

Use your vote!



RBC ELECTION MAY 2nd



With Cllr Sian Williams deciding not to go for re-election on RBC this year (see below), we're delighted to introduce **Geeta Moudgil**, who was overwhelmingly endorsed at our AGM on February 27th as the Runnymede Independent Residents Group (RIRG) candidate for RBC's Egham Town ward.

Geeta added "I am a mum with two lovely teen-age kids and have raised my family here since 2009. My kids went to Manorcroft School, enjoyed being part of the 1st Egham cubs/scouts & we've long been keen family members of Egham cricket club; also we're regular users of the Orbit. What I love most about Egham is the people who volunteer to make these things possible, who join in so that our clubs continue to thrive. Along with raising my family here, I've worked full time, first in Contracts & Sales and then as a legal and compliance manager in Pharmaceuticals. I've benefitted from Egham's great connections for travel, but I'm also familiar with the frustrations that can arise when there are problems associated with public transport or for road users. Rail-crossing downtimes are a particular grievance.

I am already active in community matters, as Administrator for two large local Facebook groups, including the Pooley Green & Egham Facebook group. So I have a good familiarity across local issues that cause concern, & I've taken the initiative to publicise matters of broad interest, for example details of the proposed gravel extraction at Whitehall Farm, which I vehemently oppose.

I've always supported the long tradition Egham has of electing Independent Councillors at RBC to represent them, and I'm proud to have ERA's support in standing to be a new local Councillor. If elected I pledge to continue the strong representation given by our current Independent councillors, especially by Siân Williams, whose encouragement and advice I value highly. If elected I will:

- Focus on serving the best interests of Egham's residents across the spectrum of RBC responsibilities;
- Be working with all appropriate authorities to reduce downtimes at the rail crossings affecting Egham;
- Collaborate with the initiatives for local flood relief planning;
- Engage widely to prevent the gravel extraction plans for Whitehall Farm and Milton Park Farm;
- Seek improvements to the facilities available for mental health protection in Egham;
- Be proactive in climate change mitigation initiatives & in protecting our Green Belt;
- Engage with the RHUL RH2030s Plan, to support the benefits & mitigate the impacts of RHUL expansion;
- Work to maximise the benefits of any redevelopment of the Precinct, while conserving the traditional character of Egham's High Street.

I am committed to applying ethics, integrity and respect in all I do. This is the basis for my motivation to become an Independent councillor at RBC for Egham. For our instinctive desire for mutual support to flourish, the fabric of Egham and the structure of support from the Council must be protected & enhanced. I don't under-estimate the challenge, but I believe my professional experience of problem-resolution as a Compliance Manager, my familiarity with local issues as administrator of a residents' Facebook group, and my long-held interests in community cohesion in Egham, will help me to become an effective councillor. Please feel free to contact me on: geetaforegham@gmail.com".

VOTE INDEPENDENT

Promoted by Sam Jenkins (agent), c/o 42 Crown Street, Egham, Surrey on behalf of the above candidate.

Cllr SIAN WILLIAMS



It's with regret that we announce that Siân is standing down as a RBC Councillor. We'd like to acknowledge what a great Councillor Sian has been, as she's championed the residents that rub up most often against the Council and other authorities; she was instrumental in the founding of @TheLit; she's set up, & she leads, a very successful Egham Games Club, which meets weekly and separately for adults and for children; she's initiated a trial Community Bus project that may develop into a great benefit for Egham. This and very much more, but in a nutshell: Egham is a better place to live because Siân has been one of our Councillors over the past 3-4 years. So THANK YOU Sian!

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Having just completed 12 months as Chair, I'd like to thank all the volunteers who've come forward in a variety of roles over the year. ERA's Membership is our greatest strength. Whenever help has been sought, there's been a swift and positive response (for election tasks, leaflet deliveries, new Area Reps, stall manning, the A30 by-pass survey; the trawl for Treasurer). I counted over 40 volunteer offers in total, that's ~10% of the membership, engagement many local organisations can only dream of. The 8 Area Reps are the quiet heroes; they play a crucial part in reaching out across the town. Thanks to all. Also I'd like to thank and acknowledge our Committee members, but the Committee is over-stretched and needs strengthening. Graham Bassett, Chris Fisher, Steve Pollard, Bill Bessant and Aneesh Gupta all resigned at different times, or stood down at the AGM. Thanks to all five for their contributions. Chris has been immense: his dogged engagement with Planning, speaking up for Egham's needs, consistent opposition to poor design and poor decisions, championing the Green Belt countryside. Aneesh has been an efficient and trustworthy Treasurer and particular thanks to Adrian Skelt for holding things together as Secretary. We do have some new faces: Sue Holloway (Green issues) stepped up at the 2023 AGM; Andrew Marven has joined to take over as Treasurer; and Sian Williams, standing down as Councillor, will rejoin the Committee in May. But still the Committee needs more depth: as we go to press, the Membership Secretary position now needs to be filled again and we need others too, to share the important roles of Planning scrutiny, social media, and our website; and also simply to bring an additional enthusiasm & concern for Egham onto the Committee. If you can help it would be great to hear from you! Offers please to chair@eghamresidentsassociation.co.uk or text-message to 07864 397208.

What's on the Agenda for Egham this year? No.1 is the application for Whitehall Farm gravel extraction. Our formal objection, on grounds of air quality, road usage & flooding threats, can be seen at <https://planning.surreycc.gov.uk/Planning/Display/SCC%20Ref%202021/0023#>, click on Attachments and scroll to Consultation Responses - see below on latest SCC timing. No.2 is a new strategic plan from RHUL (the RH2030s Plan) due the first half of this year. We'll fully engage. Recent news is that the Student Village development on the old Procter & Gamble site is being put on ice, as the college re-visits their likely future numbers (which are down). No.3 is development plans expected soon for the Precinct in the High Street, due for refurbishment by the Council, & possibly the planning for this will start this year. No.4 is RBC's stop-start Review of their Local Plan. This 'Local Plan' is the template, for Planning and much else, governing RBC's priorities and policies up to 2040. Our Councillors are working to get better control over Houses of Multiple Occupation included (and more). We're advised and represented by them of course, but there are consultations planned too, which we must engage with.

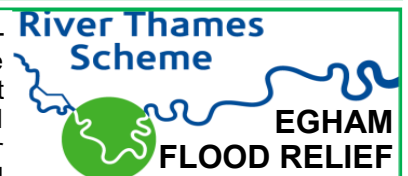
Finally, Thank you to the wonderful Egham institution which is the United Church, for hosting us throughout the year and at our AGM, when the piano was also made available - and we enjoyed some wonderful music provided by two talented pianists from RHUL. It was a pleasure to see all who came.

Committee Vacancies

The Committee is in need of bigger numbers & new blood. We specifically need to be able to revitalise and manage our website & our social media communications; also we now need a new Membership Secretary & we need someone to take responsibility for monitoring Planning Applications. These will all be satisfying & interesting roles for the right person - is it you?

Or do you know someone you could recommend? We also need to bolster the numbers of 'ordinary' members of the Committee. We meet 10 times per year. If you share our enthusiasm for Egham, tempered by concerns for its protection, please do consider joining the Committee - please contact the Secretary or the Chair (details on Page 4).

Statutory consultation about the widely publicised River Thames scheme (RTS - see <https://www.riverthamesscheme.org.uk>) ended at the start of March. The scheme is designed to give maximum defence against a 1-in-20 year flood event such as we experienced in 2003, 2014 and 2024. It principally involves two flood relief channels (Hythe End to Chertsey & Laleham to Desborough Cut), each similar in concept to the 'Jubilee River' flood protection channel between Maidenhead and Datchet. As the infrastructure of the RTS falls completely outside of Egham, ERA didn't comment on the non-flooding aspects of the scheme. However, some small flood relief is claimed upstream of Hythe End, including for Riverside in Egham, and for Runnymede fields. In ERA's submission we reported our lack of confidence that the RTS will noticeably reduce our flooding experience. From our reading of the RTS reports, including the 'non-technical Modelling Report', it appears that the RTS model representation of a 1-in-20 year flood does NOT capture the flooding experienced in 2003, 2014 and 2024 along The Avenue and in Albany Place, parts of Strode Street and on Vicarage Road (at the Vicarage Crescent junction) in Egham. Therefore, these locations fall outside the area for which the scheme's benefits have been judged (& there is no benefit being claimed in these badly effected parts of Egham). We also saw in the comparison of observed & modelled river levels for Bell Weir that the model under-represents the river level there (consistently, & by c.10 cm at peak flood). Possibly this explains the model's failure to capture the full extent of the flooding affecting Egham over the years. If the model under-represents, we cannot trust the model outcomes at the scale that we're affected. Nor can we trust the 5-20 cm claimed benefits across Runnymede fields and Riverside (because if the 1-in-20 year flood is under-represented by 10 cm in the 'calibrated' model, the claimed benefit is of the same order of magnitude as the model error).



An additional possibility for Egham has emerged, with the Environment Agency recently initiating a project for Flood Improvement Measures between Datchet and Hythe End (the DHEFIM project). A local DHEFIM consultation group is being inaugurated in April & ERA will be represented, probably through the Egham Flood Group.

MISCELLANEOUS

i) Gravel Extraction - we reinforced our objections to the Whitehall Farm application at end January & SCC have now announced a further delay until 29/5 for their Planning Committee to review the plans (plus they delayed a review of Milton Park Farm application plans until 26/6 but they both are likely to be delayed further?)

ii) ERA Coach Trip - unfortunately only 8 residents have contacted us about a Coach Trip this year, thus there has been insufficient interest to justify a booking & we will not unfortunately be arranging a trip in April.

2024

ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING

Reports (27th February)

The Secretary welcomed c.40 members of the Association and others to the 42nd annual meeting.

Chair

Willy Burgess opened by offering thanks to the United Church (for holding our meetings) & for our volunteer members, who had helped significantly on several events during the year. He also covered the Committee, our membership trajectory, our activities over the year & the main issues for Egham in the upcoming year. *An update from the Chair is now available on Page 2 above.*

Treasurer

The accounts as @ 31/12/23 were circulated at the meeting & the key points were that we had a positive result, with subscriptions back up to the 2021 levels, resulting in a surplus of £50 over the year & an overall funds balance of c.£6,400.

Now that the ERA has moved to Metro Bank, clause 7.7 of the ERA Constitution does not quite match efficient use of the more modern banking services Metro can offer as standard on a Community Account. Also, we should increase its current "materiality threshold" (where 2 Committee roles need to approve something vs just 1) from £25 to £40 across any payment channel. The Treasurer thus advised that clause 7.7 of the ERA Constitution should change to "All payments over £40 shall be authorised/signed by at least two of the Secretary, Treasurer or Chairman. Payments of £40 or under can be authorised/signed by any one of the Secretary, Treasurer or Chairman. Only payments of £40 and under can be made by cash." This proposal was accepted by the audience.

Officers & Committee

The Secretary reported, as the Chairman had said, that there had been several personnel changes over the last year & the current candidates who sought election for 2024/25 were Chairman (Willy Burgess), Vice Chairman (vacant), Secretary (Adrian Skelt), Treasurer (Andrew Marven), Membership Secretary (Nilofar Bhurawala), Webmaster (Vacant) & General Committee Members (Sue Holloway, Brigitte Kreuger, Jim Pearcey, Glenda Thisdell & Sian Williams (after May)). All nominations were supported unanimously from the audience.

RBC Councillors & Candidate Adoption

The Egham Town Independent Councillors on RBC gave their summary annual reports for 2023 : Isabel Mullens, where her main involvement with RBC had been on the Planning Committee, where she has been pressing for an Article 4 Direction on Houses of Multiple Occupations (HMOs). She had again pressed for live streaming of RBC meetings, but this was rejected again (as it did last year) - however, it may all change after May elections? Sam Jenkins had served on both the Planning & Corporate Management Committees at RBC & has dealt with over 80 specific resident issues over the year. A summary of his events is covered in the February Jottings by Jenkins pamphlet circulated earlier. Sian Williams has been on the Overview & Scrutiny & Environmental Services Committee at RBC, with the latter looking at bin & noise issues in particular. She has worked with residents on accessibility issues, e.g. at Fairhaven, & on housing & casework demands.

After careful thought, Sian Williams has now decided to not go for re-election on RBC this year & the Chairman led the appreciation of her strong efforts as an RBC Councillor over the last 3+ years. After the "Be a Councillor" workshop last Autumn, Geeta Moudgil has now come forward to seek adoption as an Independent candidate for the Egham Town ward in May's RBC election. Geeta has lived in Egham for 25yrs, is currently working as a Healthcare Compliance Manager & is particularly interested in traffic issues (living in Vicarage Road) & environmental concerns. A motion for adoption of her as our Independent candidate for Egham Town ward was unanimously supported from the floor.

The meeting concluded by having a refreshment session with accompanying pianists from RHUL.

OPEN-DOOR INVITATION FOR ERA MEMBERS

We are taking up a suggestion made at the AGM for there to be an open-door for ERA Members to come to speak to the Committee in advance of our meetings, to raise issues relevant to Egham. There are 10 Committee meetings per year, monthly apart from August and December, held in the vestibule of the United Church adjacent to The Red Lion. 'Open door' will operate for 15 minutes from 7.30 pm at the start of every meeting. The next meeting will be Tuesday April 16th (with future meetings planned on May 14th, June 11th, July 9th, September 10th, October 8th & November 12th). Feel free to contact the Secretary or Chair in advance with issues to raise.

Membership
Committee
Meeting

Alerts on issues that arose between Newsletters this quarter covered :

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| a) Flood Alert (8/1) | b) Railway Crossings Downtime (12/1) |
| c) Care in Egham (14/1) | d) River Thames Scheme Consultation (16/1) |
| e) Police Council Tax Survey (18/1) | f) RBC Carpark Charges (23/1) |
| g) Political Boundaries (30/1) | h) Cllr Jenkins Annual Report (2/2) |
| i) RHUL FUSE Evening (7/2) | j) SCC Materials Recycling Facility (7/2) |
| k) Egham Library (9/2) | l) ERA Constitution Proposal (14/2) |
| m) Level Crossing Downtimes (20/2) | n) Manorcrofts Nursery (23/2) |
| o) RHUL Poetry (6/3) | p) M25 closure 15-18/3 (6/3) |
| q) Egham Road Names (7/3) | r) Fairmont Hotel (7/3) |
| s) RHUL Bus Service (8/3) | t) Save Jutland Place (23/3) |



Contact Adrian Skelt on adrianskelt@eghamresidentsassociation.co.uk to be sent email alerts



2024/5 LEVELS

In the Council Tax bills sent out in March RBC will be responsible for collecting the Council Tax for itself and on behalf of SCC and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey (Surrey Police). Overall, the rates shall be (for an average Band D property):

	2023/24	2024/5	Increase
SCC (77%)	£1,675.08	£1,758.60	4.99%
Police Precept (14%)	£310.57	£323.57	4.19%
RBC (9%)	£184.92	£190.45	2.99%
Total	£2,170.57	£2,272.62	4.7%

A rise of 4.99% on the SCC's share was approved by County Councillors on 6/2, which is the maximum amount allowed without a referendum. SCC leader Tim Oliver said: "Everything we do has become more expensive, with some areas seeing price increases even in excess of the rate of inflation but demand for services is increasing. We know any rise in Council Tax is tough, but support is available to people who really need it. Last year we did not raise Council Tax by the maximum available as the cost of living was increasing sharply, and taken together with the proposed rise this year, council tax in Surrey has risen well below inflation. Surrey was the only county council in the South East not to put up Council Tax by the full amount last year".

The Police and Crime Commissioner, Lisa Townsend, suggested a 4.2% increase for the policing element at the county's Police and Crime Panel on 2/2, after 3,300 residents shared their views in her Council Tax consultation this winter. 41% of respondents said they would support the 4.2% (or £13 per year) increase, 11% voted for £12, while the remaining opted for a figure below £10. The 14 Panel members present voted on the Commissioner's proposal with seven votes for and seven votes against. but there were insufficient votes to veto the proposal and the Panel accepted the PCC's precept will come into effect.

Runnymede residents will also be asked to pay just £5.53 more per year for all the services which RBC provides. Cllr Tom Gracey, Leader of the Council, emphasised that: "Residents in Runnymede will still pay the lowest Council Tax overall in Surrey. The income we receive from your Council Tax actually makes up less than seven per cent of our total income from multiple sources".



ERA COMMITTEE

Chair	Willy Burgess	07864 397208
Vice-Chair	Vacant	
Secretary (& Newsletter Editor)	Adrian Skelt	07956 875329
Treasurer (& Data Protection Officer)	Andrew Marven	07702 933686
Membership Secretary	Vacant (at time of going to press)	
Planning Co-ordinator	Vacant	
Social Media Co-ordinator	Vacant	
Green Issues	Sue Holloway	07906 938041
Webmaster	Vacant	
Other Members	Brigitte Kreuger	07887 891456
	Jim Pearcey	01784 432805
	Glenda Thisdell	07905 917440
	Sian Williams (after May)	07783 010121

Local Councillors

Runnymede Borough

Sam Jenkins	(Independent)	07539 478951
Isabel Mullens	(Independent)	07562 644057
Sian Williams	(Independent)	07783 010121

Surrey County

Marisa Heath	(Conservative)	07816 117404
Robert King	(Labour)	07506 274314

Website : www.eghamresidentsassociation.co.uk



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