



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Bruce McDonald
Leader
Elmbridge Borough Council
Civic Centre
High Street
Esher
KT10 9SD

21 February 2024

Dear Cllr McDonald,

Thank you for belatedly releasing the June 2020 Internal Audit Report regarding Elmbridge Community Support Services following my requests.

I was very concerned to discover in the report that Elmbridge Borough Council knew three and a half years ago that all thirteen areas of community support services inspected in the audit needed improvement, with six of these areas requiring “major improvement”. It is particularly concerning that “Staff Supervision and Training” – the precise reason you gave for closing the centres in November 2023 – was identified as needing “major improvement” in June 2020.

In short, you had three and a half years to take action to improve the services being provided to vulnerable residents, yet nothing was done. This ultimately resulted in the closure of community centres over the festive period in 2023 and into the New Year – a time when vulnerable residents rely on the service the most. Users are still yet to see a full service resume across the board.

In light of this, and frankly for your own position to be tenable, Elmbridge Borough Council should issue an apology to community centre users, staff and volunteers for the failure of the Liberal Democrat administration to maintain a sufficient service at community centres which, ultimately, resulted in their closure.

Secondly, Elmbridge Borough Council must guarantee all centres across the borough will fully reopen, with sufficient staffing delivering a ‘gold standard’ service.

Finally, Elmbridge Borough Council must conduct a genuinely independent review into the level of service being provided at community centres, which should be agreed on a cross-party basis at the Council.

Only by taking these steps can you begin to regain the confidence of the local communities affected.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Dominic Raab".