

FOCUS

Local news & action from Elmbridge Lib Dems

GE2019 Esher & Walton

49%
CON

45%
LIB
DEM

5%
LAB

It's now so close between the Lib Dems and the Tories across Elmbridge

Elmbridge delivers for local residents

The coronavirus outbreak has been a struggle for many businesses, organisations, and people in our community. As of August, Elmbridge Borough Council has been able to provide



26,560
meals on wheels



1,780
business grants
equating to £24.6M



5,002
calls to
shielded residents



£10,000
donated to
food banks



18,876
welfare calls to
vulnerable residents



4,500
customer interactions
per week



31,975
coronavirus
webpage visits

Government U-turn leaves Surrey Tory leader embarrassed over waste of taxpayers' money

Tory County Council Leader Tim Oliver, Weybridge Division, has been forced to delay controversial plans for a single Unitary Authority in Surrey to replace the existing 11 districts and boroughs by next May.

Following a Government announcement on changes to the forthcoming Devolution whitepaper, Tim Oliver emailed colleagues that it "effectively kills our bid".

Residents will have received a costly leaflet from Surrey County Council over the past few weeks that has attempted to make the case for a single "Monster Surrey". The Conservatives are still planning to press ahead with these plans as soon as they're invited to make a bid and we must oppose them. Find our better alternative on page 3.



Cllr Mary Marshall gives a thumbs up to Cllr Tricia Bland

Environmentally friendly face masks

COVID-19 has triggered the use of 129 billion 'disposable' face masks globally every month. The majority of these are made from single-use plastic which is leading to an environmental catastrophe.

The Thames Ditton Boomerang Bag sewing bees are now working to supply their reusable face mask/coverings free to Elmbridge Borough Council officers and volunteers interfacing with the public, including those delivering essential Meals on Wheels to residents across the Borough.

THANK YOU

To all volunteers, council, NHS and service staff for everything you've done for our community

Ed Davey MP for Surbiton and Kingston becomes new Liberal Democrat Leader



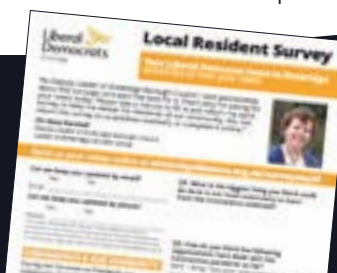
Ed Davey has been elected as the new leader of the Liberal Democrats. As the MP for Kingston and Surbiton, Ed already knows Elmbridge very well. Having increased his majority in the 2019 election over the Conservatives, Ed is perfectly placed to know the challenges and opportunities we face to get a Liberal Democrat candidate elected at the next election.

Having been first elected to parliament in 1997, Ed brings a wealth of experience with him and recently forced Boris Johnson into committing to hold a public inquiry into the Coronavirus pandemic. His passion for the environment is demonstrated through his record of trebling UK's renewable power, making Britain the world-leader in offshore wind and Ed is committed to helping us make Elmbridge carbon neutral by 2030.

Having been a young carer for his mother, and more recently caring for his two children, including his disabled son, Ed knows the challenges carers face and believes it's time for the 10 million carers in the UK to have a higher carers allowance and more legal protection.

**Tell us
your
views**

We're asking residents how they've been affected by lockdown and what improvements could be made by the council
elmbbridgelibdems.org.uk/surveysep20



**Liberal
Democrats**
Elmbridge

A new voice to put Elmbridge residents first

Elmbridge Liberal Democrats are pleased to announce the election of Councillor Mary Marshall as their new group leader on Elmbridge Borough Council. Mary now takes on the role of Deputy Leader of Elmbridge Borough Council as part of the Liberal Democrat/Residents' Association joint administration.

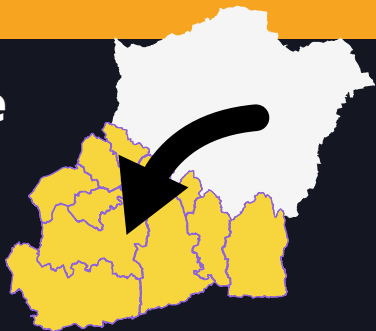


Mary Marshall was first elected to the council by the residents of Claygate in 2013 and moved quickly into her role representing and supporting the needs of her residents. Mary has also spent almost 30 years running a charity community organisation for children from its base in Surbiton.

She will continue working for residents of Elmbridge on her Environment portfolio in the cabinet, with much work still to do following the council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in July 2019.

On her election, Mary said, "I'm honoured to be able to serve the residents of Elmbridge as Deputy Leader of Elmbridge Borough Council. Having lived in Elmbridge my whole life, it's my priority to make sure Elmbridge Borough Council achieves its pledge of being carbon-neutral by 2030 and I will continue supporting the council in delivering on all its commitments. It's only right that we focus on the administration's agenda during this difficult time which has highlighted the importance of our discretionary services and how extremely important our key workers are."

Elmbridge makes gains from London



Elmbridge is attracting more Londoners than any of our Surrey neighbours in a growing exodus from London to the home counties.

The net gain for Elmbridge was 2,224 people, which was the highest figure in the county in the year to June 2019 according to the data from the Office for National Statistics.

"The momentum of home working is likely to keep growing because it is now a big trend due to the Covid-19 lockdown. People are looking for that extra room for an office. Growing families also look for a better quality of life - including extra rooms and a garden, especially as socially distancing remains in place," commented Cllr Mary Marshall deputy leader of Elmbridge Borough Council and portfolio holder for Environment.

"Elmbridge is close enough to London when it's required, but we are fortunate in terms of our air quality, green spaces and safe communities."

Conservative Government's proposals threaten Elmbridge's Green Belt

Residents across Elmbridge have reacted with horror at Government plans to reform the planning system, which could result in hundreds of new homes being built in Elmbridge including on our Green Belt without local scrutiny.

The Conservative Government's Planning White Paper proposes new nationally set housing requirements for every local area, as well as taking away Councillor and resident influence on individual planning applications.

PUSHING THE TARGET UP TO 775 UNITS

In Elmbridge Borough Council's draft Local Plan the target is 623 homes a year - far higher than Elmbridge can sustain. Under the Government's new proposals, Lichfields, one of the most respected planning consultancies in the UK, predicts Elmbridge will be expected to build even more i.e. 775 units each year.

Cllr Mary Marshall, deputy Leader of Elmbridge Borough Council and Leader of the Liberal Democrat group says,

"The Government's Planning White Paper is a developers' charter to concrete over the Green Belt. We simply don't have the space to build 775 homes every year. It would totally destroy the character of our beautiful Borough.

IMPOSSIBLE TO DELIVER AFFORDABLE HOMES

"In Elmbridge we have very few large sites and we rely on small sites to deliver affordable housing. The new proposals require affordable housing contributions only on developments of 50 or more houses making it virtually impossible to deliver much needed affordable housing in Elmbridge."

"Our planning system should provide a balance between delivering the homes we need and respecting the environment and amenities of existing residents. The Government's plans favour developers over local communities. Local people will have virtually no say on the area in which they live."

ANOTHER ALGORITHM DISASTER

"Whitehall is deciding how many homes should be built here in Elmbridge using an algorithm - just as it did with the recent A-level disaster."

Whilst the Liberal Democrats in Elmbridge reject the Conservative government's housing paper as 'irresponsible', the Tory leader of Wokingham Borough Council, John Hansall has also rejected it, which shows that the Conservative government is at variance with its own party in local government."

CONTEMPT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Cllr Hansall says, "The Conservative government's contempt for local government is profound and must urgently think again about its new housing plan. Our party's manifesto promised levelling up in the North, but the algorithm puts most homes in the South East."

He continues, "Most local authorities have skyrocketing increases in housing requirements. In October any developer or landowner can present an application, and on refusal in most cases an appeal can be won."

THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL EFFECTIVELY REMOVES LOCAL CONTROL

"The developer does not need to build homes, but can just accumulate permissions; and the local authority will be sanctioned for not having fulfilled the quota. The Government's proposal hides the reality that it will give pretty much all control to developers."

Tories' Monster Surrey plan must be opposed

The Tory administration at Surrey County Council has proposed the creation of one single 'Monster Surrey' local authority in Surrey. It would be the end of all eleven borough/district councils, including Elmbridge Borough Council. Instead they would be merged into Surrey County Council, creating a behemoth to serve 1.2m residents.

Liberal Democrats regard this as a shameless power grab by the Conservatives in Surrey. Having lost their majority in several Surrey boroughs, it's seen as a Tory tactic of trying to stay in control by centralising political power.

Surrey County Council is financially distressed and any cost saving measures, including raiding the better managed finances of Elmbridge, will only go some way to mitigating their existing failures.

Liberal Democrats are all for streamlining and economising local government by establishing unitary authorities. But the answer is not in a bloated and wasteful bureaucracy, where residents' needs are compromised and the promised savings evaporate in pursuit of the Tories' ruthless drive for more centralised control.

Reasons why we should oppose the Tory plan for a single mega-size Surrey authority:

#1 SURREY RESIDENTS HAVE BEEN AMBUSHED

The Tory administration at Surrey County Council has ambushed Surrey's residents by charging ahead with a single 'monster authority' proposal without asking for the opinion of local people.

#2 FINANCIAL ESTIMATES PIE IN THE SKY

The Tory proposals are pie in the sky based on estimates by politicians and designed to sell the plan quickly with a 'sign here now' tactic. Buyer beware!

#3 THE VOICE OF LOCAL PEOPLE WILL BE MARGINALISED

A single council of 1.2 million people would be too remote and even more unaccountable as is already the case with Surrey County Council. With all decision-making concentrated in just a few hands for the entire county, the voice of local communities and people will be marginalised and sidelined.

#4 SURREY HAVE MISMANAGED THEIR EXISTING SERVICES

Surrey County Council are incompetent and wasteful at managing services as is, let alone coping with the mega-sized bureaucracy required for the whole of Surrey. They already have a poor track record in Fire Services, children's services, roads with potholes, ongoing cuts to social

care, mental health and disability services. And yet their management costs remain among the highest of any county council in the country.

#5 A POLITICALLY MOTIVATED MANOEUVRE AT OUR RESIDENTS' EXPENSE

You have to ask why the Tory administration at Surrey County Council and their sponsors in Boris Johnson's Conservative cabinet have decided to embark on 'revolutionising' our local government in the middle of the a pandemic and with a prospective no-deal Brexit round the corner? What's more they are rushing to do it without any regard for the views and preferences of Surrey's residents. It's nothing but a politically motivated manoeuvre at our residents' expense.

A BETTER ALTERNATIVE

Liberal Democrats believe that three or four unitary authorities in Surrey would strike the right balance in terms of democratic accountability, quality of services and value for money. The key principle in any re-organisation of local government must be put to our residents first.

Surrey's damaging cuts to young and old continue

When the Tory administration's cuts to services continue relentlessly year after year, we have to say stop in no uncertain terms. The latest budget proposals for 2020/21 are the case in point. While we understand that balancing the books is challenging, we believe that Surrey's residents will not tolerate the following Tory proposed cuts:

- ✂ **£4.6m from older people's care provision**
- ✂ **£4.6m from learning, disability and autism services**
- ✂ **£0.7m cut from mental health**
- ✂ **£1.5m from fire services**
- ✂ **further severe cuts to children centres**

Yet management costs remain among the highest amongst any county council in the country.

Cllr Chris Botten, leader of the Liberal Democrats at Surrey County Council said, "Despite all the pain we have gone through with the Tory-led austerity in Surrey, 10 years later they are still cutting vital services for those most vulnerable at the beginning and end of their lives."

"Instead of focusing on cuts, they should do something about the well documented crisis in our care homes, many of which are now on the verge of bankruptcy. Similarly they should ensure that children with special needs are not sent halfway across the country just to achieve a place in a suitable school."

Fire services under fire



In its latest budget proposals Surrey County Council is proposing to cut another £1.5m in its funding to the fire services. The Fire Brigades Union has had a long-running battle with Surrey about continued cuts and the Union has repeatedly warned that it will put people's lives in danger.

Liberal Democrats in the County Council have protested against reducing funding to fire services, which will see the number of fire engines at night cut from 30 to 23, as well as reducing crew sizes and hours at stations.

This means that it has been necessary to bring crews from outside the county to aid in responding to fire incidents. Another three fire engines are due to be cut in October, which according to the FBU will leave Surrey fire-fighters even more short-staffed.



Lib Dems back 'Shop Local' campaign More than ever, shops and businesses in Elmbridge need support.

Liberal Democrats are calling on residents to help local businesses bounce back after lockdown. Elmbridge Lib Dems have launched a 'shop local' campaign encouraging people to protect businesses and save local jobs by buying from local shops and suppliers whenever possible.

Local Lib Dem campaigner **Gill Smith** said: "The local businesses that so many of us rely on and value are at serious risk after months of lockdown, threatening jobs and the local economy."

"The British Chamber of Commerce has warned that almost one million small businesses across the country could be at risk of collapsing due to the economic impact of having been closed. Once we lose these businesses, there's no coming back. Local high streets were under huge pressure before lockdown and the next few months are going to be extremely challenging. If we want the variety and personal touch that comes with local shops, we need to do our bit to help."

"Now, more than ever, we need to get behind our local businesses, show our support and help save jobs and livelihoods. That's why I'm urging people to think local when they go shopping."

Our community supports our foodbanks

Residents needing to make use of foodbanks has increased dramatically. Walton and Hershams have reported a **72% increase** in the number of people in need of help against this time last year.

Our foodbanks have managed to deliver for our residents while needing to overcome new operational difficulties due to Covid-19. Stock to prepare food parcels has been maintained thanks to additional collection points outside residents' houses, and from requests for help on social media.

We all hope for a day when foodbanks are no longer needed in our society, but until then please think about donating to your local foodbank through collection points or contacting them directly.



Walton & Hershams Foodbank
waltonhershams.foodbank.org.uk
Tel: 0203 328 0243 / 07884 046665

East Elmbridge Foodbank
eastelmbridge.foodbank.org.uk
Tel: 07908 777475

Cobham Foodbank
cobhamarea.foodbank.org.uk
Tel: 01932 450282

Runnymede & Weybridge
runnymede.foodbank.org.uk
Tel: 01932 838 383



Logging your health daily can help to stop Elmbridge becoming a local COVID hotspot

Although the government have not released an official track and trace Covid app, members of the public can still log their health daily through the **Covid Symptom Tracker** app.

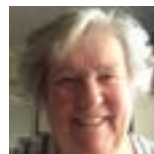
Developed in partnership with King's College, London (KCL) the app, which is available both through the Apple App Store and Google Play Store, simply asks you each day to record how you are feeling and whether you have ever had a Covid test. With over four million members of the British public currently contributing, the data is shared with researchers at KCL and the NHS and helps to monitor the spread of the virus.

The app has also allowed researchers to gather further insights which have been published in academic journals, such as the effect of Covid on pregnant women. Although independent from the government, the app has been endorsed by a whole range of organisations including Cancer Research UK and the Royal College of Physicians and recently received a £2m grant from the UK government.

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