NEIGHBOURHOOD
Area Committee
East Elmbridge

MAKE IT HAPPEN

East Elmbridge Neighbourhood Area Committee (NAC)

4 December 2025 – 14.30-16.30

Meeting Notes



East Elmbridge Neighbourhood Area Committee 4 December Meeting Notes

Attendance

Chair:
Rob Mills - Walton Charity

Vice Chair:
Cllr Simon Waugh - Elmbridge Borough Council

Attendees:
Cllr Andy Burton - Surrey County Council
Cllr Neil Houston - Elmbridge Borough Council
Cllr Andrew Burley - Elmbridge Borough Council
Dr Shazid Karim - Cobham and Oxshott Primary Care Network
Dr James O'Brien - Esher Green Surgery
Rob Mills - Walton Charity
Elaine Bissell - Citizen's Advice Esher and District
Mary Suphi - Rentstart
Sally Dubery - Central Surrey Voluntary Action
Alex Munro - St Peter's Church West Molesey
Olive Leach - Home-Start Elmbridge
Chris Thoday - Surrey Police

Apologies:

Apologies were sent from 2 NAC members representing Surrey County Council

Introduction

The meeting opened with a warm welcome from the chair, who thanked St Peter's Church for hosting and outlined today's agenda. Attendees viewed a video, showcasing engagement activities at Cobham One-derland, which despite wet weather, was well received and provided a family-friendly atmosphere. Engagement also extended to Cobham School and the Commonplace platform.

Amongst the key findings from the engagement were the following:

- Improved safety in outdoor spaces was a theme across age groups.
- Residents wanted to see a bigger variety of community spaces and affordable access to sports and leisure facilities, especially for young people
- Transport links should be improved and should be safe, accessible, reliable and affordable.
- 100 residents had already commented on the Commonplace site and 109 had subscribed for updates.

With the above feedback in mind and with recommendations collated from earlier meetings, the committee split into 2 dynamic working groups to examine priority issues as set out below.

The discussion kicked off with participants diving into recommendations and sharing fresh perspectives. Overlapping priorities were highlighted, sparking a lively conversation about accessibility and connected working. Mapping current resources was suggested as a starting point, and it was identified that some recommendations could solve multiple challenges.

Transport and Accessibility.

Table 1 discussion:

While full 'Transport for London'-style coverage may be a long-term aspiration, the group explored how we can adopt some of TfL's best features now—like simpler ticketing with one card for all journeys and more direct links between key destinations.

Funding will be crucial, and creative solutions are on the table: a mix of corporate sponsorship, foundation support, and economic models that keep services sustainable. Traditional timetables alone won't cut it—future-ready ideas like Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) are already being trialled in some areas and could be combined with scheduled services for a flexible, hybrid approach.

Active travel is another big opportunity. Encouraging young people to cycle is a priority, but access to bikes remains a barrier. Government-backed initiatives like LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) can accelerate progress, creating safe, connected routes that make cycling a real option. Corporate partnerships—think “Boris bikes” for Elmbridge—could add extra momentum, but infrastructure must come first.

Table 2 discussion

Young people face real barriers to getting around—patchy transport, high costs, and safety concerns. The group discussed community-focused buses as a practical solution, alongside active travel initiatives like cycle paths and guided rides to boost confidence. E-scooters and bike-sharing schemes were considered, though legal and uptake challenges remain. Late-running community buses and better connectivity to hubs like Xcel could make a big difference. Schools were seen as key partners for insight and engagement and plans for a 2026 event to gauge community transport needs were welcomed enthusiastically.

Affordable Fitness

Table 1 discussion:

One idea sparking interest is the potential reuse of the unused swimming pool at St Andrews—could this become a vibrant indoor facility for the community?

The discussion also highlighted NHS school exercise referral schemes, which allow adults with long-term physical or mental health conditions to access facilities at a reduced rate through GP referrals. While these programs exist, questions remain about how effectively they're being delivered—and whether more can be done to maximize their impact. Initiatives like 'Be Your Best' are already making strides for young people, but there's room to expand beyond age-related conditions.

Outdoor fitness was another hot topic. Outdoor gyms and boot camps offer scalable, cost-effective solutions, but do they get enough use? The group agreed that engagement is key - having a trainer on-site makes all the difference. And while free facilities sound appealing, experience shows that people often value what they invest in, so creative approaches to encourage participation will be essential.
By making smart use of existing assets and introducing innovative ideas, we can create spaces that inspire healthier, happier communities.

Table 2 discussion:

Fitness should be accessible to all. The conversation turned to subsidised gym memberships, partnerships with Places for Leisure, and creative use of community spaces. The group emphasised promoting existing activities better and tackling misconceptions about anti-social behaviour. Ideas included outdoor heaters for social spaces and leveraging schools to keep costs low while ensuring safety. Mapping current facilities and consulting on redesigns were identified as next steps to create vibrant, welcoming spaces for young people.

Work Experience

Table 1 discussion:

Cobham Business Improvement District (BID), the team behind the fantastic One-derland event, is just one of several BIDs and business groups across the area that could play a key role in shaping work experience opportunities for young people. The vision is clear: placements must be equitable, accessible, and carefully monitored to ensure they truly benefit the young person—not just the employer.

Work experience should never be free labour. It should be a stepping stone, offering valuable skills and insight. Local Authorities have an important role to play in setting a strong framework that makes these placements mutually beneficial. A transparent feedback system will help guarantee quality and safeguard young people, especially those without family connections to open doors for them.

The group agreed that placements should reflect the young person's interests while considering business needs. A good duration? More than a week but less than a month—possibly in stages based on age and experience. For school students, short-term placements work best, while college learners and those aged 18–25 could take on longer opportunities. This is especially vital for young people who aren't following academic routes.

To make this happen, the new authority could create a business register listing available opportunities. Collaboration with local partners like Esher's Chamber of Commerce will be key. And timing matters—conversations should start in early 2026, aligning with school schedules and addressing the challenges faced by disadvantaged young people.

The next step? Bring together the right people—those leading Economic Development and Children & Families portfolios—to further explore and understand the current system and any action plans and how it supports young people, including those with neurodiverse needs. Together, we can create a fair, inspiring pathway into the world of work.

Table 2 discussion:

There's a clear shortage of work experience opportunities, and the group is determined to change that. Suggestions included partnering with local businesses, creating toolkits to simplify safeguarding and paperwork, and hosting school-based events to build confidence. National schemes like the King's Trust were mentioned, but uptake is low—so a localised approach could help. The discussion also touched on educating young people about volunteering as a steppingstone to paid work, with ideas for CV workshops and interview skills sessions.

Evaluation and Next Steps

The chair reflected on progress and remarked on how much had been achieved in a short time, including strong engagement via Commonplace and valuable connections. There was also an action agreed to follow up on recommendations 1 and 2, hence closing the engagement loop. The evaluation approach, 'test, learn, and grow', was shared, and participants agreed NACs should continue but there were some areas that needed further consideration. Suggestions included quarterly meetings, alternating formats, and forming sub-groups to accelerate actions. Areas for consideration were identified. These included:

Whether the geographic footprint was correct: There was an opinion that the current NAC footprint was too big to effectively engage and reflect the communities it houses. It should also reflect NHS boundaries. Alternately, it was felt that if the NAC area might be too small to be able to influence change on transport provision (such as the introduction of cycle routes).

Alignment with local government and external bodies: It was recognised that NACs should complement the work of the new council, following the reorganisation and to explore how this might be achieved, should the new authority adopt a committee structure. Further exploration was also invited on how NACs could be best served by voluntary agencies, given how they are resourced.

As community engagement is at the heart of this initiative, it was suggested that there should be opportunity for the local community to evaluate the positive impact of the NAC on the community as a mark of its success.

Finally, attendees valued the connection that they had made because of this pilot. However, to move the group forward, the membership must evaluate its purpose and determine action ownership and decision-making strategies.

The meeting concluded with optimism and a commitment to keep momentum going. Feedback was invited via QR code, and the Resident Insight Team will analyse data and share findings with stakeholders.