A responsive and effective Council

With a population approaching 133,000, Elmbridge is an attractive place to live, to work and to raise a family and it’s our role as your local Council to keep it that way.

To do this we work with numerous partner organisations such as the Environment Agency, Surrey County Council, Public Health England and Surrey Police, but it all starts with knowing what you the people of Elmbridge value about your Borough – what are your priorities? what is important? what makes you stay? what would make you leave?

In 2017, we asked you exactly this. We asked you to help us formulate the Council’s vision – an ambition for Elmbridge that we would work to achieve over the next five years. A statement that would be broken down and which would form the foundation of the workload of every officer and Councillor at Elmbridge Borough Council.

After months of analysing and collating responses, that vision is:

“A responsive and effective Council, protecting and promoting the interests of residents and businesses and safeguarding our environment, while maintaining a community for all.”

Lofty words indeed but ultimately it places you, our residents and customers, at the heart of everything we do. We will work tirelessly to protect the interests of our people and our place and we are committed to Elmbridge being a community where no one gets left behind.

Within this Annual Report, you will not only read about some of the services we deliver and how we manage our finances against the backdrop of decreasing funding from Government, but you will also read about how we are ensuring that Elmbridge is a community for all and how we are playing our role in safeguarding its future.

As always, I hope you find what you read insightful and if you have any comments please let me know.

Robert Moran
Chief Executive, Elmbridge Borough Council
Elmbridge - Location and geography

- 17 miles south west of central London in north Surrey
- 23,800 acres
- 8 villages and communities of Claygate, Hersham, Hinchley Wood, Long Ditton, Thames Ditton, Oatlands, Oxshott and Stoke D’Abernon
- Close to Central London, Heathrow and Gatwick airports, the M3, M25, M23 and the A3
- 57% of Elmbridge is green belt
- Some areas are at a high risk of flooding

The River Thames flows through the north of the Borough, along with a number of other rivers and waterways.
Character and Environment
Making Elmbridge a sustainable and attractive place

As a responsive and progressive Council we are determined to protect our residents and our environment. We have a role to play in protecting Elmbridge for future generations. Our wonderfully green and thriving Borough sustains our needs and in turn we must do all we can to sustain it.

Your home
Energy efficient lighting, smart meters and insulation all contribute to increasing the sustainability of a home.

We work with Action Surrey, an impartial energy advice centre set up by local councils across Surrey, to provide advice and support to our residents.

From April 2017 to March 2018, Action Surrey received 405 enquiries from our residents about improving the energy efficiency of their homes or renewable energy technologies, such as solar panels. These resulted in the installation of 31 energy saving measures such as loft insulation, cavity wall insulation and boiler repair/replacement.

Have you considered that a chimney balloon can eliminate unwanted draughts if you have an open chimney? What more could you do?
Go to actionsurrey.org to find out.

Your play
Do you cycle instead of driving to the gym? Maybe you have your own water bottle instead of buying a disposable, single use plastic bottle?
Sustainable thinking can be part of all aspects of our lives.

Working with Places for People (the company running the leisure centre, pools and halls on our behalf), we have implemented energy improvement measures such as replacing the lighting system at both Hurst Pool and the pool hall at the Xcel Leisure Complex with LED equivalents which has reduced our energy consumption by 47% and replacing the steam room generator and sauna at the Xcel with a modern, more efficient unit.

Our Countryside Rangers, who help us maintain our amazing woods and commons, carry out estate carpentry to support and enhance the countryside estate, using sustainable wood to produce benches, posts and railings. The next time you are orienteering in Esher Commons and you stop for a rest, consider that the bench was made by Elmbridge countryside rangers!

40 companies including some multi-nationals with shops / offices in Elmbridge - Marks & Spencer, Morrisons and Waitrose - have signed up to this Plastic Pact. Find out more are wrap.org.uk (Source BBC News April 26 2018)
Air pollution impacts us all. It particularly affects the most vulnerable in our society, such as children, older people and those with heart and lung conditions.

While air quality is generally good across Elmbridge, one of the main polluters in Elmbridge is unsurprisingly motor vehicles. Maybe the next generation will all drive electric vehicles but for now we have cars, vans and lorries with which to contend.

Cycling more is an option and we have worked with partners to improve cycle routes in the Borough, as well as increasing the number of bicycle lock ups at both Claygate and Weybridge train stations.

We are also very concerned with the issues of air pollution in relation to the new runway at Heathrow Airport. We are making representations to Government ministers and to Heathrow Airport itself, to ensure issues of air pollution are properly considered as part of the proposed development and we encourage residents to do the same.

For your part, you can turn off your engine at red lights or in heavy traffic to reduce your emissions, you can decide to leave your car at home and check out cycle routes in the Borough and you can keep your vehicle well-tuned and your tires inflated properly to reduce exhaust emissions.

Did you know you can sign-up for a free alert on air pollution when levels in your area increase to a moderate level or above? Visit airalert.info for information on the airAlert app and alerts.

You can read our annual air quality report on our website elmbridge.gov.uk/pollution.

The Xcel Sports Hub which opened in September 2017, uses photo-voltaic cells to reduce CO2 emissions, there is LED lighting in place with motion sensors and taps and showers have compression fittings to save water.

We also have three electric staff pool cars at the Civic Centre for Council business use during the working week.

You told us that you want the countryside and green spaces of Elmbridge protected and we know that means more than grass cutting and flower planting. It means having a commitment to doing everything we can to bring sustainable thinking into our processes and actions.
Elmbridge - Leisure and culture

20 countryside sites covering 550 hectares

Esher Commons designated by the Government as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for their wildlife diversity.

130 sports clubs & groups

90 arts clubs & groups

32 playgrounds

25 conservation areas

130 local listed buildings

770 statutorily listed buildings

6 scheduled monuments

3 historic parks and gardens
You may see Elmbridge Borough Council as the people who pick up your bins and collect council tax but as an organisation at centre of the community we do much more and want to make sure that everyone in Elmbridge feels part of the community; that no one gets left behind.

We do this across a range of services and initiatives including housing support, health and wellbeing, community involvement projects, support for troubled families and financial advice that you may not be aware of.

What makes a good community?

If we asked you what makes a good community, what would you say? You might say somewhere ‘safe’, or somewhere were people come together to support each other, somewhere that offers a sense of belonging or somewhere that allows for a good quality of life - however you define that.

As human beings we need a sense of belonging and that sense of belonging is what connects us to the many relationships we develop. However, more and more people are losing that sense of belonging, that sense of community. Perhaps through ill-health or a change in circumstance or being new to the area, there are people in our community who feel separate and distant, who don’t feel they belong to their community.

There are many organisations in Elmbridge (church groups and charities for example) who are focused on supporting people from all ages, backgrounds and circumstances who don’t feel part of our community. Elmbridge Borough Council is one of those organisations.

We have seven Centres for the Community around the Borough offering a wide range of fun, active and supportive activities, all designed to improve the wellbeing of our residents and to help people feel part of their community. Whether its art and craft classes, ipad training, Zumba classes or organised trips to museums or to the coast, these Centres are a vibrant and thriving asset to our community.

However, the opportunities we offer are not just confined to our Centres for the Community, our healthy walks programme for example, has been popular for 13 years and has provided a safe space for our residents to explore the Borough, stay active and be part of a friendly and welcoming group.

Allotments, tapestry, dance, volunteering, antiques, parent & toddler, choral music, theatre, walking football, morris dancing, swimming - the list goes on and on. Whatever interests you, we know there is a group in the Borough you could be part of… and if there isn’t, let us know and we will work with you to establish one.

We are also very aware that cost should not be prohibitive factor with these services and the fees associated with the groups and services managed by us are kept as low as possible.
**Community Wellbeing**

**Healthier and empowered communities**

**Men in Sheds**

We developed the Men in Sheds project in 2016 to encourage retired men to leave the comfort of their home and come together to build bird boxes, tables and other woodwork commission. The ‘shedders’ meet in Thames Ditton twice a week and are going from strength to strength.

**Financial support**

With the average house price in Elmbridge fast approaching £800K, it could be easy to assume that everyone is Elmbridge is financially independent with little if any money worries. This is of course not the case and we are here to support our residents living with the worry of fuel poverty, the cost of childcare or rent and council tax arrears.

**Leisure activities for all**

As part of our commitment to services for all our residents regardless of their circumstances, we offer the ‘more’ card, a scheme offering discounts on activities at the leisure centres and on our children’s holiday activity schemes.

**Tackling poor housing conditions**

Whilst the vast majority of private sector landlords manage their homes responsibly some residents on lower incomes are vulnerable to rogue landlords providing substandard living conditions. We are working to stamp this out in Elmbridge through enforcement powers to ensure that privately rented homes meet at least the required minimum standard, both in terms of management and maintenance.

**Supporting our residents**

Working with our partners at Citizens Advice, we want to ensure that our residents are made aware of their housing rights and benefit entitlements. We fund Citizens Advice support teams to offer their services through our Centres for the Community.

Universal Credit will start its roll-out in November in Elmbridge. We will be working with partner organisations and specially trained Universal Credit champions to help prepare, advise and support residents who will be impacted. This could include help with internet access and IT skills, budgeting support and/or help opening a bank account.
In 2011, the Government established the Troubled Families Programme to support families experiencing abuse, violence and drug use for example. Its aim was to help reduce crime, get children back to school and to put adults on the path back to work.

In partnership with Spelthorne Borough Council and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and funded by Surrey County Council, Elmbridge established the Family Support team on the back of the Government initiative.

The team brings together experiences professionals from different agencies such as health, education and housing to work together as a ‘team around the family’ to support each family. These families face a range of problems such as domestic abuse, mental health issues, financial problems and housing. The majority of children in the programme are aged 5-14 and the majority of adults are 18-39.

The team works closely with Elmbridge families and seeks to bring together a full range of services to support vulnerable families. Working with schools, social services, health visitors, youth groups etc. the Family Support team put together a network of support to help families to get back on track.

Since 2013, the Family Support Team has helped 537 families.

Our families can look forward to a brighter future due to the intensity of our support.

“things are a million times better”

“we are stronger and more positive”
Affordable homes in Elmbridge

Fundamental to feeling part of a community is having somewhere affordable to live and we are committed to delivering more affordable homes in Elmbridge.

To do this we work with housing associations and others to increase the supply of affordable housing to meet the needs of people in the Borough. In the year to end of March 2018, housing associations delivered 52 affordable homes and in 2018/19, we expect more than 100 to be provided.

In February 2018 EBC agreed to establish a Council-owned housing company. The creation of this housing company will open up new opportunities for affordable housing to be developed in the Borough, by working with our partners and contractors, and enabling us to respond to the needs of the people who live and work in Elmbridge. The new company will start planning for developments in 2018/19.

Current affordable housing developments in Elmbridge include:

- The planning consent for Rivernook Farm in Walton-on-Thames includes 40 affordable dwellings (working with PA Housing) as part of a 93-home scheme.
- Having purchased Albemarle House in Thames Ditton in 2017, we secured planning approval in January 2018 to convert the vacant office building to residential use, and once the refurbishment is completed, the site will provide 5 affordable homes.
- Our redevelopment of Weybridge Hall will provide 5 affordable homes as well as a boutique cinema.
- The redevelopment of former Rydens School, Hersham - 128 affordable homes (of a total of 296 homes) are being built alongside a new school. The first affordable homes were completed Spring 2018. The housing association, A2 Dominion, will provide the affordable housing, half as shared-ownership and half for affordable rent, of different types and sizes. Priority for the affordable homes will be given to households living or working in Elmbridge who are in housing need.
- Orchard Lane, East Molesey - CALA Homes is developing 106 homes (of which 43 are to be affordable) on what was the Imber Court Trading Estate. Thames Valley Housing will be providing the affordable housing, comprising 22 shared-ownership homes and 21 dwellings for affordable rent. Again, priority for the affordable homes will be given to those living or working in Elmbridge, with the Council nominating applicants on our housing register to take up the tenancies. The affordable housing is forecasted to complete in early 2019.
As well as new-build, the Council supports a number of initiatives to make the best use of the existing housing stock. With PA Housing, we launched the Perfect Fit scheme in 2012 to encourage their tenants in homes larger than they needed to downsize, thereby freeing up much-needed larger homes for families in need. Support and incentives of up to £4,000 have resulted in around 150 households downsizing.

We also support Catalyst Housing to run the Elmbridge Homeownership Assistance Scheme, which gives aspiring homeowners and those who are priced out of the market, a route to purchasing a home of their own. The scheme offers equity loans of up to £90,000 to qualifying households towards the cost of purchase. More than 40 households have been helped through this scheme since 2011.

In addition we help to promote the Government’s Help to Buy programme, which offers a range of products designed for those who want to purchase a home of their own, but who can’t afford to buy on the open market. More details are available at helptobuyese.org.uk
Economic Development
Supporting local business

Business grant scheme

The Elmbridge Civic Improvement Fund (ECIF) offers money to Elmbridge businesses to support business growth and boost the local economy.

To date the fund has provided over £1,150,000 to local businesses and projects, with over 240 applications having been approved. Grants of up to 90% are available.

The types of projects that the scheme supports include:

• street furniture and street scene improvements
• improving shop fronts and signage
• promotions and marketing initiatives
• learning and skills or training initiatives
• fat, oil and grease (FOG) interceptors for restaurant and catering premises

Start-up fund

The Elmbridge Start Up Fund is a one off grant up to £1,000 towards start-up costs, which could include marketing costs, purchasing of equipment or anything that would help a business to start operating in Elmbridge.

The fund is only available to businesses that are looking to set up within Elmbridge, or have set up in Elmbridge within the last 6 months.

Elmbridge Business Network

Join the network for free today to access business workshops, networking and funding.

Connect with businesses across Elmbridge and keep up to date with our monthly e-newsletter on business news, events, funding and opportunities across the Borough.

Share your news or offers via the networks regular monthly e-newsletter or via our LinkedIn group where you can post anything business related and engage with companies across the area.
Elmbridge - Business

9,450 active businesses in 2016\textsuperscript{10}

1,420 business start-ups in 2015, 4,880 since 2012\textsuperscript{11}

35,150 (54\%) of working age residents commute out of the Borough to work, the majority to London\textsuperscript{12}

16th in 2016 UK Competitiveness Index\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} Inter Departmental Business Register, 2016, Office for National Statistics

\textsuperscript{11} Table 1.1a & 1.1b, Business Demography, November 2016, Office for National Statistics


\textsuperscript{13} UK Competitiveness Index 2016, 2016, Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University
Let’s Talk Money

Elmbridge Borough Council collects all the council tax for the Borough. In 2017/18, based on a B and D property, £1,556.12 (88%) was collected on behalf of the County Council and Surrey Police and £211.00 (12%) was for the services provided by Elmbridge Borough Council. The services provided by Elmbridge Borough Council include, household waste collection, street cleansing, housing services and the maintenance of the parks and play areas.

The pie charts opposite show the £35.4 million gross cost of running the services provided by Elmbridge Borough Council in 2017/18 and how the expenditure is funded.

A full copy of the Council’s statement of accounts can be found on our website - elmbridge.gov.uk/council/financial-performance-and-annual-accounts
Our Vision and Priorities

A responsive and effective Council, protecting and promoting the interests of residents and businesses and safeguarding our environment, while maintaining a community for all.

Our Priorities support our Vision for 2018/19:-

- **Character and Environment**
  - We will make Elmbridge a sustainable and attractive place.

- **Quality Services**
  - We will work in partnership to ensure services are efficient, effective and offer value for money.

- **Economic Development**
  - We will facilitate economic growth, including improved infrastructure and housing.

- **Community Wellbeing**
  - We will listen to all of our residents and support communities to become healthier, empowered and safe.

This includes –

- Ensuring that we have an up-to-date Local Plan that supports the delivery of sustainable development.
- Support the successful expansion of Universal Credit while minimizing the effects of adverse impacts on our residents.
- Helping to increase the amount of affordable housing through a housing company owned by the Council.