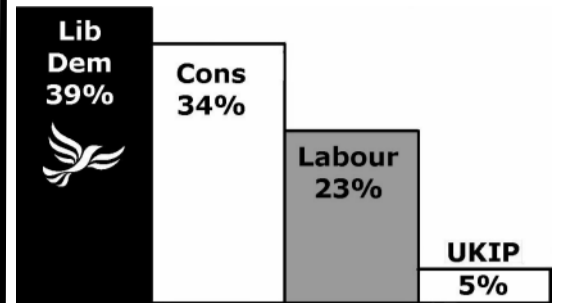


It's a two horse race here in Epsom & Ewell South-West!



County Council Election 2005

Labour and UKIP cannot win here !

Four Years of Service Cuts? County Hall Conservatives pick their new leader

Surrey County Council's majority Conservative group is set to lurch sharply to the right after the county council elections in June, following the selection of a right winger, Dr Andrew Povey, as their new leader.

Under new rules, the council Leader elected in June will hold that post for the next four years. So with Cllr Povey nominated for the job, Surrey residents can look forward to another four years of service cuts, if the Tories remain in overall control after the elections on 4th June.

From 1993 to 1997 a power-sharing regime operated. It can again if enough opposition members are elected. With the two-man Labour group expected to vanish, and the ineffectual RA group expected to shrink, the role of holding back the worst excesses of the Tories will fall squarely upon the **Liberal Democrats**.

We are the main opposition party on Surrey County Council and the only party likely to make gains on 4th June.

This is why it is so important that divisions like Epsom & Ewell South West continue to elect a Liberal Democrat as our county councillor, as we have ever since 1993. Those fighting to throw off the Tory yoke are relying on us!

Roads Survey

Surrey County Council recently paid a market research company to find out how satisfied residents are with the state of the roads.



The Lib Dems question the value of this survey which cost nearly £14,000. The money would have been better spent on improving the roads and repairing the potholes.

The Conservatives running County Hall must already be aware that Surrey residents are dissatisfied with the state of Surrey's roads and the poor quality repairs that waste Council Taxpayers money.

The Conservatives have refused to say whether the survey results will be published before the elections on 4th June. We wonder why?

Gambling with public money

The Tories running County Hall wanted to spend council tax payers' money fighting Surrey's recent One Star rating.

Despite a united appeal by opposition councillors not to waste public money on saving face, the Tories applied for a judicial review of Ofsted's recent assessment of their children's services as 'inadequate'.

The Tories said that they had to defend the county council's reputation, to avoid further inspections and future serious problems with staffing. Yet there are already serious staffing problems as well as extra inspections, because of the ruling last year that Surrey's children's services were inadequate.

A judicial review is very expensive. The money would be far better spent in improving services. It is fortunate that the courts have refused them permission, because there can be no justification for wasting potentially hundreds of thousands of pounds on lawyers bills - risking double costs if they had lost, paying Ofsted's expenses as well as the Council's.

"It was outrageous for the Tories to gamble with public money like this", said Lib Dem County Cllr **Colin Taylor**, "Perhaps it was because they didn't like Surrey being branded a One Star council, when County Council elections are due on 4th June".



Printed by EELD Print & Design, 30 Pound Lane, Epsom KT19 8SB
Published and promoted by and on behalf of Epsom & Ewell Liberal Democrats, 71 Mortimer Crescent, Epsom, Surrey KT4 7QN



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Six steps to a better deal for Surrey

Surrey's Liberal Democrat county councillors and campaigners have launched their plans to improve Surrey County Council and the services that it provides to residents.

"Council tax in Surrey has doubled over the last ten years, but services are being cut yet again", said Lib Dem County Councillor Colin Taylor. "Still our roads remain a mess. It's just not good enough, particularly when we see just how much money our Conservative-run county council has wasted."

It's time for changes at County Hall that only the Lib Dems can provide. Their detailed plans are comprehensive and backed by a published manifesto. They can be summarised under six simple headings - the "Six to Fix".

The "Six to Fix":

- 1 Improve the roads and pavements.
- 2 Protect the environment.
- 3 Improve and protect public transport.
- 4 More help for disabled people, old people, vulnerable children and their carers.
- 5 More activities for young people.
- 6 Stop Surrey County Council wasting money.

Cuts reveal same old Tories

Conservative-run councils have started cutting services for elderly people, disabled children and working parents.

In Hammersmith & Fulham, elderly people now pay £182 more a year for meals on wheels. In Coventry, after-school clubs have been closed. In Worcestershire, free transport for disabled school children has been axed.

Councillor Harry Phibbs, of Conservative flagship council Hammersmith & Fulham, lists 100 ways Tory councillors can cut services and increase charges. Some are common sense, but their meaner schemes include:

- Charge scouts and guides more for events in parks.
- Raise cash from "events which residents enjoy."
- Sell off public toilets.
- Sack library staff.
- Cut staff training.
- Scrap support for local school governors.
- Cut funding of elderly and disabled people's groups.
- Replace night staff in care homes with sprinklers.
- End garden waste collection.
- Turn libraries into cafes.
- Close council-run youth clubs and centres.
- Get rid of council-run playgroups.

Government threat to Surrey Police

Surrey Police have cut costs and red tape, to put more PCs back on the streets.

However their grant from central government is less than half the national average, so despite cutting 144 admin jobs they needed to raise their share of council tax by 4.9%.

Now the Labour government has threatened to "cap" them, which would entail the loss of another 80 staff, including front line PCs.



Chief Constable Mark Rowley

FOCUS - an Apology

We realise that residents prefer to read "good news" stories in FOCUS, but it's vital that you realise that the County Council is in complete disarray - remember this recent headline in the Epsom Guardian?



Epsom Guardian 5 March 2009

FOCUS says, "Sorry that this issue is so negative.

Look out for some better news in the next issue!"

Snow catches County Council napping

The heavy snow in February led to severe chaos throughout Surrey, with roads blocked and schools closed. Things were made worse by a lack of sufficient salt to maintain ice-free roads.

Following this, the Lib Dem county councillors asked how effective Surrey's emergency planning had been, both on the roads and in ensuring that the essential services got through.

It seems that the major roads network was salted on the afternoon before the snow fell and the County hoped that people would help themselves to the salt in roadside bins.



The snow was unusually heavy, but the delays in clearing it meant schools had to stay shut longer than needed.

"Most people don't know where these bins are, and even whether they're allowed to use them - better labelling and information must be amongst the actions taken", said County Councillor Colin Taylor, "but this is just a small part of what needs to be learned from what happened in February."

The Lib Dems also asked about Social Services, and how emergency planning took account of vulnerable people, whose care may be provided by outside agencies.

"It's clear that some social workers and care teams worked determinedly to cover the needs of vulnerable people," said Colin, "but we know from local residents that some people may have slipped through the net. The Conservative Executive member says that an Emergency Response Group is working on 'joined up' arrangements to identify people who might need help and their carers, and this is clearly needed."

Here in Epsom & Ewell, staff from the borough council's Operational Services Department came to the rescue when Surrey County Council's contractors didn't appear to deal with key roads. Heroic staff normally employed as refuse collectors went out in vans armed with salt that was already in store.

More salt was then bought in because the County couldn't supply any.

A splendid service from dedicated people, but why should Epsom & Ewell's council have to prop up a service that we already pay the County Council to provide?

Cameron's waste call binned by Tories



Conservative bosses in Westminster were left with egg on their faces recently after David Cameron attacked the government, claiming they were demanding an end to weekly bin collections.

A week later, David Cameron's own Conservative run local council, West Oxfordshire, decided to scrap the weekly bin collection.

Bins in his backyard are now collected fortnightly. Oops!