

## **CHAIR'S STATEMENTS TO COUNCIL**

**Councillor Steven McCormick**

**Chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee**

### **Taxi and Hackney Carriage Emissions**

Following the public consultation, a recommendation came to LPPC and members agreed to put forward the recommendation to the full council.

### **Local Plan**

At the recent extraordinary council meeting members supported the recommendation from LPPC to unpause the Local Plan. Work has restarted on spatial strategy/site selection and policy development.

Several member briefing sessions have been scheduled to enable ALL members to take part in discussions to progress the local plan.

At the time of writing Central government has not updated the NPPF.

At a special LPPC meeting, brought forward to accelerate work where possible, a report on the updated Local Development Schedule (LDS) was brought. LPPC Members supported the updated LDS.

The next steps will be briefing sessions with ALL members on key aspects of the Local plan along with sessions on spatial strategy/site selection.

I will continue to provide a statement at each full council and welcome questions from members on any item under this committee's remit.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Councillor Clive Woodbridge</b> <b>Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee</b></p>
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## **Arts, Culture and Heritage**

Work is increasing apace following the adoption of the Council's new Arts, Culture & Heritage Strategy by the Community & Wellbeing Committee. A few examples are covered below.

*Kids in Museums:* On 17th November students from Nescot took part in the national Kids in Museum Takeover day at Bourne Hall and did some fantastic work reimagining the older wallpapers and fabrics in the museum's collection through a more modern lens. The exhibition of their work is on display in the museum.

*Christmas in Ewell and Stoneleigh:* Funding from the Levelling Up initiative has been used to support some pop-up art installations in Ewell village and Stoneleigh shop windows this Christmas, seeking to bring some festive cheer and hopefully increase visitors/customers at this critical time of year for retailers and service providers. Using glass pens and acrylic paints, bespoke wintery scenes have been drawn onto the windows of a number of shops who expressed an interest, under the direction of a UCA tutor, who is also a very successful street artist. She worked collaboratively with retailers to produce personalised artworks in their shop windows. This project sits within the Council's Arts, Culture and Heritage strategy which seeks to grow the local economy through creative projects - drawn up in collaboration with community members who live, work and study within our borough.

*Refugee welfare:* Again using some Levelling Up Fund money, the council and Refugee Network will be running arts and crafts sessions for refugees in the Borough this Spring to enhance their mental well-being. The Arts, Culture & Heritage team is also working with the council's Dementia hub to relaunch art classes in partnership with an external provider.

*Million Hours Fund:* EEBC has submitted a bid to this Fund, which is jointly funded by National Lottery and DCMS. The aim is to support young people at risk of being drawn into ASB and provide them with more things to do. Funding is only available for areas of the country with low social deprivation ratings and EEBC can bid to provide opportunities for young people living in Court and Town wards. The bid we have submitted envisages providing a weekly after school arts club, and to fund additional community murals, along the lines of the one in Upper High Street that has been well received, for young people in those two wards.

## **Housing**

*Housing and Homelessness:* This remains one of the most significant problems facing the Borough. While over the course of October there was a slight decrease in

the number of households in expensive nightly paid accommodation to 76, from a peak this year of over 80, as testament to the hard work of our housing team, the underlying trend is still upwards. Net nightly paid spending up to the end of October was £943,000, compared with a budget of £741,000, and we are on course for a full year spend of around £1.5 million on homelessness, which represents an overspend of around £200,000. Measures are being taken to mitigate this, by for example moving people on from nightly paid into more settled accommodation, mainly in the private rental sector, and to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place. Efforts are being made to recruit additional team members to strengthen the work we are doing to reduce homelessness cost pressures, but this is proving challenging.

The shortage of suitable accommodation is chronic. In Q2 of the 2023/4 year, there were 1328 applications on the housing needs register, and yet in that time we were able to conclude only 43 lets.

One of the initiatives that has been taken is to strengthen our fraud and financial investigation work, by procuring the team at Reigate and Banstead Borough Council to assist with the prevention and detection of fraud within the housing and homeless application process. This partnership, which started in March this year, involves 1.5FTP up to 52 hours a week. In the six months to date the RBBC team have had considerable success, with eight housing register applicants removed, seven homeless referrals ending in withdrawal or being disallowed, and a significant benefit overpayment being uncovered. The notional savings to date from these actions is around £46,600 (against a cost to then council of around £17K). Pressures on the housing register and homelessness assistance service are being alleviated, and there is a deterrent effect as 'word spreads' that applications to EEBC are being scanned for possible fraud. The hope is that legitimate applicants will benefit from the removal of competition from ineligible applications.

## **Poverty**

East Surrey Poverty Truth Commission - EEBC is participating in the newly re-launched East Surrey Poverty Truth Commission, being coordinated by the Good Company, with Rod Brown attending. The aim is to bring those experiencing the effects of poverty together with those who as stakeholders may be able to contribute in the amelioration of its effects. A new group of commissioners met recently and was a useful first step in hearing the voices of those impacted by poverty and collaborative steps that might help address some key issues. Further meetings will be held in 2024.

## **Leisure**

Surrey Youth Games - Active Surrey has confirmed this will take place in 2024, after some uncertainty caused by over Districts and Boroughs not being able to take part or uncertain. Epsom & Ewell has indicated it will participate. Active Surrey have suggested there may be a need to 'revise and reconsider the approach' to Surrey Youth Games, and members will be updated once greater clarity is available.

**Councillor Alex Coley**  
**Chair of the Crime & Disorder Committee**

It has been a busy six months since we inaugurated the crime and disorder committee. I'd like to give my thanks to the staff supporting us and delivering so much work in such a short time.

In that time we have created new policies on Video Surveillance and on Anti-Social Behaviour Intervention. We have recommended proposed responses to an independent review of our Community Safety Partnership, including an expansion to represent more partners from other sectors, like education. And we are undertaking a public consultation on our Community Safety Action Plan.

### **Public Consultation**

I am very keen to hear from residents on their priorities for community safety. The consultation on our Community Safety Action Plan is running until 17th December. Please search online for: 'Epsom and Ewell Council consultations' and let us know your thoughts on the plan.

### **Surrey Police**

I have asked several questions of the Police & Crime Commissioner about budgetary underspend at the Surrey Police & Crime Panel. We must get the resources we have into policing, so taxpayer money can be put to work, not used for treasury reserves.

We also welcomed a new Chief Constable this year and those who attended the Policing roadshow at Bourne Hall will have seen his 15-point plan for Surrey. This represents a pivot to tackling acquisitive crime across the county, particularly burglary and shoplifting. Something residents and businesses have repeatedly complained is not taken seriously.

### **Shoplifting**

I attend the Business Crime Reduction Partnership, hosted by the Epsom BID and attended by major retailers. The BCRP are using a new application called Disc to join up intelligence gathering and ultimately create a dedicated reporting channel from retailers direct to Surrey Police. It's critical we protect our high streets from serial offenders and criminal gangs or our economic centres will fade and die.

## **Joint Action Groups**

I attended the most recent JAG as an observer and was impressed by the partnership work between the Council and Surrey Police. Anti-social car meets and youth problems in some of our parks are being prioritised with some very creative problem solving to disrupt troublemakers.