

The Liberal Democrat Team:



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Spring 2017

Focus



Local Community Newsletter for Epsom and Ewell

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Fund Social Care!

The NHS and care system faces great pressure each year in the winter months.

One of the most serious aspects of this is 'delayed discharge' from hospital, caused when patients (mainly the frail or elderly) finish their treatment but are left stranded in hospital unable to return home because the health and social care system is not able to give them the support they need.

Steve Gee, prospective Liberal Democrat candidate for Epsom and Ewell, said, "The Lib Dems are the only party prepared to be honest with the public about the scale of the problem in the NHS and social care.

"We know the system needs more money and we are prepared to do what is needed to safeguard health and social care for generations to come."

In Surrey the county council turned down thousands of requests for social care in the last year, with only 7,995 out of 35,565 requests being successful according to the respected Leonard Cheshire charity.

The charity has also shone a light on the declining number of people to whom Surrey has provided adult social care in recent years. In 2009, the county council provided 31,095 people with social care but by 2014 it had reduced this number to 29,650.

These figures follow a joint statement released by The King's Fund, Nuffield Trust

and the Health Foundation which has called on the government to address the funding crisis in adult social care.

They point out the social care system is facing a £1.9 billion gap in its funding next year and that the government should urgently address this by providing more resources to councils.

Liberal Democrat campaigner **Clare Clark** said, "Surrey Liberal Democrats continue to call for fundamental reform of social care funding. It can't be right that nearly 80% of appeals to Surrey County Council for help are going unanswered. With demand only set to rise, the necessary funding for social care must be provided by central government and distributed around the country according to need.

"It is too heavy a burden to dump on local council tax payers according to an arbitrary formula when many are already struggling with steep house prices, extortionate commuting costs and ever rising costs of living.

"Unless something is done there will be increasing pressure on the health service and Surrey residents will have to stay in hospital after they are well enough to go home, because the appropriate social care cannot be made available. This, in turn, will cause delays in hospital treatment for others."

Tory Council Tax Bombshell

Conservatives running Surrey County Council have proposed a council tax increase of 15% this year.

If approved, it will trigger a countywide referendum, to be held on the same day as the county council elections in May.

Liberal Democrat campaigner **Clare Clark** said, "An increase of this size is

simply not affordable for many residents, particularly those on fixed incomes – and residents also have to foot the bill for holding a referendum!

"This rise will not solve the crisis in adult social care. We will oppose any proposal to make local residents pick up the bill for the Conservatives' financial failures."

Local Pharmacies at Risk

Pharmacies throughout Surrey are at risk following the government's decision to cut their grants by 4% in 2017, rising to 7.5% by 2018.

Liberal Democrat County Councillors believe that these cuts could threaten pharmacy services in Surrey and have called for more information about the funding cuts from the local Director of Commissioning Operations for the NHS.

Across the country county, borough and district councils have opposed these cuts, but now that they have been confirmed it is time to see what effect they will have on our local pharmacy services.

The cuts come at a time when residents are being encouraged to ask advice from pharmacists rather than their GP in certain circumstances and this additional support could also be at risk if pharmacies across the county are forced to close.

In this uncertainty, the residents of Surrey will expect their elected representatives to seek the most accurate information available in order to be best prepared.

Liberal Democrat campaigner **Clare Clark** commented, "Once we know the effect of this funding cut, our Lib Dem county council team can work out the best way to protect this vital service."

Liberal Democrats win Richmond Park Parliamentary By-Election

Liberal Democrat **Sarah Olney** won the Richmond Park by-election on 1 December 2016 which was held after Tory MP **Zac Goldsmith** resigned over the government's policy to approve a new runway at Heathrow. If you would like to join the winning team, you can at:

www.libdems.org.uk/join



Tim Farron MP with Sarah Olney MP, with David Steele in the background

Open, tolerant and united.

Renters' Rights Campaign

Liberal Democrats have taken the lead to improve Renters' Rights.

Tom Brake MP sponsored an Early Day motion in parliament, calling for a ban on letting fees for tenants.

Baroness **Olly Greender** introduced the Renters' Rights Bill in the House of Lords, which also calls for the banning of letting fees for tenants,

public access to a database of rogue landlords, compulsory electrical safety checks for renters and a ban on rogue landlords obtaining licences.

Following this Liberal Democrat pressure to improve renters' rights, the government has announced a ban on letting fees for tenants in the Autumn Statement.





Lidl and Aldi

In January your FOCUS team attended a display of Lidl's plans for a new store on the former Iceland site in Upper High St.



These plans can be viewed online at www.epsom.lidl.co.uk. They show a food store with 30 residential units attached and around 80 dedicated parking spaces in addition to the adjacent council-owned car park.

Lidl plan to lodge their formal application by the end of March and get a decision from the planning committee by June. Views can be emailed to either forlidlepsom@lidl.co.uk or againstlidlepsom@lidl.co.uk.

Coincidentally an appeal by Aldi is also expected to be heard in June. Aldi are trying to overturn the borough council's unanimous refusal of their plans for a food store on the former dairy site in Alexandra Road, some 200 yards from the Lidl site.

FOCUS will keep you informed on both matters.

Chris Grayling MP angers cyclists



The Transport Secretary angered cyclists by telling parliament "where you have cycle lanes, cyclists are the users of cycle lanes, and there's a road alongside – motorists are the road users, the users of the roads".

Former Olympic cyclist Chris Boardman said Mr Grayling's comments show an "astonishing lack of knowledge about how 7 million people regularly use the roads in this country".

Since that incident where he "doored" one, our MP is not too popular with cyclists.

New survey by the Focus team

The Lib Dem Focus team will be continuing their regular programme of visits to see local problems first-hand. Look out for us in your road anytime soon, particularly if you have an issue that you would like us to take up with the council on your behalf.

We are always interested in local residents' views on current issues, so we trust you will be willing to help us with our next survey.

Town centre road works

"Plan E" road works, delayed from a year ago, have now started in Epsom town centre and are expected to last for most of this year. When complete, they should enable much faster trips from West Hill to Dorking Road, at the expense of slight delays to all other journeys.

The separate long overdue pedestrian safety improvements at the Spread Eagle and Playhouse junctions are also included in the current scheme.

Lib Dem success – Huge drop in use of plastic bags

Single-use bags blight our towns and countryside; they trap and suffocate wildlife and many take hundreds of years to degrade.

You might remember Epsom Lib Dems campaigning in the High Street some years ago to reduce plastic bag use.

The Lib Dems, when in government, successfully introduced, in the teeth of Tory opposition, a 5p charge on the thin plastic bags given out when shopping.

The result is that the number of single-use plastic bags used by shoppers in England has fallen by more than 85%.

More than 7bn bags were handed out by seven main supermarkets in the year before the charge but this dropped to just over 500m in the first six months after the charge had been introduced.

Charities have also benefited from the £29m raised and donated by the big supermarkets.



Scrap Surrey's Tory Tip Tax

Lib Dem County Councillor Stephen Cooksey has written to Marcus Jones, Minister for Local Government asking him to scrap Surrey County Council's unpopular charges for taking household waste to a Community Recycling Centre or "tip".



The unpopular fees were introduced by the Tory-run county council last September, despite a consultation in which residents made clear their opposition to the charges and their fears that fly-tipping would increase across the county as a consequence.

Cllr Cooksey told FOCUS: "Last October I wrote to the Department of Communities & Local Government (DCLG) pointing out that legislation passed by the Coalition government in 2015 prohibits local authorities from charging residents for the disposal of household waste.

"In response, the DCLG confirmed that charging for the disposal of household waste from DIY was illegal and that a Minister could intervene if the charges imposed were regarded as 'over-zealous'.

"I believe these charges are over-zealous and that it is sensible for the Minister to stop this practice, rather than expect residents to seek legal solutions. That's why I am taking this matter to the highest level.

"On the evidence that I have seen I am of the opinion that the charges imposed by Surrey County Council for disposal of DIY waste are illegal and I call upon Marcus Jones, Minister for Local Government, to intervene in this case and scrap these unfair charges."

Published and promoted by Epsom & Ewell Liberal Democrats, 7 Bridge Road, Epsom, Surrey KT17 4AN. Printed by Summit Press, Unit 21d Holmethorpe Avenue, Redhill, Surrey RH1 2NB.

Join Your Local Lib Dem Team

Your local Liberal Democrat FOCUS team relies on the support of volunteers in our community. Can you help your local team?

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

- I can help deliver leaflets in my area.
- I can help talk to residents either on the doorstep or by phone.
- I can help with clerical tasks at home.
- I'd like to join the Liberal Democrats.

The Liberal Democrats and their elected representatives may use the information you give us to contact you. By providing your data to us, you are consenting to us contacting you in the future by mail, email, telephone, text, website and apps even though you may be registered with the Telephone Preference Service.

For more information go to libdems.org.uk/privacy.

You can always, at any time, opt out of communications by contacting us or visiting libdems.org.uk/optout.

GET IN TOUCH

The local Liberal Democrat Focus team works all year round for local people.

If you need our help, please contact us.

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