



# Surrey Advertiser

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## Neighbours' surprise as cannabis factory goes up in smoke

A CANNABIS factory was uncovered when a blaze broke out at a house in Hersham on Sunday evening.

Fire crews from Esher, Walton and Sunbury were called to tackle the blaze at the empty property in Albany Road at 10.12pm.

When police arrived on the scene they discovered each room was being used for the cultivation of what are thought

to be cannabis plants.

Police said more than 60 plants were found and subsequently taken away.

An investigation is under way to trace the culprits, with house-to-house enquiries taking place in the area.

Fire crews were at the scene for almost five hours and are carrying out their own investigation into the cause of the blaze.

Watch manager Peter Flanagan, from Esher fire station, said the fire broke out on the ground floor at the back of the property but that the house was unoccupied at the time.

The fire is not being treated as suspicious at this stage.

Bryn Strudwick, fire investigator from Surrey Fire and Rescue, said the blaze was likely to have been caused by

rewiring of electrics.

Neighbours watched as fire engines pulled into the road on Sunday evening.

There was a police presence in the road for most of the following day.

Music teacher Georgina Colwell described the fire engines coming 'silently down the road'.

"There was a thudding noise, which I think was

the firefighters getting the doors down," she said.

"I looked at the chimneys and there was smoke billowing from them.

"There were firemen going in with breathing apparatus. You could see the house must have been hot, as the snow had melted from the roof but next door's had not."

Blair Plant, neighbourhood watch co-ordinator for Albany

Road, said people gathered in the street after seeing smoke and emergency service crews.

Stuart Gray, who lives near the property, added: "You don't expect to see it on your doorstep."

Another neighbour, who preferred not to be named, said he saw smoke billowing and pouring out of the house.

He added: "A friend told me you could see the smoke from

Molesley Road."

Detective Constable Jon Rees said: "Fortunately, on this occasion there was no loss of life, but people could have easily been hurt or killed in the fire.

"Cultivation of cannabis is a criminal offence and the supply of cannabis is something that we treat very seriously indeed.

"Drug misuse is a commu-

nity problem and it is important that anyone with information or suspicions about drugs in their area contacts us so we can take action."

DC Rees also appealed to landlords who own residential properties to be on their guard.

Anyone with information about the cannabis factory is asked to call Surrey Police on 101, quoting the reference number P13020550.

### In brief

#### Brief reprieve for rental stores

ADMINISTRATORS for Blockbuster have said none of Elmbridge's stores will shut at the moment, as it announced the first phase of closures in the UK.

Administrators, Deloitte took over on January 16 and said further closures could be made in the coming weeks, after announcing 129 stores across the country will shut.

Blockbuster stores in Cobham, Walton and Weybridge are not on the first list of planned closures.

Lee Manning, joint administrator, said: "Having reviewed the portfolio with management, the store closure plan is an inevitable consequence of having to restructure the company to a profitable core which is capable of being sold."

The company owns 528 stores in the UK, employing 4,190 staff.

#### Chelsea date for Beckham and son

DAVID Beckham was spotted in Stoke D'Abernon along with his son Brooklyn on Tuesday.

The former England footballer and 13-year-old son were seen at Chelsea Football Club's training ground in Stoke Road as Brooklyn tried out at the Premier League club.

Gordon Ramsay's son Jack also took part in an under-14 session at the London club's training ground on Tuesday.

#### Readers frozen out by boiler

A BROKEN boiler caused Weybridge Library to close early on Tuesday.

The Church Road building closed at 2pm due to a lack of heating. A spokesman for Surrey County Council explained that a new part for the boiler was needed and added: "The temperature reached only 10 degrees so it was too cold for staff and customers alike."

The heating was fixed and the library reopened on Wednesday.

## Town gets green ideas in the bag

### Cobham would like its own currency

by Claire French

A PLASTIC bag free high street, local currency and improved public transport are ideas being put forward to make Cobham the borough's first environmentally friendly town.

During Transition Cobham's first meeting at Church Gate House in Downside Bridge Road on Tuesday, ideas including a Cobham currency and a community garden were put forward to improve the area's sustainability.

Similar groups have already been set up in Dorking, Ashted, Farnham, and Kingston which has more than 900 members.

Speaking after the meeting, Stéphanie Jacometti, 29, founder of Transition Cobham, said a number of ideas are now being looked at.

"It is a voluntary and local initiative and the first meeting was about seeing if people are interested and what they would be interested in doing in terms of projects," Ms Jacometti said.

"It is led by concerned citizens. What we are looking at is solutions and activities in response to climate change - how can we make our community more resilient?"

"One thing we looked at doing is having a community food garden to grow some of our own food in.

"We also talked about plastic bags and seeing how we can stop using them and use the ones we have."

The group also discussed introducing a local currency - something that has been done in some transition towns such as Lewes in East Sussex.

"It is very much a local thing," she said.

"It's about how we are living now and how we can use less. There are a lot of ideas but it was very much a first meeting."

Sir Gerald Acher, chairman of Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust, told the *Surrey Advertiser* he was excited by the ideas put forward at the meeting and his organisation would be supporting the initiative.

"The heritage trust is thrilled that Stéphanie has come forward to try and get some initiatives going in this vitally important area," he said.

"We all want to see ourselves living more efficiently but sometimes it takes something to spur us on."

"There was a complete cross section at the meeting with different interests."

Sir Gerald said the idea could bring Cobham residents closer together, with members of the community sharing skills and working together for a common cause.

"I look forward to using the River Mole to generate some

electricity," he added. Alistair Mann, chairman of Cobham Chamber of Commerce, said his organisation would welcome the ideas put forward.

"I think from the chamber perspective we welcome involvement of anyone and everyone in developing the community of Cobham and Transition Cobham has some welcome ideas about this, from reducing waste and rubbish to improving the local area with a community garden," he said.

"We would be pleased to discuss this in detail and we would also encourage the group members of Transition Cobham to talk to other established community groups like Cobham Heritage and Envisage, who will have similar ideas and motivation about making our community a better place to live and enjoy."

"The real point is that community is about people as well as place, more people being more involved is likely to make a better community for everyone. It's real localism at work."

Transition town groups have been set up all over the world, including 491 listed in Europe, 258 in the USA and 69 in Australia.

To find out more about Transition Cobham and getting involved, and to find out about future meetings, email transitioncobham@gmail.com.



## Call the selectors! Alicia's in fine form

CHILDREN across the borough were delighted this week to receive some unexpected holiday as many schools closed due to snow.

Four inches of snow fell over the weekend. The South West Trains network was heavily disrupted and a revised timetable sent out which affected thousands of commuters for most of the week.

Surrey County Council announced on Tuesday that it had gritted more than 10,000 miles of road - the equivalent distance between London and Bangkok.

The council employed gritter lorry drivers, hand gritting crews and quad bike riders to deal with the weather, clocking up 1,774 hours throughout the 24/7 operation.

Alicia Sheargold bowls a winner at Weybridge cricket green.  
Picture: Grahame Larter.  
(Ref: EN130442\_10)

## Commissioner halts 10 remaining police station sales

THE Police and Crime Commissioner has called a stop to the sale of Esher police station.

Buyers were actively being sought for 10 properties but the sales have been put on hold by Kevin Hurley following a review.

He will now reconsider the buildings' futures, although there are no plans to reopen any of them as police stations.

The sales of stations in Esher, Haslemere, Epsom, Leatherhead, Old Woking,

Banstead, Camberley, Horley, Sunbury and Chertsey have been halted.

However the sale of the station in East Molesey will still go ahead.

Contract negotiations for the East Molesey station and the station in Egham are too far progressed for them to be withdrawn from the process.

The stations were originally put up for sale by Surrey Police Authority in 2010, in an effort to make savings required by government funding cuts.

Police staff were relocated to council offices and other locations.

Hazel Banting, who successfully campaigned for East Molesey police station to be reopened more than a decade ago, said the decision to continue with the sale is wrong.

"Because it is in a conservation area, it will be well watched," she said. "It is very, very sad news and we think it is a dreadful wrong decision because it is in the centre of everywhere."

Following the closure of the East Molesey station, officers were moved to a post within Environment Agency premises at Molesey Lock.

In Esher, a post at the borough's civic centre in Esher was taken up.

A spokesman confirmed Cobham police station in Portsmouth Road, which is due to become home of Cobham Free School, would be unaffected by the change in policy.

Mr Hurley's first action on winning the November elec-

tion was to launch a review.

He said: "The basic logic of the policy remains sound - co-locating police teams with councils has helped improve services to the public. Closing ageing and barely used stations has reduced our maintenance costs."

However, he said that markets had changed considerably and police should be looking at ways to use the assets to create revenue.

"I've been looking at what we can do in terms of joint

development schemes. If there are going to be flats or houses, maybe there could be a small police office at the front."

He said that rather than selling the freehold he would rather offer long-term leases to bring in revenue.

"If someone wants to buy it they can make a lot of money out of it. Surrey Police should see if they can do similar for the public. As a businessman this is a no-brainer for me," he added.

Esher councillor David

Archer questioned why the best value had not always been looked for during the tendering process.

Asked what he thought of Mr Hurley's decision on the Esher station, he said: "It is good, absolutely. They need to get value for money for it."

"I am assuming it will be ground floor retail units with luxury flats above. That is what I think will maximise the profit. I think we have got enough of offices and offices would not realise the value."

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### Chilli

Sandies show curry reduces Plaquin Brain linked to disease (Research UCLA 2005) Cinnamon, a common spices already enjoyed by many Americans appears to lower blood sugar and cholesterol. (Sansam Research Institute, Santa Barbara 2005)



## Village Ceramics

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