NEIGHBOURHOOD
Area Committee
East Elmbridge

MAKE IT HAPPEN

East Elmbridge Neighbourhood Area Committee (NAC)

18 March 2025 – 14.30-16.30

Meeting Notes



East Elmbridge Neighbourhood Area Committee 18 March Meeting Notes

Attendance

Chair:
Rob Mills - Walton Charity

Vice Chair:
Cllr Simon Waugh - Elmbridge Borough Council

Attendees:
Cllr Andy Burton - Surrey County Council
Cllr Nick Darby – Surrey County Council
Cllr David Lewis – Surrey County Council
Cllr Neil Houston - Elmbridge Borough Council
Cllr Andrew Burley - Elmbridge Borough Council
Cllr Gil Bray – Claygate Parish Council
Dr Shazid Karim - Cobham and Oxshott Primary Care Network
Dr James O'Brien - Esher Green Surgery
Elaine Bissell - Citizen's Advice Esher and District
Helen Watson- Rentstart
Sally Dubery - Central Surrey Voluntary Action
Alex Munro - St Peter's Church West Molesey
Olive Leach - Home-Start Elmbridge
PC Stacey Josling - Surrey Police
Emma Cox – NHS Trust
Michael Rolph – Surrey Fire and Rescue
Kadeem Dunning – Citizens' Advice (Youth)

Introduction

The Chair opened the meeting with an overview of the event's plan, setting a clear and positive tone for the session. An update was provided on the *Indicative Government Timeline for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Surrey*, outlining where we currently stand in the process. It was noted that decisions about the future of NACs will ultimately rest with the new authorities once established.

The Chair reflected on the progress of the pilot so far and the strong commitment NAC members have shown to supporting young people. He acknowledged that, should the shadow authority choose to continue NACs, there would be challenges in scaling this model across Surrey—but also significant opportunity to build on the promising foundations already in place.

Officers then shared updates on work against the agreed priorities.

The *Work Experience* priority was introduced, emphasising the need for a diverse working group drawing on NAC members' strengths and expertise. It was highlighted how traditional work experience opportunities often favour well-connected young people, leaving others facing barriers. Discussions explored a broader menu of opportunities and how schools and partners could work together to expand access and support young people more effectively.

The *Transport* priority was then presented, revisiting the conversations from the previous NAC meeting. The presenter noted that while the ambition for TFL-level service is encouraging, it will need to be taken forward by the shadow authority. The presenter updated the group on the launch of Surrey Connect in Elmbridge and ongoing Chatterbus services from Cobham. Members were invited to consider how NAC could increase awareness of these services among young people and promote tools like the Surrey Link Card. He also highlighted opportunities to build on the local cycle network—through initiatives such as Bikeability, tagging and maintenance schemes, and community marketplace offers—while reflecting on how such projects might be replicated across the wider NAC footprint. LCWIP was also raised, with members encouraged to monitor for future opportunities.

The *Sport and Leisure* priority was then introduced, acknowledging persistent barriers for young people trying to access activities. The presenter suggested that Free School Meal data could be used to help identify priority groups for discounted offers. The group could explore ways to make better use of local green spaces—such as Cobham Skate Park—and opportunities for young people to gain coaching qualifications, which naturally link to the work experience discussions. It was also noted the hope of launching a new swimming cohort as early as the Easter holidays.

Finally, insights were shared from the youth engagement carried out so far, which shaped the three priorities. Engagement took place through one-to-one conversations, group work and events in Cobham, Claygate and Walton. They highlighted how these interactions have placed NAC in a strong position to deepen its understanding of young people's needs going forward. Their creative approach at events was well received, helping residents feel comfortable and motivated to contribute their views.

Workshop discussions

Transport

Proposal Recommendation: Young people face significant barriers due to patchy and spread-out provision, costly or unsafe transport options, and limited accessibility—especially for low-income families. Removing these barriers is seen as essential for success.

Having identified Transport and Accessibility as a priority, NAC members narrowed the recommendation to three actions. Each action is recorded below, along with a short update.

The proposal's recommendation was discussed:

The group shared a lively and constructive discussion about transport challenges and opportunities for young people. Members highlighted that booking Connect services from Cobham to Excel can be difficult for young people trying to access sports clubs and other local activities. Ideas surfaced around exploring funding options and travel permits to make the scheme more affordable, which could reduce unsafe travel behaviours and enhance public safety. There was also interest in the Elmbridge Borough Council Community transport as a potential way to bridge existing gaps.

A positive theme emerged around cycling. The group noted increased use of the local cycle network, boosted by community initiatives. The local bike project pay-it-forward repair scheme and the repair café were celebrated for working together to ensure access to repairs, supporting wellbeing and active lifestyles.

A member of the group agreed to explore options around bike locks and helmets, including whether damaged helmets can be safely recycled, recognising they cannot be reused.

The group also discussed strengthening links between transport schemes. The Chatterbox route passes Walton Firs, and members were enthusiastic about finding ways to coordinate Chatterbus and Surrey Connect during quieter periods to increase flexibility and coverage.

Community transport remains an ongoing challenge. The recently launched Surrey Connect service is not free, has limited evening and weekend hours, and may not meet the needs of families—especially those connected to Foodbank services or young people needing to travel to Walton while Hersham Centre for the Community is closed. There was also concern that the price point and marketing materials might deter users.

In relation to encouraging more people to use the cycle network. Members noted that despite the desire to cycle more, many local "safe routes" do not feel safe. Confidence was raised as a barrier, especially for those unsure of their cycling ability. The Lower Green Bike Project was praised for its surplus supply of free bikes, but more promotion is needed.

Suggestions included using the Surrey County Council Community Marketplace to gather donations of cycling equipment and linking with Bikeability to support skill development. The group also discussed taking outreach into community hubs and identifying options for safe bike storage.

Interest in Surrey Connect continued, with a member agreeing to promote it to the parish council. Ideas included exploring travel permits to support families affected by cost-of-living pressures.

There was strong support for promoting Bikeability through Citizens Advice Esher and District. With so many bikes available, members discussed how best to distribute them, reduce theft, and consider corporate social responsibility partnerships to support the initiative.

Access to Sports and Leisure

Proposal Recommendations:

- *To provide subsidised access to sports and physical activity for young people in East Elmbridge*
- *A focus on those who are less able to access or pay for existing facilities, with a focus on young people from low-income backgrounds*
- *Targeted as diversionary activities to help tackle Anti-Social Behaviour*

The recommendations were discussed:

The group had an energised conversation about strengthening connections between local sports and leisure providers and schools, including opportunities for taster sessions or discounted activities. They also explored how providers could make use of school or youth hub spaces. Finding the right school contacts was noted as a challenge since many roles altered during the shift to academy structures. Active Surrey was identified as a key partner to help bridge those gaps.

Transport was highlighted once again as crucial—creating activities is only effective if young people can reach them. Members suggested looking at models like the Blue Light App, which combines information on local opportunities, discounts, transport and incentives in one appealing platform.

NAC members agreed to share datasets to assist in identifying individuals who might benefit from this initiative.

Work Experience:

Proposal Recommendation:

There is a massive shortage of work experience placements for young people. There is a need to use local resources and partnerships to create/market structured opportunities with potential for a collaboration with the Business Improvement District (BID). National schemes exist such as the King's Trust (formerly Prince's Trust), but uptake of these to date, in the East Elmbridge area is low. There is potential to increase engagement of these or shape a more localised offer. The government is extending support for schemes for young people from the age of 18-25 at no cost to the businesses - can this help to open more opportunities locally? Working with partners and businesses could help connect young people into local employment or training opportunities?

The recommendation was discussed.

It was agreed by the group that the term “work experience” would be used to mean all paid or voluntary opportunities that young people could take up.

The discussion began with a positive example from the Lower Green Bike Project, where a Duke of Edinburgh Gold participant volunteered. However, staffing and funding pressures—such as keeping the café open—were noted as barriers that impact whether young people can fully benefit from opportunities.

Poverty emerged as a major theme, affecting young people’s ability to volunteer when they often feel pressure to contribute financially at home. Members acknowledged this as a difficult reality and considered how best to support these young people.

While many schools do arrange work experience, families often must secure placements for themselves in specialist areas, creating inequality for those without networks or local connections.

The High Sheriff of Surrey’s NEET project was highlighted as a promising starting directory, with potential to be adapted across NACs and wider Surrey for work experience, volunteering, apprenticeships and sponsorship opportunities.

It was agreed that efforts should be renewed to explore partnership opportunities between Citizens Advice Esher and District and Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership and that dialogue should be opened with Esher and Cobham Chambers of Commerce, as well as the local Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), for collaboration on work experience opportunities.

Summary and Closing

It was noted by the chair that there were a lot of promising discussions in the room and that working groups would be developed to progress these initiatives.

An update as to the future of the NACs would be provided once more was known after the May elections.