



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Gill Coates  
Portfolio Holder for Community Care  
Elmbridge Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
High Street  
Esher  
KT10 9SD

2 February 2024

Dear Cllr Coates,

Thank you for the transparency in your response, which is recognised and appreciated, even if it comes late in the day.

From your response, it is clear Elmbridge Borough Council has been running an irresponsible and unlawful level of service by allowing community centres to operate under significant health and safety violations. As the Portfolio Holder responsible for Community Care, I am keen to understand how long you, and Elmbridge Borough Council, have been aware that the most vulnerable people in our communities have been at risk in your care.

I understand an internal audit was carried out on Elmbridge community centres back in June 2020, with an outcome stating that “major improvement needed”. In the interest of transparency, I would request Elmbridge Borough Council release this audit. If this is not willingly released, I will request it under freedom of information, since it is manifestly in the public interest to understand how long our local community centres have been operating at this inadequate level.

All Elmbridge Centres for the Community operated a safe and functioning service when the Liberal Democrats and Resident Associations took control of Elmbridge Borough Council in 2016. It is under your leadership that these centres have deteriorated to a dangerous level, resulting in closures across the Christmas period, partial re-opening, and targeted closures (under your published Local Plan). This is wholly unacceptable. On behalf of the many residents who rely on these much-valued services, I now urgently request that you set out a full and detailed plan to share with residents that will see the return to the safe and lawful standard you inherited from the Conservative administration in 2016.

It is also the Liberal Democrat and Resident Association led Council that has listed six out of seven of our local community centres on the Local Plan for housing. As I am sure you are aware, this has led to widespread concern about whether the centres will be permanently closed. In order to provide clarity and reassurance that permanent closures will not happen again, it is incumbent on Elmbridge Borough Council to commit to maintaining the previous levels of service and ensure all locations with community centres continue to directly benefit. It is paramount that no matter what changes occur at the centres, the same level of services will continue to be provided for elderly and vulnerable users.

Under your watch, the situation at our precious community centres has reached crisis level. It is the direct result of clear and serious mismanagement under the leadership of the Council, and I am therefore now formally requesting that Elmbridge Borough Council commission an independent review of all Elmbridge Community Centres. In order to provide confidence in the full plan to bring services back to a full and legal level, it is essential that an external,

independent provider, such as the Health and Safety Executive or another independent body, reviews and scrutinises your plan and the level of service being provided to vulnerable people.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Damien Reay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D' and a stylized 'R'.