

FROM THE CLOCK TOWER

WINTER 2004-05

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



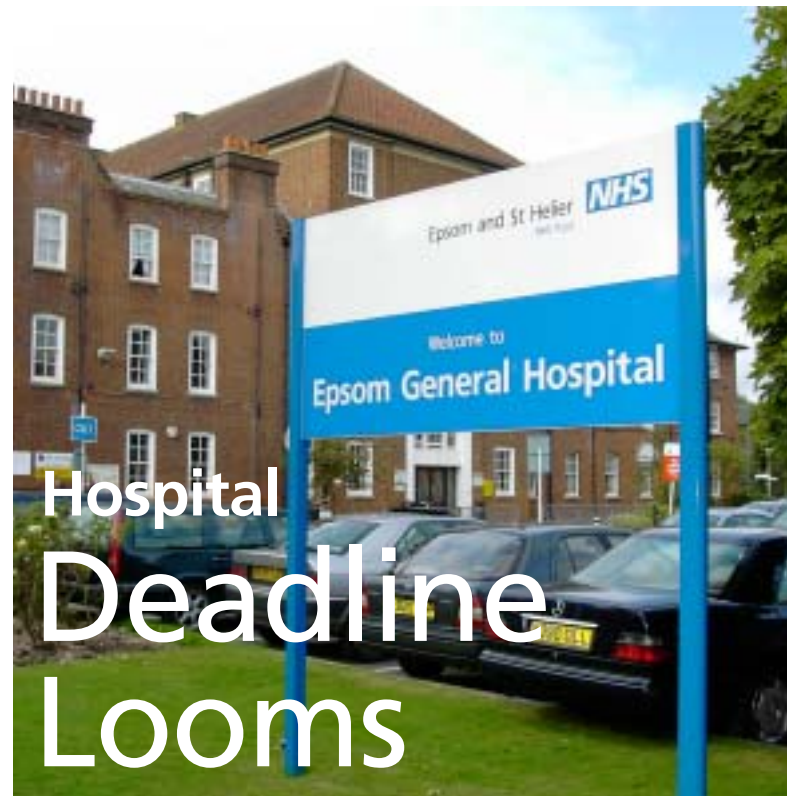
The campaign to save Epsom Hospital has launched a final push as the closing date for the NHS consultation on its future approaches. NHS managers are expected to decide the future of both Epsom and St Helier hospitals in either December or January.

The campaign team has distributed thousands of postcards for local people to complete so that their voice is heard during the consultation and has held a further series of public meetings about the proposals.

Meanwhile, following the huge campaign earlier in the year, when more than 27,000 people signed the petition calling for Surrey to be treated fairly when the new structure of services is announced, the NHS has agreed to do feasibility work into a possible divorce between Epsom and St Helier Hospitals.

Local MP Chris Grayling, who has been leading the campaign to save Epsom Hospital, says the next few weeks will be crucial.

"I am profoundly unhappy with the way in which the NHS has



Hospital Deadline Looms

handled this whole process. They have put forward plans which seem to favour St Helier, and could lead to it being rebuilt and Epsom downgraded. And they have still not come up with clear evidence that the project can be afforded.

"That's why it's so important that we keep up the pressure. At the end of the day, the NHS in Surrey could refuse to endorse the final decision if it involves a transfer of services to St Helier. We mustn't let them forget the strength of local feeling."

Meanwhile the Priests Hill site next to Ewell East station has emerged as a surprise alternative for the new hospital. "Priests Hill is an interesting option, but it carries major problems with it. It is a green belt site, and it could only be acceptable if the plans included a way to protect most of the area from development in perpetuity, says Chris. "But my main priority is to work to retain the existing hospital. That's what both its doctors and patients want. It's a battle we have to win."

MP backs residents over Development pressures



We need greater rights over planning

Residents should not be under siege from developers with projects that contradict local plan guidelines. That's the view of local MP Chris Grayling, following a spate of applications to build new flats in the Windmill Lane area of Epsom. He has objected to the scale of what is proposed.

“At the moment, the law always seems to favour the developers. Why should local people see the character of their area changed suddenly, dramatically and against their wishes? I want to see changes that give

local communities much greater rights over planning – and to prevent the current proposals to transfer responsibilities for planning to regional assemblies – elected or unelected,” says Chris.

MP calls for Mast law changes

We deserve a more balanced hearing over the siting of mobile phone masts

Local MP Chris Grayling has called for greater local controls over the siting of mobile phone masts, and for local councils to be allowed to take into account health issues when agreeing sites for masts.

“I am fed up with insensitive applications for masts in this area,” he says. “Too often the

companies come forward with proposals which will either blight local properties or create health fears. We need masts, but not at the expense of the interests of local people. It is not absolutely necessary to have perfect coverage for every network in every part of the country.”

Chris wants local councils to be able to veto controversial applications and for companies to be

required to lodge a planning application each time they try to set up a new mast. “I also think the phone companies should be obliged to demonstrate that their plans are not going to significantly change the character of an area. They should also be prevented from pushing ahead with plans for masts close to schools and other areas where children congregate.”



Antisocial bikers

Chris has been working with police and local residents to try to end the blight of motor bikes using Priests Hill at weekends and causing massive disruption to local residents. "I want to see the police using their powers to confiscate bikes from those who are causing this nuisance," he says. "Surrey Police say they are willing to do this. But they can only act if someone is caught more than once – so residents need to keep them informed when there is a problem."

Save Ewell Court House

Chris is backing local campaigners who are fighting to save one of Epsom and Ewell's best-known landmarks - Ewell Court House. The owners of the House, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, have been struggling to afford to pay maintenance costs, and have been looking for alternative uses for it. Chris says that any new use must preserve the fabric of the building. "Ewell Court House is a part of the local landscape. I strongly support those who are fighting against redevelopment plans. I understand that the Council needs to find a realistic financial way forward for the House, but equally it has a duty not to allow the site to be broken up for redevelopment."

Challenge to Foreign Secretary over European Constitution

Who will have control?



Chris Grayling has challenged Foreign Secretary Jack Straw to explain which areas of Government activity will be entirely the responsibility of the United Kingdom if the European Constitution is ratified – and the answer was that he couldn't say.

"I would like to say that I was astonished," says Chris, "but somehow it didn't come as a surprise. It is quite clear from reading the Constitution that responsibility for almost all areas of Government will pass to Brussels if it is introduced. That's why I am so strongly opposed to it."

Chris has teamed up with a group of local businesspeople and others concerned about the EU to form an embryonic No campaign for the forthcoming referendum on the Constitution. It has attracted the support of some of Epsom's best known figures, from the worlds of business, politics, education, racing and leisure.

The campaign will be holding a series of action days in Epsom over the next few months to raise awareness about the Constitution and to build up a network of people ready to campaign against it when the referendum takes place.

Local MP produces top-up fee alternative

Listening to both Universities and students

At Westminster, Chris has been responsible for developing the Opposition's alternative policy to top-up fees. In his job as Shadow Higher Education Minister, he has visited Universities around the country talking to both academics and students about the financial issues they face.

The plans, to scrap fees and radically reform both University funding and student finance, were launched in September and debated on the floor of the House of Commons.

"It has been a huge challenge, but I am immensely proud to have been able to take such an important policy from first thoughts to a final form – and also to find that key people in our universities think it is a good idea and a viable alternative to the Government's plans," says Chris.



AROUND & ABOUT

Visiting local community, voluntary and charitable groups

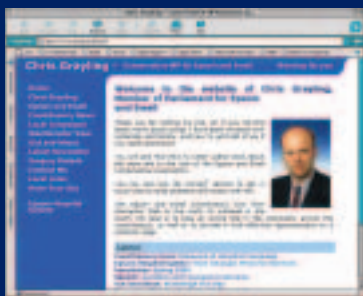


With Rev Roger Welch at the Preston Community Action Group Fete



Cutting the 20th birthday cake for the local branch of AFASIC, a support group for children with communication disorders.

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.

Supporting Mencap

Taking part in the Epsom and Ewell FC Sponsored Walk for Mencap.



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.