

Ofsted slams Surrey over vulnerable children

Vulnerable young people in Surrey are being failed by children's services at Conservative controlled County Hall, according to a damning Ofsted report.

Three out of five areas covered in the report have been described as inadequate - the worst possible ranking. As a result, the Lib Dems have called on the Conservative Leader of the Council to resign.

Cllr **Colin Taylor** (Lib Dem) said: "Many of the underlying problems highlighted in this report, such as lack of respite care, too much reliance on agency staff and a limited range of preventative services, have been known for years, but the Conservative administration failed to act."

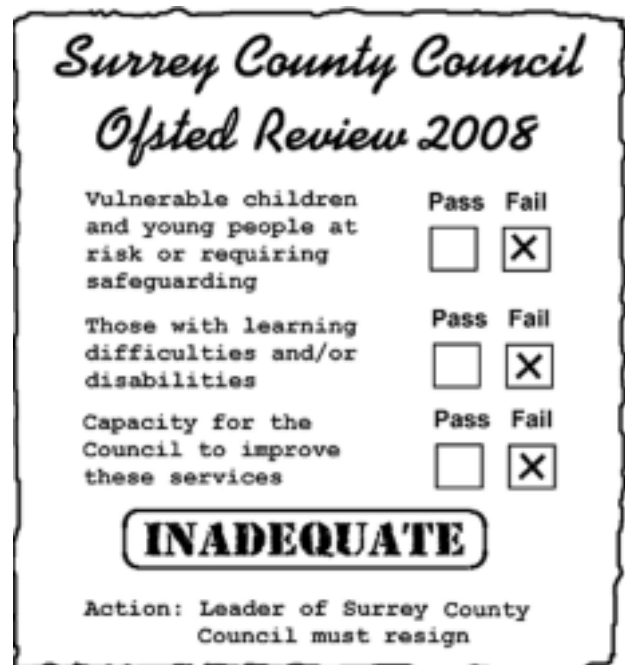


Vague and woolly
"Even now, the Executive's action plan in response to this highly critical report is vague and woolly. It really doesn't give us much confidence that the appropriate practical action will be taken speedily enough. The report highlights appalling failures and Surrey's residents deserve better."

Inadequate CRB checks

A key issue highlighted was the inadequate provision of Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks - a national requirement for anyone working with children / young people.

Ofsted noted: "Although the council state in their self-assessment that all staff are robustly CRB checked, this information is false, with high numbers of staff identified by the human resources database as either not having had CRB checks or three yearly re-checks."



*Surrey County Council
Ofsted Review 2008*

Vulnerable children and young people at risk or requiring safeguarding	Pass	Fail
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Pass	Fail
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Capacity for the Council to improve these services	Pass	Fail
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

INADEQUATE

Action: Leader of Surrey County Council must resign

Leader must resign

Colin Taylor commented: "This report is one of the most shocking ever to come before this council. There's nothing positive to say. Surrey is an Executive-run council, so the Executive must be held responsible. It's a shame that Cllr Nick Skellett, the Tory Leader of the Council throughout the period leading up to this report, did not resign as soon as the news broke. Ultimate responsibility must rest with him and that's why we called on him to do the honourable thing and resign."

YOUR LOCAL LIBERAL DEMOCRAT COUNCILLORS' COURT WARD NEWS

St Ebbas Re-Development

The long-awaited Planning Application for **redevelopment of St Ebbas** was approved recently. The plans include a link to Longmead via Harvester Road, open to buses, cyclists and pedestrians only and a footpath link to Chessington Road. The existing footpath bordering Longmead and St Ebbas is to be refurbished as part of the scheme.

A total of 322 houses and flats are to be built, or created by refurbishing listed hospital buildings, with a green area in the middle and the water tower turned into a Combined Heat and Power plant. Special activity areas for children and young people are included. The planners claim to have learnt from the mistakes made on the other former hospital sites. We'll see. **Your local Lib Dem councillors David Morgan and Colin Taylor emphasised the need to provide an informal kick-about area** and somewhere for allotments. It is hoped to combine the corner of Hook Road Arena near Richards Fields into the green open space available to residents. Your ward councillors will join with those from West Ewell to discuss the details of landscaping and footpath links.

We also asked that if possible, getting the new roads adopted promptly should be made a condition of the planning approval.

Southfield Park Primary School Expansion

The expansion of Southfield Park is expected to leave sufficient space at Epsom Primary School for the children from the new houses at St Ebbas. Part of the old hospital is being retained as an NHS campus around the cricket field; Sands House will also be retained, within the new housing area, though its residents will be moved out whilst building work is in progress.

Following an appeal to the Schools Adjudicator by parents from Clarendon Park, **the county council have been forced to create an extraordinary catchment area giving priority to Clarendon Park, Livingstone Park and the Horton Estate** – with those living furthest from the school given preference over those living nearer. The school governors have no choice in this.

Because priority also has to be given to brothers and sisters of existing pupils, to avoid children still being driven past their nearest school, the Southfield Park will have to take in 60 children next year instead of 30. A public consultation will be held before making this permanent.

At first "Portacabins" will be needed, but it is hoped to extend the buildings when funds allow.

Epsom Primary School Breakfast Club

County Councillor **Colin Taylor** has allocated £2,000 from his discretionary allowance to help the Breakfast Club at the primary school to continue at least for the rest of this school year.

Keeping Fight on Horton Chapel

Your local Lib Dem councillor, Elaine Britten, has asked the borough council for an explanation as to why Horton Chapel is still awaiting restoration, despite the council taking ownership many years ago.

"I've spent the past three years trying to get action, but am at a loss as to know what to do now" says Cllr Britten. *"It's exactly two years ago that the council jubilantly issued a press release saying that the tender process was going to be reopened. Although we have had the promised public consultation, what real progress has been made? None. And what's the point of a public*

consultation which is going to be out of date by the time any action takes place?"

Cllr Britten knows that various local organisations are keen to tender again for the Chapel and wants action on the Horton Water Tower as well. *"Livingstone Park is a beautiful development, utterly blighted by the appearance of these two buildings. The council should not have taken on responsibility for them if they weren't prepared to do something which would ensure they benefitted the neighbourhood. Hundreds of local residents have to look at these buildings every single day."* adds Cllr Britten

Your local councillor, **David Buxton**, **suggests that a comprehensive recycling station could be sited near the Chapel and part of the green space considered for allotments or a kickabout area.** *"The council should be putting pressure on the new owners of the Water Tower to at least make it visually attractive, even if the current economic climate means it won't be turned into flats."* says Cllr Britten.

Tenders for Horton Chapel were declared void nearly 3 years ago after complaints about the tender process were made. Original tenderers Cheam Community Church are thought to be still interested in the site but the Islamic Society, the other bidder, has since found other premises. A public meeting was promised for September 2008 but has not happened. Council officers were known to be unavailable in the past to deal with subject because of "other priorities". Enquiries made by Cllr Britten to the top council management have not been answered.

"I've taken my concerns and frustrations to the highest authority but have got nowhere. I feel I'm letting the people of Court Ward down because I just cannot do my job as their local councillor" says Cllr Britten.

Today Programme Praise Vince Cable

Whilst interviewing Chancellor Alastair Darling and Conservative Treasury spokesman George Osborne on Radio 4's "Today" programme on 29th September, Evan Davies gave both a dressing down for their economic failures, but reserved particular scorn for George Osborne. Then, in reply to one of Osborne's lightweight comments, Davies cited the record of Vince Cable (see below photo), Lib Dem MP for Twickenham and snapped back



"It sounds to me like I should vote for Vince Cable. Vince Cable was against demutualising the building societies back in the 1990s when your government was doing that. Vince Cable was sending me as an economics editor emails every three weeks, about the levels of debt through the last five years and he has been instrumental in saying that the taxpayer needs to be protected, and nationalising the banks and in having the upside risks as well as the downside ones, are the way to go. Why, if I'm angry, would I vote for you over him?"
Why indeed, says FOCUS!

£58m Underspend at Surrey County Council

The Liberal Democrats on Surrey County Council have called for the Conservative administration to get a grip on its finances, after revealing it has £58 million of unspent capital in its coffers from the 2007/08 financial year. At a meeting of the full Council, the Lib Dems called for the Tory administration to use the money to radically improve services - such as highways and children & families' services - which are currently suffering as a result of poor financial management.

Epsom & Ewell Lib Dems' county councillor Colin Taylor commented: *"£58 million is a massive underspend that suggests there are problems with the planning and management of the Council's capital schemes - so we either have agreed schemes which are just not getting progressed or we have money sitting there that could be allocated to much needed projects. Either way, this is a waste of resources. The County Council should be using these resources to improve our roads, to give a boost to the Surrey economy."*

Cllr Colin Taylor added: *"The Tory administration frequently complains about Government underfunding Surrey. The reality is very different. The County Council is not sufficiently well organised to spend the money it has in its own coffers. The unspent money could be used to improve school buildings and provide extra school places where appropriate."*

"Money is also needed to resurface more roads to reduce spending on filling in potholes. Mobile equipment is needed for social workers to reduce form filling and improve efficiency. Overall, better planning and project management is needed so that projects are delivered within a reasonable timescale and on time."

Christmas Lights for Epsom

The one-man campaign for Christmas lights in Epsom High Street by a Residents' Party councillor continues, boosted by the support of the local press. Strangely this same RA councillor voted against the borough council spending £10,000 on Christmas lights on a "matched funding" basis, when this was recently proposed by your local Lib Dem councillor **Dave Morgan** and his fellow Lib Dem councillors. FOCUS can only assume that he wanted to keep all the credit for himself! Fortunately the local Lib Dems, who have consistently supported Christmas lights, don't give up easily and **your local County Councillor, Colin Taylor**, subsequently persuaded SCC's Local Committee for Epsom & Ewell to **provide an additional £5,000 to help fund a decent display!**



Epsom Allotments

There are now 168 local people on the waiting list for an allotment in Epsom & Ewell, according to the local Lib Dem councillors. After assisting several local residents mainly in the Longmead area over allotment problems, **Cllr David Buxton agreed to work with Cllr Colin Taylor** (see right photo - allotment) to make sure that the subject must be discussed at the next meeting of the borough council's Leisure Committee. We want demand for allotments and new sites built into development plans, better "policing" of plots that are not worked and a review of multiple tenancies.



Local Liberal Democrats get RESULTS All Year Round !

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR LOCAL LIB-DEM COUNCILLORS

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Cllr Colin Taylor (Surrey County Council), 32 Christ Church Mount, Epsom KT19 8NB
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COURT WARD COUNCILLOR SURGERIES

Your local Lib-Dem Councillors' **Court Ward Advice Surgeries (10am to 12 noon)** will be held at:

Longmead Centre, Sefton Road
and "Walkabout" Surgery (call us where)
13th December, 14th February

Concorde Hall Air Scouts, Horton Footpath
8th November, 10th January

These sessions are **FREE OF CHARGE** / open to all.
No appointment is necessary. **COME AND MEET US!**



Asking for our help and/or supporting your local FOCUS Team

GOT A PROBLEM? Please use this space for any local issues, complaints or ideas that you want your local Court Ward FOCUS Team to take up. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

Tel No: _____ Email: _____

I would like to:

- display a window poster during the election time
- deliver FOCUS leaflets around where I live
- become a member of Epsom & Ewell Lib-Dems
- make a donation of £ _____ (to Epsom & Ewell Liberal Democrats)

Send to *(no stamp needed but it saves us money if you use one):*

Epsom & Ewell Lib Dems (Court Ward), FREEPOST, Epsom KT19 9BR