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With Epsom

How to contact us

Epsom and Ewell Conservative Association
212 Barnett Wood Lane
Ashted, Surrey KT21 2DB

01372 277066
office@epsomconservatives.org.uk
www.epsomconservatives.org.uk



News from local campaigner

BERNIE MUIR

Introducing Bernie.....

I am Bernie Muir, I live in Epsom and have two sons and two dogs. I was raised on the mantra that 'one person can make a difference' and my approach is not to sit back but, instead, to get involved and address issues head on. I seek to identify the best that Epsom has to offer and encourage creative thinking to give us the edge. We need to find imaginative ways to generate enthusiasm so that everyone, who can, sees themselves as part of the solution making all of us feel like stakeholders in our town.

South Street chaos temporarily reprieved

'Plan E' is a set of town centre improvements funded by the government. Our High Street is in desperate need of improvement, but care needs to be taken to ensure that individual changes improve things rather than cause more problems. Our Residents' Association council put forward a package of how to spend this government money. Unfortunately this included making South Street open to two-way traffic.

Such a change would cause traffic chaos, snarling up the town centre leading to tail backs far down the Dorking Road. Residents Association councillors have refused to take on board these concerns.

Work on the whole project was pushed back to commence in January 2017 and the work on South Street is planned at the end of the project. We have continued to ask for reconsideration of the South Street proposals but so far have been refused.



Council Tax update

Surrey has hit the headlines recently as the council has grappled with meeting its obligations to put forward a balanced budget and guarantee key services such as adult social care.

Despite having made £450 million of savings the council was facing a £30 million funding gap. Having lobbied the government to understand the unique funding pressures Surrey faces the council is now confident the government has provided assurances as to the funding of social care in the near to mid term future.

Such assurances mean a referendum on a significant council tax increase is no longer necessary, something I very much welcome. Instead there will be a general increase of 1.99% and a further 3% ring fenced for social care. The Conservative group will continue to engage in the hard work of seeking to protect services whilst delivering value for money for your council tax.

Residents' Association deliver double whammy over parking charges

Figures obtained under a Freedom of Information request show total revenue generated by council car parks and pay and display machines decreased despite previous parking charge increases. Disregarding this worrying development RA councillors have forced through additional increases. Local Conservatives were alone in opposing a policy that imposes increased costs on local residents and discourages visitors coming to our town whilst causing a loss in revenue for the council. We call upon the Borough Council and RAs to reverse this bizarre, illogical and damaging decision.

Challenging secret plans to reduce services

Last year the Borough Council announced the closure of the popular Wells Social Centre which was a hub for providing support to our elderly population and an important base for voluntary groups and community activities. The RA council kept their plans secret, threatening opposition councillors with disciplinary action if they reported on what was going on to the public. This secrecy meant that there was no consultation of local residents and users. Every council is under financial pressures and difficult decisions have to be made, but secrecy and a lack of consultation lead to poor decisions. A request by Conservative councillors to pause the decision to allow for a proper consultation was rejected.



Could you be a Foster parent?

Surrey's Fostering Panel is busy. Recently a lady in her 60's came for her first review. In one year she has helped 10 children; children who had to be moved quickly and who were at risk. Some stayed for a couple of days, some a month but this lady smiled broadly and told of how Fostering had transformed her life. You don't have to be young, or married. You just need a desire to help. At the moment we have 200 children who have to live away from areas they know because we are so short of help. Please think about helping. Google 'Surrey County Council fostering' to find out more.

Conservatives deliver additional school places locally

470 new school places are coming to Epsom & Ewell through recently authorised expansions at Danetree Primary, West Ewell Infants and Ewell Grove Infants. Population growth in Epsom has led to a higher demand for school places. There is always going to be pressure when seeking a good school close to home, but these expansions will help more parents when making these choices.



BERNIE MUIR

Campaigner, Epsom West

01372 277066

office@epsomconservatives.org.uk

KARAN PERSAND

County Councillor Epsom West

07972 354110

karan.persand@surreycc.gov.uk



DAVID MUNRO

Surrey Police & Crime Commissioner

01483 630 200

www.surrey-pcc.gov.uk

CHRIS GRAYLING

MP for Epsom and Ewell

01372 271 036

chris.grayling.mp@parliament.uk

www.chrisgrayling.net

