

FROM THE CLOCK TOWER



WINTER 2003-04

www.chrisgrayling.net

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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Chris Grayling MP



Fighting for Epsom Hospital

The Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust has abandoned controversial proposals to downgrade Epsom Hospital, after fierce protests from the local community and a campaign launched by MP Chris Grayling.

In September the Trust circulated a plan to staff which would have led to the transfer of all of Epsom's acute services to St Helier and the closure of the Accident and Emergency Department.

More than 400 people attended a meeting organised by Chris at the Methodist Church in Epsom to support the hospital. Large numbers of people also signed petitions in the days after the plan

became public knowledge. In the face of such strong opposition, the Trust withdrew the proposal.

Since then it has also confirmed that the A&E Department will still operate overnight, despite staff shortages.

"I am delighted that we have fought off these ill-considered plans", says Chris. "However this is not the end of the story. Next year the European Working Time Directive

will mean changes to services in hospitals right across the country. We will continue the battle to ensure that Epsom does not lose out then."

"Next year the NHS will also decide the future of both Epsom and St Helier Hospitals. It is already planning to have one acute hospital, and several local care centres after 2010. I will be fighting strongly for the plan I submitted in the Summer, that would make Epsom the new hospital site."

See Page 2 for details of Chris's Hospital Proposal to the NHS.



Blueprint for a new hospital

A decision on a new hospital is only months away: the battle is on to get it built in Epsom.

Rebuilding Epsom Hospital as a critical care centre to serve the whole area could save the NHS hundreds of millions of pounds and prevent cuts to other services. That was the message that local MP Chris Grayling gave to NHS officials when he presented them with detailed plans for the Epsom site.

The NHS has already taken a decision in principle to press ahead with its strategy of developing a network of local care centres to take over part of the work done by Epsom and St Helier Hospitals and then to merge their acute services into a single, new critical care centre by 2010. A formal document seeking permission to make the change has been submitted to the Department of Health this autumn, and a

detailed decision on the sites for services will be made sometime in 2004.

Chris has challenged the NHS over the plans which, he says, are unaffordable. His plan for Epsom, he says, would make the project possible and would cut the cost dramatically.

His plans, produced with the help of the Denbies Trust, would involve rebuilding the Epsom Hospital site in the same style as the existing

new buildings, and would enable it to hold up to 700 acute hospital beds. The project would cost around £100 million, around a third of the cost of building a completely new hospital in Sutton. The plan also includes substantially increased parking on the site to ease the pressure on local residents, and extra accommodation for staff.

“If the NHS goes ahead with a totally new hospital,” says Chris, “their own figures show that the cost of paying the mortgage will be an extra £20 million every year. But they are already running a deficit. So the bill can only be paid by cuts to other local health services, such as community-based care, mental health care and GP services. That’s why it’s so important that we win this battle.”

You can read details of Chris’s plan at www.epsomhospital.com



NORTH ELEVATION

Model Planes to Move

Plans are now underway to find a new area of the Downs for model aircraft users to fly their planes, after pressure from Chris about the safety risks in the area currently used. "I have been very concerned that the planes fly low over the main path across the Downs, close to walkers and children. I am delighted that the issue is now being properly addressed, and hope that a new site can be found soon," he says.

Council Tax

Chris and other Surrey MPs are meeting officials at the County Council to help put pressure on the Government ahead of this year's funding announcements. There have been widespread warnings that taxpayers across the country face increases of more than 10% this year. "I will be joining MPs of all parties from right across our region again this year in trying to ensure that our local councils aren't forced into a position where they can only maintain key services like education and social services by massive increases in council tax."

Dognapping

Chris and fellow MP Andrew Rosindell have tabled a Parliamentary Motion urging police to make dog theft a greater priority. "There is a growing, organised trade in dogs," he says, "and it is a crime that causes huge distress to owners. It needs to be stamped out."

Funding battle over local services

Primary Heads warn of more cutbacks

Teaching Assistants could be axed

Head teachers of many local primary schools have written to Chris to express their concern about financial problems that could lead to cutbacks in their schools. Several have said that they may cut back posts, including classroom assistants and that they may have to set a deficit budget this year.

Together with other Surrey MPs, Chris has held meetings with Schools Minister David Miliband and Local Government Minister Nick Raynsford to warn them about the risk to educational standards.

"I have enormous sympathy for our local heads and their staff, who are dealing with an extremely difficult situation. I will continue to do everything I can to get the Government to address the situation," he says. "The danger is that pupils will lose out, and I am particularly concerned about those with special needs."



Policing also faces new financial crisis

Millions set to be lost from Surrey Police budget

Surrey Police faces another round of cutbacks as the Government prepares plans to shift money out of shire counties into urban areas. The move could see local taxpayers having to pay extra to avoid a reduction in services provided by the already stretched force.

In November Chris requisitioned a special House of Commons debate on Surrey Police Funding, to urge Ministers to think again. He warned them that violent crime was on the increase and that the overall crime figures did not properly reflect the sharp rise in antisocial behaviour that is blighting many parts of the area.

"People who dial 999 in Surrey already face long waits for a police car to arrive because there are so few officers out on patrol. In one case, a young man who had been viciously assaulted had to wait half an hour for a car to arrive from Caterham. More budget cuts will just make that worse.

It's time that our police force received proper levels of support."



AROUND & ABOUT

At the celebration of NESCOT's 50th Birthday

Chris continues to make regular visits to schools and colleges across the area. This autumn he has attended a series of events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of NESCOT, Epsom's local college.



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.

Visits to the House of Commons

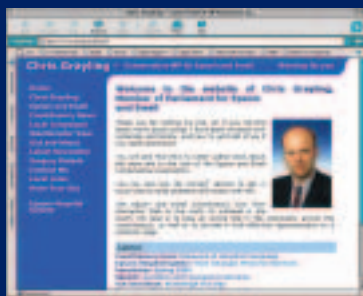
If you are part of a local school or organisation that would like to arrange a tour of the House of Commons, please contact Chris's office at Westminster. You can ring the office on 020 7219 8194 or write to Chris at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

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 on 01372 271036.

Keep updated



Chris's website, www.chrisgrayling.net, contains information about the area, local news and details of how to contact him, as well as electronic copies of this newsletter. You can also leave your views on the special bulletin board.

Remembering our war heroes

With other civic figures at the services for this year's Remembrance Day in Epsom and Ewell



Supporting new business



Attending the relaunch of the Kall-Kwik centre in Epsom as part of his ongoing support for local business