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Busy Epsom and Ewell Borough Council next meets December

29 July 2025



At a busy half-hour meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council on 22nd July, councillors confronted some of the borough's most pressing issues, including the future of Horton Cemetery, the lack of social housing, and the need to reinvigorate scrutiny of Council actions.

Calls to Honour the Dead at Horton Cemetery

Cllr **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) raised a poignant question about the fate of those buried in the long-neglected Horton Cemetery. "My belief is that the culture and heritage of having the Epsom cluster – five large Victorian institutions in which people lived and died – should be remembered," she said. "9,000 people died and are buried in a cemetery in the borough. Will the Chair of Community and Wellbeing do something towards helping remember the people who died there and respecting their resting places?"

Responding, Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) said he shared her sympathies. "It's a place that we should remember and celebrate," he said. "If I can do anything to address the concerns that the councillor raised, I'll do so."

Social Housing: "Three Houses in Five Years is Derisory"

Cllr Chinn also delivered a sharp rebuke of the borough's performance on affordable housing. "It's not going to happen until this Council starts building homes for social rent," she declared. "Can we have all the different departments working towards finally building some homes for social rent within the borough? Three houses in five years is derisory."

Cllr Woodbridge admitted the situation was "particularly disappointing" and noted the Council is not a housing stockholder, which "limits its ability to deliver social housing directly." However, he pointed to the local plan as a potential tool to unlock affordable development. "It won't be enough ever, but it will be something," he said. He added that homelessness prevention would remain a key focus, with increased use of the housing prevention grant to strengthen support teams.

Audit and Scrutiny Committee Faces Questions Over Effectiveness

Discussion over the **Audit and Scrutiny Committee's annual report** revealed dissatisfaction with the body's performance.

"The Audit and Scrutiny Committee has carried out limited scrutiny during the past year," Cllr Chinn noted, quoting the report. "From my memory, that's exactly the same last paragraph as it was a year ago. Can I please ask what will happen to change it so that next year there is some proper, true scrutiny?"

Cllr **James Lawrence** (LibDem College), former member of the committee, agreed there was room to grow: "I do think there are good changes occurring. There is a lot more to go… We would like scrutiny to go further." He acknowledged that the committee's new chair Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) was making good progress.

Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative – Horton) took a firmer stance, calling out enforcement as a glaring omission: "There is a rainforest of information from residents and councillors with their issue on enforcement. It has been identified as a weakness in our local authority. I don't think this report reflects the issues that I believe exist."

Cllr **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) raised concerns about how scrutiny is blocked by bureaucracy: "If the committee is always saying, well, this is just too much trouble… how are things going to be any different?"

Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Steve McCormick accepted the criticisms, noting that scrutiny work had been limited but improvements were underway. "We do have a work plan in place," he said, citing a planning enforcement audit and a forthcoming September item for scrutiny. "If we do have an item to scrutinise, we will find the resource to get that done."

Alex Coley's Motion on Council Property Referred to Committee

Cllr **Alex Coley** (Independent – Ruxley) and Cllr **James Lawrence** (LibDem College) sought to move a motion that included proposals to urgently dispose of 66 High Street, 70 East Street and any other underperforming Council owned commercial properties, and the capital receipts to be placed in Capital Reserves.

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However, the details were not debated, as the Council voted to refer the motion to the Strategy and Resoucres Committee instead.

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The next Full Council meeting is scheduled for 9th December 2025.

Image: Mayor Robert Leach and deputy-Mayor Lucie McIntyre of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council bow heads in prayer with the Chaplain. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council – YouTube.

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