



CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

As of 25th September, Ruth Hutchinson, Surrey's Director of Public Health, warned residents they 'can't be complacent' as Covid-19 cases rise after :

- a) Spelthorne became the first local authority in the South East on the Covid watchlist, with Staines, Ashford, Stanwell, Shepperton, Sunbury-on-Thames & Halliford now officially an 'area of concern' with the highest infection rate in the South East; &
- b) a small but significant rise in cases has been noticed in Runnymede Borough, which needs **all residents in Runnymede to play their part in reducing the spread of the virus.**

Ms Hutchinson said she was not expecting any other Surrey boroughs to follow suit & "we are still a long way from a local lockdown but if we follow guidelines we can rein this back in. With issues around testing continuing in Surrey, as with the rest of the UK, official data may not represent the true scale of infection".

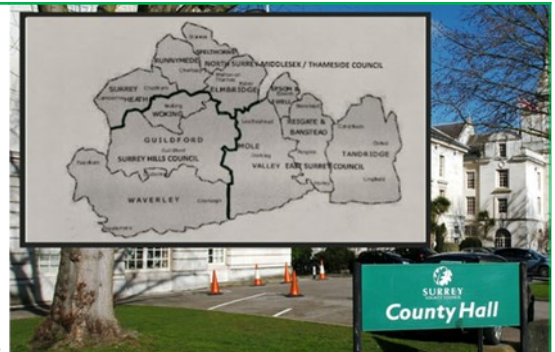
The R number in the South East has now risen to between 1.1 & 1.3 as of 25th September, with the infection growth rate/day now at 1-6% (compared to the highest rates in neighbouring London, the North West & North East rising to 4-9%).

Please follow government guidelines to stop the spread of coronavirus :

- **Follow Rule of 6** - from 14th September it is illegal to meet in groups of more than 6 indoors & outdoors
- **Hands** - wash them frequently for more than 20 seconds - the best way of stopping the virus spread
- **Face** - wear face coverings on public transport and in shops unless you are exempt
- **Space** - stay 2m away from anyone who is not in your household or your bubble
- **Get the app** - download the free NHS Covid-19 app on your smartphone.

SURREY UNITARY AUTHORITY?

The government was due to publish a Recovery & Devolution White Paper in the Autumn which would have encouraged counties to be governed by unitary authorities (ending the county council & borough council arrangements). For Surrey this would have meant the 11 borough & district councils (B&DCs), including RBC, would be scrapped. SCC's initial proposal was for a single unitary authority covering Surrey, arguing that it would reduce the "complexity of governance & reduce costs to the taxpayer". However, this had not been consulted upon & at the end of July the leaders of Surrey's 11 B&DCs wrote to the government outlining their views against SCC's proposal (which would be the largest unitary authority in the country, with 1.2 million residents). This was followed up in August by the Independent Councillors across the county launching a Residents Against Surrey Single Unitary (RASSU) campaign to force debate at SCC & set up a petition that it was keen for residents to sign (at <https://petitions.surreycc.gov.uk/unitary>).



Alternative proposals were being suggested (e.g. Labour has already suggested Surrey be split into 3 authorities - see above picture) & RBC and other councils were to agree that KPMG consultants should come up with a range of options for the B&DCs to jointly pursue with their residents & the government. "This is not just an argument about saving money but about building on what works well".

However, late in September, & in the light of considerable adverse reaction, the government announced that they were not now prepared to progress a local government restructuring as part of the White Paper. This clear U-turn means that the SCC proposal is currently dead, & it is reported that the White Paper will be watered down & then delayed until the Spring (with no compulsion to instigate unitary authorities)?

However, whilst RASSU could claim a victory, they now anticipate that SCC may reintroduce the unitary proposal after the SCC elections in May 2021? Keep watching this space.....



ROYAL
HOLLOWAY
UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON

STRODE'S COLLEGE



COVID-19 SAFEGUARDING

With students returning at the end of September, RHUL have advised us about the coronavirus safeguarding advice it is giving to students : "We

recognise that safety is important & the health, safety & well-being of students, staff & our community is a priority at RHUL with a Covid-secure campus that reflects government guidance and restrictions. Students living in our halls of residence will be grouped into households & they will be expected to maintain social distancing with people they don't live with. The same will be expected of students living in shared private housing. For students arriving from countries where the UK government requires a period of self-isolation, & who are staying in our halls of residence, we will provide self-isolation accommodation. Our annual Be A Good Neighbour guidance will be delivered to students living in the community in private sector accommodation and will be accompanied by additional digital information specific to the current situation which can be amended and updated as guidelines or restrictions change. Alongside practical changes on our campus, we will be launching a campaign called Playing your Part to communicate to our students the importance of adhering to social distancing guidelines & reinforcing the important role that everyone plays in protecting themselves, others & the whole community".

However, in response to several Freshers' Week parties that were in breach of the regulations, the RHUL Principal has now announced that "the majority of our students are playing their part but, unfortunately, some students are not. For those who are not taking the health & safety of our community seriously, we are introducing a requirement to use face coverings indoors, introducing new fines (£50 for first offence up to £200 for a third) & are having marshals to help maintain social distancing. Overall, we have a responsibility to ensure that the actions of a minority do not put our whole community at risk".

While RHUL's responsibility largely focuses on the campus itself, many residents are unhappy that there appears to be no concerted partnership with RHUL, SCC, RBC & the police to keep everybody safe off-campus in the community & respond to students' adverse behaviour? As in other university towns, "town v gown" tensions are beginning to rise as residents are worried there will be lockdowns when term is underway, cancelling out the benefits of the so-called student pound on the local economy. Even the government's own scientific advisers have said there will be outbreaks in universities by November (as already evidenced in Scotland & Manchester).

We have also raised the Covid-19 safeguarding issue with Strode's College, whose students have less of an effect, who are advising that at present only 1 year group is on-site for a week at a time, their on-site café is providing lunch & students are supposed to wear face coverings in public areas in the community. However, there was initially a large gathering in the High Street at lunchtime in their first week back in mid-September. Strode's management are now keeping an eye on off-campus activities & are more aware of the implications on their students of the "rule of six" & increased social distancing requirements etc.



EGHAM LITTER PICK WEEK (25th - 31st July) & WORLD CLEAN UP DAY (19th September)



ERA co-ordinated a Litter Pick Week at the end of July to support the month-long ECO Church at St John's Church. We had over 8 teams participating on a social distancing basis across the Town & they collected numerous bags of rubbish that would have ended up in our rivers and oceans - and our food chain! Well done to all our Litter Picking Teams, & our ERA organiser, Sian Williams, & the local poster produced for one of the teams (above left) seems to sum up the important message of the week.....

The Great British September Clean, which was deferred from the Spring, coincided with the World Clean Up Day on 19th September, which is an annual global social action program aimed at combating global solid waste problem. An Egham-wide litter pick was organised for that day, covering Hummer Road carpark through Town Path & into the High Street & then Walnut Tree Gardens. Recent changes in the Covid-19 security precautions (the "rule of six" etc) meant that the group had to be organised into sub-groups of 6 doing the picking separately - in the event there was only a turnout of 10 people - so the groups were easily arranged! The Town looks cleaner than normal after our visit & our efforts were thanked by passers-by & by the police in the High Street - thanks to Adrian Skelt for organising the event..

ERA QUIZ NIGHT (17th October)

This year's Quiz Night was to be held in the evening of 17th October at the Pastoral Centre, behind the United Church in Egham High Street, but, with the current Covid-19 restrictions & the UC Pastoral Centre meeting rules at present, we have unfortunately again had to cancel this event - hopefully it will return in 2021.....





PLANNING SYSTEM REFORM

On the 6th of August the government launched a White Paper called “Planning for the Future”, designed as “landmark reforms to speed up and modernise the planning system and get the country building”.

Instead of councils assessing applications on a case-by-case basis, all land in England would be categorised into one of three zones. “Growth” areas would be earmarked for major development, with new homes, hospitals, schools, shops and offices given automatic

permission, subject to quality & design controls. “Renewal” areas – largely on urban and brownfield sites – would be set for “gentle densification”, with a presumption of planning permission subject to checks. Third, areas such as the greenbelt (& national parks and so on) would be designated for “Protection”. At the same time, the system whereby developers contribute to affordable housing & community amenities via “Section 106” agreements & the community infrastructure levy would be scrapped. There would be a nationally set tax on a fixed proportion of a development’s value, above a threshold.

The Town & Country Planning Association has condemned the government proposed reforms as “disruptive & rushed”, saying that 90% of planning applications are currently approved but there are up to 1 million unbuilt permissions - “the problem is planning implementation not planning approval”. However, the shift away from a case-by-case to a rules-based, zonal approach risks creating a more centralised system that is less accountable at a local level. Reducing the local democratic process will be challenged if this is seen as a ‘gravity train’ for developers and landowners. This proposed approach will also highlight the primacy of the council’s future Local Plan & make it all the more important for residents to be kept up to date - through the ERA raising awareness on your behalf

An initial consultation period runs until 29th October - the consultation document is at: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future. This will be followed by primary legislation & local councils will then have 30 months to draw up local guidelines via a revised Local Plan.

USES CLASS ORDER CHANGES

You may be familiar with the Use Classes Order - it divides the ‘uses’ of land & property into different classes. Class A1 covers shops, for example, and A3 restaurants. Offices come under B1, flats & houses are C3. Changes between the different classes sometimes require planning permission, sometimes don’t.

USE
CLASSES
ORDER

The classes of use for England as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and its subsequent amendments

A significant reform of the Use Classes Order was announced on 21st July 2020 & was effective from 1st September 2020, making it possible to change uses without planning consent when previously consent would have been required. There will be no more ‘A’ (shop) use class as A1 (retail shop), A2 (professional services) and A3 (restaurant) will all move to new use class E, as will B1 (offices, R&D & light industrial), as will medical / health uses e.g. doctors surgery or yoga studio, as will day nurseries. **This means an existing office could be turned into a restaurant or creche without requiring planning consent.** Pubs, wine bars (old class A4) and hot food takeaways (old class A5) will become sui generis, meaning that planning consent would be required for a change of use. There will be two more new use classes: F1 and F2, with F1 includes education, place of worship and public halls & F2 is for ‘local community’ uses including shops selling essential goods & community halls.

Essentially the new classes are larger, covering more ‘similar’ uses. You do not need permission to change between uses within the same use class. Currently you need consent to change a shop (A1) into a restaurant (A3) or an office (B1), a creche (D1) or a gym (D2). There was no public debate on these changes, which seem to just accept the reality of shopping changes occurring in the country. The intention was to create flexibility to allow vacant High Street shops to be brought back into use, but it could thwart attempts to create local shopping cores, like Egham High Street, which was classified as such in the RBC 2030 Local Plan. RBC are thus considering what changes are necessary in the implementation of the Local Plan in terms of the shopping core areas in Egham, Chertsey & Addlestone?



MILTON PARK GRAVEL

The never-ending saga goes on! SCC has now deferred their planning application review by Hanson's for Whitehall Lane gravel raising yet again until **27th November** at least - that's getting on for 12yrs after the first submissionnil desperandum. Given the nearness of Heathrow, it has been claimed that gravel raising (at Milton Park & elsewhere in the region) will not be decided until the future of the 3rd runway is clearer?.....

Alerts on issues that arose between Newsletters this quarter covered :

- | | | |
|--|--|----------------------------------|
| a) 30/6 Libraries Reopening | b) 2/7 SCC Local Outbreak Control Plan | |
| c) 5/7 St Johns Church Reopening | d) 6/7 Litter Pick Week (25-31/7) | |
| e) 11/7 EGW Construction | f) 14/7 Network Rail Vegetation | |
| g) 15/7 St Johns Eco Festival | h) 16/7 Surrey Unitary Authority | |
| i) 17/7 Millman's Closing (1/8) | j) 21/7 Litter Pick Week Reminder | |
| k) 25/7 Partial High Street Closure | l) 12/8 SCC Active Travel Plan | |
| m) 16/8 Community Fair (5/9) Off | n) 19/8 Unitary Authority Views | o) 20/8 Active Travel Plan Egham |
| p) 30/8 Egham Museum Reopening | q) 30/8 Surrey Unitary Authority | r) 31/8 Covid & RHUL Return |
| s) 2/9 Surrey Unitary Authority Petition | t) 4/9 RHUL Community Matters | u) 8/9 Red Lion in September |
| v) 9/9 Egham GBSC Litter Pick (19/9) | w) 11/9 Millmans Closure Phone | x) 18/9 Millman/Boots Problem |
| y) 21/9 Surrey Unitary Authority Ditched | | |



Contact Glenda Thisdell on 07905 917440 or glendathisdell@eghamresidentsassociation.co.uk to be sent email alerts



@TheLIT

Positive conversations with RBC Councillors & Officers, owner of The Literary Institute, was gaining momentum in late 2019 & early 2020. However, the coronavirus pandemic temporarily paused this as businesses, retail, places of education and leisure closed, and RBC diverted their resources to those on the frontline and residents who required emergency support. The '@TheLit' campaign are eager to continue their conversations with the Council as the country transitions into a new way of working. They have appointed 4 First Trustees &, with the new RBC Corporate Head of Assets & Regeneration's support, several conversations/negotiations are progressing for a much-needed space for the local community to re-connect socially. A review of the @TheLit campaign & the Lit lease was held at the RBC Corporate Mgmt Committee on 24th September & it is hoped to reach a decision on the Lit's future in October?



ERA COMMITTEE

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Adrian Skelt	07956 875329
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Aneesh Gupta	07915 612291
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Glenda Thisdell	07905 917440
Webmaster	
Stephen Williams	07876 573660
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Jim Pearcey	432805
Cynthia Reilly	07790 273225
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Sian Williams (Facebook)	07704 887892
Vacant (Twitter)	

HEATHROW APPEAL



The Supreme Court has announced that it will hear an appeal from Heathrow Airport & the Arora Group on 7th - 8th October on the plans to expand Heathrow Airport by adding a third runway. Paul McGuinness, Chair of No 3rd Runway Coalition, said: "These dates are sooner than some expected, but perhaps because the Supreme Court is as keen to clarify this important area of developing law, as our communities are anxious to see Heathrow expansion shelved, once and for all. The sooner this misguided project is put of its misery, the better".

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Marisa Heath	07971 666317
Yvonna Lay	457170

EGHAM GATEWAY NAMING

After consultation with residents & stakeholders, the RBC Corporate Management Committee on 24th September agreed to the naming of the 4 new blocks based on Egham's previous historic buildings (Corn Merchant House, Parish Hall, Gem House & Holloway View).

Website : www.eghamresidentsassociation.co.uk

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