



# FROM THE CLOCK TOWER

June 2003



*Chris Grayling MP*

**From the Clock Tower** is a twice yearly update from your local MP Chris Grayling. The Epsom and Ewell parliamentary constituency covers the Borough of Epsom and Ewell, Ashted, Nork, Tattenhams and the Preston area of Tadworth.



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## Hospital's Future 'Non-Negotiable'

Most local people, whilst they are interested in the concept of local care centres, are adamant that Epsom should retain a major hospital. This message is clear from Chris Grayling's consultations across the constituency involving thousands of people, whose views are incorporated in a formal document submitted by Chris to the Epsom and St Helier Trust.

The first phase of the consultation over the Epsom and St Helier Trust's plans for our local hospitals is now over. During the past three months, in addition to canvassing public opinion, Chris has met senior officials from all of the local health trusts in both Surrey and South West London to discuss the plans and their implications for people in the Epsom area.

"The strategy of moving services out of major hospitals is now Government policy", Chris says, "but while that may seem attractive as an option, it throws into question the future of many local hospitals like Epsom. There are also big doubts about whether the new strategy will

work. For example, there are still important questions to be answered about how the plan would be staffed and financed."

"I have told the Trust," he says, "that Epsom Hospital's future is non-negotiable. If a decision is taken to have one hospital, then Epsom is the best place for it."



*Epsom General Hospital*

# IN BRIEF

## Post Office Closure

Chris has continued to fight to defend local post offices against closure plans. Already one local office, on the Preston Howe estate, has been closed, and others are likely to follow. He has also been fighting against plans to close the Post Office in the Spar store in Manor Green Road in Epsom.

## Central Railway Update

Chris continues to press the Government over plans for Central Railway, the freight line that would pass through the western edge of Ashted. The Strategic Rail Authority has rejected the plan, but it appears that the Government is likely to over-rule them and give the scheme provisional approval. Even so, it faces an uphill struggle to raise the money for the scheme.



Chris meets local pharmacists campaigning against plans that would threaten their future.

## Defending Community Pharmacies

**Another part of our local health service is also under threat. A new report by the Office of Fair Trading has recommended that the pharmacy market should be completely deregulated.**

This would allow supermarkets and other major retailers to open new pharmacies, inevitably leading to the closure of many existing shops in our local parades.

Chris has been spearheading the opposition to the measures in Parliament. He has tabled an Early Day Motion that has attracted support from more than 150 MPs, and has led special debates on the issue. He has also presented petitions from all our local pharmacists, backed by thousands of local people.

"Our local pharmacists are an essential part of our local centres, and do a valuable job supporting people of all ages. We cannot afford to lose them", he says. "We will continue to fight to ensure that these ill-thought out proposals are not implemented."



Chris discusses animal welfare with Joanna Lumley

## Ending Live Animal Transport

Chris has backed campaigns at Westminster to limit the transportation of live animals. He recently co-tabled a special parliamentary motion in support of such limits. He also attended a special campaign event hosted by Joanna Lumley.

# Police Campaign

Chris has continued his fight to secure a better deal for our local police, especially on pay and affordable housing. During the winter he and other members of his local team collected a 3,000 signature petition on the issue, which was presented in Parliament in March.



*Chris's police campaign attracted more than 3,000 signatures from local people*

He also had a series of discussions with Home Office Ministers about the problems that the local force faces and has made a number of speeches in the House of Commons on the subject.

The campaign has had some success – in March the Home Office agreed to provide an additional £3 million to Surrey Police to support the Chief Constable's plans to introduce an affordable housing scheme for his officers. But there is still a huge amount to be done.

## We must challenge antisocial behaviour.

Chris is to hold discussions with local police and councillors about ways to strengthen the battle against antisocial behaviour. "I am extremely concerned about the continuing problem from vandalism, graffiti and other forms of antisocial behaviour in our area. We need to do everything we can to combat this menace." He also recently held a meeting of local council representatives, residents and the police to explore ways of dealing quickly with any illegal occupation of local land by travellers.

"We continue to lose officers at an alarming rate to the Metropolitan Police," says Chris. "We have to get the Home Office to address the huge pay disparities that lead to an officer in London being paid £6,000 a year more than in Surrey. Until that issue is tackled, we will continue to lose our experienced officers."

Surrey's Chief Constable warned recently that he was having difficulty maintaining proper levels of policing because of the loss of experienced officers and the level of central government funding for Surrey - the lowest in the country.

In a recent visit to Epsom Police Station, Chris met Special Constables in the area. They are volunteers who reinforce local full-time officers at key times. "We should be extremely grateful for the work that our Special Constables do," said Chris. "Because of the number of local officers who have joined the Met, the experience that our longer-serving special constables have is a vital part of local policing."

# AROUND & ABOUT



*Left:*  
Receiving the Epsom Common Association's petition on the controversial roundabout proposal for Christchurch Road

*Right:*  
Having his blood pressure checked as part of Epsom Rotary's campaign to raise awareness of the risks that may lead to patients suffering a stroke

*Below:*  
Chris joins in the fund raising car wash for the Ashted Chernobyl Children's Lifeline Appeal.



## Visits to the House of Commons

If you are part of a local school or organisation that would like to arrange a tour of the House of Commons, please contact Beth Mitchell in Chris's office at Westminster.

You can ring the office on 020 7219 8194, or write to her at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

## Surgeries

Chris holds surgeries every fortnight on a Friday afternoon. The venues rotate between the Constituency Office in Ashted, the Epsom Conservative Club, Stoneleigh Library and Tattenham Corner Library.

For details of the next surgery date, and to book an appointment, please ring the Constituency Office.

## A visit from your MP

If you would like Chris to attend an event or to visit your organisation, please contact the Constituency Office at 212 Barnett Wood Lane, Ashted, KT21 2DB, or telephone 01372 271036.

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