neither clarified the situation.

Gatwick – A letter regarding Gatwick expansion plans has recently been received and will be responded to in due course.

SW Rail – Emails have been received from SW Rail expressing disappointment regarding the current strikes along with a warning to check before you travel.

Council
18 December 2019

Councillor Barry Nash,
Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee

The Community and Wellbeing Committee has a wide-ranging portfolio which includes Health and Wellbeing, Sport and Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces, as well as the management of Bourne Hall, The Playhouse and Ewell Court House.

However, the big challenge is on the issue of homelessness, which is a real concern not just for Epsom and Ewell, but for all councils across Surrey and the South East.

The challenges of homelessness for the borough council are significant and rising. Despite our best efforts, an increasing number of households are having to be accommodated in out-of-borough nightly paid accommodation. There are many reasons why people become homeless, but one of the key factors is the high cost of rents in the borough compared to earnings and the lack of new affordable housing coming forward.

For those who might not know, we have been proactive in responding to this challenge. We have increased the supply of less expensive 'in-borough' accommodation through purchasing new properties within the borough, as well as introducing a new Private Sector Leasing option for our local landlords.

Right now, we are increasing the number of council staff dealing with homelessness prevention, so that we can do everything possible to avoid people becoming homeless. We are also adding another member of staff to manage and increase the number of our successful Private Sector Leased properties.

Early in the New Year, we are expecting to be able to start using accommodation at Defoe Court in East Street as new 'in-borough' temporary accommodation, creating a more flexible solution using 24 linkable rooms, which will accommodate a range of household sizes.

The Committee will also be considering a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy in the New Year. This will help us to further understand and tackle the root causes of homelessness in the borough and develop actions to support residents in their search for a home.

I would also like to remind Members that we have a Member Briefing session on 9th January, which will include a briefing on both Health and Wellbeing and developments with our Homelessness strategy.

Council
18 December 2019

**Councillor Eber Kington,
Chairman of the Strategy & Resources Committee**

Fair funding Consultation

The Council has responded to a Government Consultation on Fair Funding for Local Councils. We took the opportunity to comment on the continuing reduction by Governments of the Councils funding options.

- This Council ceased receiving any Revenue Support Grant (RSG) through the formula calculation from 2017/18.
- Negative RSG, which currently remains an option for the MHCLG, will mean Epsom & Ewell Borough Council having to use council tax income or reserves to meet these payments to the Government.
- This Council only retains a fraction of the income it collects from Epsom and Ewell businesses and historically redistributes the vast majority of funding from those business rates to be utilised elsewhere within the Country.
- The Consultation Paper's proposal that referendum limits be set at 2% (not 3%) will, if introduced, result in an annual % increase in real terms insufficient to maintain and, where required, improve services.
- The Government is trying to incentivise councils to build more properties but has significantly reduced the benefit to this Council of doing so with the changes to New Homes Bonus.
- The Government's policy of adding responsibilities to council's with funding subsumed into RSG penalised EEBC when all RSG grant funding was withdrawn.

We made the point that local councils can only provide services if it has the funds to do so. In that respect the local government funding system of grants, business rate redistribution, and restrictions on council, does not work effectively for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

2018/19 Statement of Accounts

Recent figures from Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited have revealed that 210 out of 486 Councils (43%) failed to meet the legally required deadline for the publication of their audited Statement of Accounts due on 31 July each year. I am pleased to say that EEBC finance officers met that legal requirement and have never failed so to do.

Council

18 December 2019

Gender Pay Gap

Figures for the gender pay gap across a range of public bodies as at April 2019 have been published. This is not about equal pay but is the average difference between hourly wages for men and women in an organization.

As in 2018 the data shows that, based on the average hourly wage, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council pays women more than men. In 2019 the median gender pay gap was 23.3%.

The figure does, in part, reflect the larger proportion of men in the lower paid occupations within Operational Services. However it also reflects the Borough Council's success in recruiting women to senior posts through a fair and open recruitment process as well as retaining women through a positive and team based workplace environment.

Finance – LGA Peer Challenge

We have asked The Local Government Association (LGA) to provide us with a Finance Peer Challenge which will be funded from grants provided by the MHCLG.

We have a very good track record in terms of our finances. However, with the Government currently undertaking a Fair Funding Review and our own grant funding from the Government very much reduced over the years, a Peer Review will help the Council learn from others and perhaps find new funding streams and ways to make less go further.

The aim is for the Peer Challenge begin its work in the new financial year 2020.