4th May Surrey goes to the polls

Election day in Surrey takes place on May 4 this year but because of the way the county is broken up, not every poll will be the same. Surrey operates under a two-tier system, so there is a county-wide council that sits atop of 11 boroughs and districts. On May 4 it's the boroughs and districts that go to the polls.

But even the boroughs and districts are holding different types of election. Surrey Heath, Spelthorne, **Epsom and Ewell**, and Guildford will have all out elections, where every councillor, in every ward will be decided on election day. The same process is also happening in Mole Valley and Waverley, although this is because of boundary changes.

In Mole Valley there will be 13 new wards, down from 21, represented by 39 seats rather than the previous 41. Waverley too has undergone major changes and instead of returning 57 members there will now only be 50 councillors. The remaining five boroughs and districts. Elmbridge, Tandridge, Runnymede, Reigate and Banstead, and Woking will be going out in thirds.

This year will also be the first time people will be required to show photo ID to vote in person.

In previous elections, residents of Woking have taken part in the Government's photo ID pilot tests. The law was changed last year so that voters have to show photo ID before being issued a ballot paper in polling stations for general, local, police and crime commissioner elections, or any future referendum.

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Register to vote deadline for elections

The deadline to register to vote in May's local elections is approaching. Those who need to register, including those who have recently moved house, need to do so before midnight on April 17.

Local elections are being held on May 4 across the country, including for councils across Surrey.

All 11 district and borough councils in Surrey are holding elections, some for a third of their councillors and some for the whole council. There is also a by-election for Surrey County Council in the Walton South and Oatlands division, following the resignation of Cllr Tony Samuels.

Councils have started sending out poll cards to voters, anyone who has not received one or who has recently moved may not be registered to vote.

Registration should take around five minutes on the gov.uk website, and though people may be asked for their National Insurance number, it is possible to register without one.

Registering anonymously is also possible for those who do not want their name to appear on the electoral register.

May's elections will be the first where all voters will need to bring photo ID to vote, with only certain forms being accepted. Those without the necessary photo ID, which includes passports, driving licence and an Oyster 60+ Card, can apply for a free voter ID document.

While online registration is the quickest way, voters can also print off a paper form to be sent to their local Electoral Registration Office, which is the relevant district or borough council.

To check if they are registered to vote, voters also need to contact the electoral services team at their local council.

Voters must be aged 18 or over on election day and be a British, Irish, European Union citizen, or Commonwealth citizen with permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need permission, as well as being registered to vote.

Epsom and Ewell Times adds: For quidance on photo ID read our report HERE "No Photo, No Vote".

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Surrey's leader's life pledge for brain tumour research

Surrey County Council's leader said his focus "for the rest of his life" will be fulfilling a promise made to his daughter before she died to fundraise for brain tumour research.

Emily Oliver was 21 when she died, 18 months after being diagnosed with a diffuse midline glioma, and after seeking medical advice "from across the world".

Her father, county council leader Councillor **Tim Oliver**, said the fund the family set up for her 21st birthday was now nearing £150,000 but vowed to continue to raise awareness and money.

He told the LDRS: "We promised Emily that we would do all that we could. We promised her that we would fundraise for what she wanted, specific research into her type of high grade glioblastoma. Hers was a very, very rare form.

"That is our focus and that will be our focus for the rest of our lives, to raise as much as we can and to find a research team that will look at predominantly her type [of brain tumour]."

Cllr Oliver said brain tumours didn't get the level of attention or funding as other types of cancer, because the number of cases was not as high, but said they were the biggest cause of cancer death for under 40s.

He said he and his wife, Debi, hoped to find a specific research project in the near future to give the money to. "It's really important to us that we continue to keep that alive and deliver on that promise to her," he added.

The council leader also has his sights set on creating a Surrey-wide bereavement service and has been having conversations about it with the chief executive at Surrey Heartlands and Surrey hospices.

He said "pulling together" the different organisations that offer support for both before and after death would help people know where to turn.

Cllr Oliver added: "I think that would be a great thing for people to be able to know where to go." He also praised the work of the **Brain Tumour Charity** and the support they give to families on what their journey may look like and understanding what their diagnosis actually meant.

He will take part in the **Princess Alice Hospice**'s "Talk the Walk" event in April which aims to get men, in particular, to talk about bereavement.

Debi said: "The pain of her loss is with us every minute of every day, but Emily was passionate about fundraising to find a cure for brain tumours, and I absolutely know she would be really pleased that what she had started is being continued."

Cllr Oliver also called on the government to deliver on its promise of delivering £40million for research into brain tumours.

An inquiry by the **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Brain Tumours** was launched in 2021, and said that as of January 25 2023, just £15 million had been awarded since June 2018.

For advice and support from the Brain Tumour Charity, you can call its Support and Info Line on 0808 800 0004 or go to the website at: https://www.thebraintumourcharity.org/

Image Tim Oliver credit Surrey Live

County resists nimbies against children's home

Resident objections to a new children's home and apartments for care leavers have been labelled "petty" as councillors approved the plans.

The former Adult Education Centre in Dene Street, Dorking can now be converted to provide accommodation for young people in the home and in "trainer flats" which bridge the gap before young people move into independent housing.



Plans for new children\'s home in Dene Street, Dorking. From Design and Access Statement. Credit: SCC

A meeting of Surrey County Council's planning and regulatory committee on Wednesday (March 29) unanimously approved the plans, which will include the construction of a new two-storey building on part of the site. But the meeting also heard that of 48 letters received at the time of the meeting, 24 were objecting to the plans.

Three were in support, citing reasons such as the need for suitable accommodation in Surrey and being glad to see a vacant site used, while 21 letters were commenting on the application.

Councillor **Ernest Mallett** MBE (Residents' Association and Independent, West Molesey) described residents' objections as "petty" when he spoke on the application. He said: "I don't quite know what the population are thinking. They seem to be objecting as if this was some sort of prison for about 100 people. I can't really understand the objections."

Cllr Mallett added that on a site visit he thought the plans were "an excellent use of the building".

The development, which will be owned and run by Surrey County Council, raised concern among residents about rats being displaced and the need for pest control in neighbouring properties, and the authority being "poor at managing children's home".

These, along with concerns about the consultation carried out and the protection of the "well-being and mental health of existing residents" were put under the heading "other" by officers, stating in the report they were not material planning considerations for the application.

An officers' report said: "The majority of objections were concerning the need to protect and enhance the site's nesting swifts."

Officers confirmed ten "swift bricks", which allow birds to nest in them, would be added to the design, while the birds' current access to the roof of the building would be maintained during building work.

Along with the concerns about swifts, residents raised issues including the design being out of keeping with the residential area, worries about anti-social behaviour, noise and disturbance, and smells from "industrialist catering".

Cllr **Catherine Powell** (Farnham Residents, Farnham North), who sits on the council's corporate parenting board, said the new facilities were "absolutely necessary" and that she "100 per cent" supported the application.

She told the meeting: "Clearly the building is in a state of decay and it puts it back into a useful purpose."

Officers confirmed the work would be done in two phases, with the children's home and "no wrong door" facility being built first, followed by changes to the existing building to develop the trainer flats.

The Children's Home would be for a maximum of four residents and 2 staff, while the "no wrong door" facility, also in the new building, would accommodate two emergency residents and one member of staff.

Top image: Dorking Children\'s home approved in Dene Street, Dorking. Current view from Google Street View

Middling rate for Epsom and Ewell Council Tax

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is slap in the middle of the 11 Surrey boroughs table of band D council tax charges for 2023/2024. The difference between the highest and lowest is £78.20 per annum. As reported by The Epsom and Ewell Times it should be no surprise to find debt ridden Woking having the highest. Emily Coady-Stemp LDRS reports on the full Surrey County wide picture and Epsom and Ewell Times produces the table.

	Borough	D band Tax
1	Runnymede Borough Council	£2,170.57
2	Guildford Borough Council	£2,178.06
3	Mole Valley District Council	£2,184.84
4	Waverley Borough Council	£2,187.29
5	Spelthorne Borough Council	£2,201.79
6	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council	£2,205.25
7	Tandridge District Council	£2,223.53
8	Surrey Heath Borough Council	£2,226.30
9	Elmbridge	£2,229.00
10	Reigate and Banstead	£2,235.36
11	Woking Borough Council	£2,248.77.

Related reports:

Budget Report: More council tax for Epsom and Ewell

Epsom and Ewell Council raises tax 2.99%

2023/2024: average of £50 more to pay Surrey County Council

Council tax bills for Surrey residents will go up from April 1 after authorities confirmed their budgets for the coming financial year. Surrey County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and each of the county's 11 districts and boroughs, confirmed their increases separately last month, with council tax bills and collection being the responsibility of the districts and boroughs.

The Police and Crime Commissioner, Lisa Townsend, confirmed a rise of £15 per year for residents amid an increase in Surrey Police's fuel bills of more than £500,000.

While Surrey County Council, which is responsible for adult social care as well as services including road repairs and schools, increased its share by £50 per year on Band D homes.



See below for a breakdown of the council tax bands in your area.

Elmbridge Borough Council

The average Band D property in Elmbridge will pay £2,229.00, except in the Claygate parish, where the bill for a Band D home will be £2,243.15.

Band A: £1,486.00 Band B: £1,733.66 Band C: £1,981.33 Band D: £2,229.00 Band E: £2,724.34 Band F: £3.219.67 Band G: £3,715.00 Band H: £4,458.00

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Residents in Surrey's smallest borough will see council tax bills of £2205.25 from April, for the average Band D property.

Band A: £1,470.17 Band B: £1,715.19 Band C: £1,960.22 Band D: £2,205.25 Band E: £2,695.31 Band F: £3,185.36 Band G: £3,675.42 Band H: £4,410.50

Guildford Borough Council

The bill for Band D households in Guildford will be £2178.06, excluding parish and town councils. For Band D the parish share ranges from no extra charge in Wisley to £2291.71 for a Band D property in Normandy.

Band A: £1,452.04 Band B: £1,694.04 Band C: £1,936.05 Band D: £2,178.06 Band E: £2,662.07 Band F: £3,146.08 Band G: £3,630.1 Band H: £4,356.11

Mole Valley District Council

In Mole Valley, the average Band D property will pay £2,184.84, except where there are parish councils. In Charlwood, with the highest parish council precept, residents in a Band D property will pay £2,259.09.

Band A: £1456.56 Band B: £1699.32 Band C: £1,942.08 Band D: £2,184.84 Band E: £2,670.36 Band F: £3,155.88 Band G: £3,641.4 Band H: £4,369.68

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

A Band D home in Reigate and Banstead will pay £2,235.36 from April, while residents in the Horley Town Council Area will pay £2,283.12 and in Salfords and Sidlow will pay £2,265.08.

Band A: £1,490.24 Band B: £1,738.61 Band C: £1,986.98 Band D: £2,235.36



Band E: £2,732.11 Band F: £3,228.85 Band G: £3,725.60 Band H: £4,470.72

Runnymede Borough Council

Runnymede residents in Band D property will pay £2,170.57.

Band A: £1,447.05 Band B: £1,688.22 Band C: £1,929.39 Band D: £2,170.57 Band E: £2,652.92 Band F: £3,135.27 Band G: £3,617.62 Band H: £4,341.14

Spelthorne Borough Council

Residents in a Band D property will pay £2,201.79 for their council tax in Spelthorne.

Band A: £1,467.86 Band B: £1,712.50 Band C: £1,957.14 Band D: £2,201.79 Band E: £2,691.08 Band F: £3,180.36 Band G: £3,669.65 Band H: £4,403.58

Surrey Heath Borough Council

Surrey Heath's amount for a Band D property is £2226.30, plus the amounts paid to parish councils throughout the borough. Bands listed below are for the most expensive parish, in Bisley.

Band A: £1,523.45 Band B: £1,777.35 Band C: £2,031.26 Band D: £2,285.17 Band E: £2,792.99 Band F: £3,300.8 Band G: £3,808.62 Band H: £4,570.6

Tandridge District Council

In Tandridge, a Band D property's council tax will be £2,223.53 2023/24. Parishes in the district range from no additional charge, to £2,311.97 in the most expensive, Crowhurst.

Band A: £1,482.36 Band B: £1,729.41 Band C: £1,976.47 Band D: £2,223.53 Band E: £2,717.65 Band F: £3,211.76 Band G: £3,705.89 Band H: £4,447.06

Waverley Borough Council

A Band D home, excluding parish council charges, is set at £2,187.29 in Waverley. The most expensive parish bills are in Godalming, and shown below.

Band A: £1,530.45 Band B: £1,785.52

Band C: £2,040.60 Band D: £2,295.67 Band E: £2,805.82 Band F: £3,315.97 Band G: £3,826.12 Band H: £4,591.34

Woking Borough Council

In Woking, residents in a Band D home will pay £2,248.77.

Band A: £1,499.18 Band B: £1,749.04 Band C: £1,998.90 Band D: £2,248.77 Band E: £2,748.50 Band F: £3,248.22 Band G: £3,747.95 Band H: £4,497.54

Spelthorne's thorny property problems spelt out

Following the report on Woking's woes we have Emily Coady-Stemp from LDRS report on another sister Surrey borough's woes over property investments:

Spelthorne's former leader says "hand on heart" he still believes the borough council's commercial property investments were "utterly legal". The councillor said the authority had taken legal advice on the decision to purchase the buildings but raised concerns about other councils with high borrowing costs.

Image: Spelthorne Borough Council audit committee on March 23, 2023. Credit: Emily Coady-Stemp

Councillor Ian Harvey (United Spelthorne Group, Sunbury East), who was leader of Spelthorne Borough Council at the time three commercial properties were bought outside of the borough in 2017/18, was responding to a public interest report carried out by its auditors. He told a meeting of the borough council's audit committee on Thursday (March 23) his first question at the time the possibility of buying properties came up was: "Is it legal?"

He said the advice given at the time by the council's KC was that it was legal, and that the decision had "repeatedly been determined to be legal subsequently".

The report, publicly released in November, claimed the council had "acted unlawfully" in its decision to buy properties outside of the borough, and set out five recommendations for the authority.

At a December meeting of the council, councillors agreed the recommendations set out in the KPMG report, and Thursday's meeting was an update on the action plan to come about from that.

The current council leader, Cllr John Boughtflower (Conservative, Ashford East) said in December the council "should not have any difficulties" accepting the recommendations, because of changes to processes at the council and issues that had been addressed since the purchases.

Cllr Harvery asked auditors at Thursday's meeting, who were presenting their report into the 2017/18 accounts, if they had assessed the council's risks "compared to some other spectacularly investing local authorities for example, Slough, Croydon, Thurrock". He also asked about comparisons to Woking Borough Council, where the current administration has warned an effective bankruptcy may be declared, saying they had "borrowed more than we have without any surety of repayment".

Later in the meeting Cllr Harvey said: "I can say hand on heart that we were assured, and I still believe, it is utterly legal. And if what we did was illegal then what a lot of other councils have done, and spectacularly failed, at was far, far more illegal." He claimed the difference in legal opinions was because KPMG had "relied on a much more junior barrister within the same chambers who came up with a dissenting view".

Cllr Lawrence Nichols (Liberal Democrat, Halliford and Sunbury West) said though the advice was taken from a "very well

qualified QC", it amounted to 19 words of legal advice for more than £200million of expenditure in 2017/18. He also questioned the diversity of the council's property portfolio and the advice sought from how to manage commercial properties. He told the meeting: "I do think we out to be more realistic about diversification. We are in the office business, whether it's an engineering company or a dental practice, that's not the issue. It's the office market we're in, so that's our diversification risk."

In response to an expected £60m of rental income dropping to £46m for next year, which Cllr Nichols said was a "massive change of direction", the council's chief accountant Paul Taylor said £7m rent guarantee income had been released and would be going into the council's revenue budget.

The meeting heard that a new group head of assets had recently started at the council and that a "fully worked up action plan" would come to the committee's next meeting in July. Spelthorne's chief executive, Daniel Mouawad, said the nearly half a decade turnaround in the audit report for 2017/18, the last stage of which was the public interest report, was "by any measure" a "remarkably poor turnaround". But he added that nearly a year's delay could be "directly attributed to the actions of one individual Spelthorne councillor" which was currently being investigated under the members code of conduct.

When asking a question on this individual, Cllr Harvey was cut off by the chair, his wife Cllr Helen Harvey (United Spelthorne Group, Sunbury East), though officers did confirm they would revert with a response on the cost of the delay caused by the councillor concerned.

KPMG representatives confirmed an "adverse conclusion" would be issued in relation to the "value for money arrangements" for the 2017/18 accounts, the same as in the 2016/17 accounts where recommendations and weaknesses raised were "still in place in the 2017/18 period".

The meeting also heard that a review into the council's borrowing carried out by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities should be coming to an end this week

In response to a public question on the review, the chair said the council was not "privy to the terms of reference or have any expectations to receive the final report within any given period".

It was hoped this report would also come to the next committee meeting in July, though Terry Collier, the council's deputy chief executive, said it had been hoped there may be a draft report available by Thursday's meeting.

Education assessment delays making parents sick

A mother claims Surrey County Council "makes her sick" as she says delays to assessing her son's special educational needs are causing "a lot of stress".

At a protest held outside the authority's Reigate headquarters, the mother, along with others, called for change at the council in how Surrey's children with additional needs are treated.

Image: Parents protesting outside Surrey County Council headquarters in Woodhatch Place, Reigate. Credit: Emily Coady-Stemp

Anna Sutherland, protesting for the fifth time outside the Woodhatch Place building, said parents being sent down the tribunal route, as they are if they want to appeal against a council's assessment of their children, "put a lot on families".

She claimed the education, health and care plan (EHCP) issued to her 11-year-old son by the county council was "unlawful" but that because she knew the law, and knew what he was entitled to, she would "get there in the end". Ms Sutherland told the LDRS: "This makes me ill. Surrey council make me sick."

With her 9-year-old daughter's EHCP also up for an annual review soon, Ms Sutherland feared she may have two tribunals on her hands. On previous protests, cabinet members on Surrey County Council have come out to talk to the parents present, but did not on Tuesday (March 21).

When the group of parents decided to attend the council meeting taking place that morning, they were told they could only do so if they left their placards in the building's reception downstairs.

Ms Sutherland said many families with children with additional needs had "a lot to deal with in the first place" and additional chasing of EHCPs, tribunals and school places was "a lot to put on families". Saying many families also had to work, may also have neuro-diverse conditions themselves and the "huge impact" on a parent's mental health of going through a child's diagnoses she said the parents at the protest were representing a "much huger group". She added: "On top of the stress they put on you, then having the additional strength or the additional drive to protest, a lot of families just can't do that."

Clare Powdrill said delays to the EHCP process for her son had led to her spending more than £30,000 in two tribunals, both conceded by the council the day before the hearing. She said: "I am protesting because Surrey County Council have seriously let my son down." Another parent, Charlotte Lewis, also said EHCP processes had been delayed "at every step" and timelines not been met by Surrey County Council. She said: "Many parents are being forced into a lengthy and expensive appeals process which is usually won but can delay children's access to an education by years in some cases."

A council spokesperson said: "We are not able to comment on the details of any individual children, but we can confirm that all current EHCPs were updated in line with statutory timescales to enable children's transition to the next phase of their education. If a parent is unhappy with the content of their child's updated plan, we would urge them to contact their case officer as soon as possible, so that any issues can be resolved.

"We always aim to resolve disagreements without families needing to go through a tribunal process, however, they do have the right to do so, and if it remains the view of the local authority that the latest education health and care plan accurately reflects a child's needs and the provision required to meet their needs, then, in these rare cases the tribunal is the appropriate route to resolve the dispute."

Surrey Council's ULEZ talks ongoing with TfL

Surrey councillors have confirmed written communications are ongoing with Transport for London over the impact of the ULEZ expansion. Surrey County Councillor **Robert Evans** (Labour, Stanwell and Stanwell Moor) asked cabinet members at a full council meeting on Tuesday (March 21) to confirm that the mitigations the council was calling for would be followed up with the chancellor.

He claimed previous attempts to extend the Transport for London (TfL) Oyster card zone 6 in several Surrey boroughs had "floundered" because central government would not underwrite potential losses to the train companies.

Image: Ultra Low Emission Zone, Stonebridge Park. Credit: Will Durrant/LDRS

Cllr Evans called on Surrey's cabinet to "work with TfL and the Mayor of London to make sure that Surrey residents get the health benefits of this, but don't get negative impacts if ULEZ comes into operation."

The zone, which sees drivers of older, more polluting cars charged £12.50 per day to enter it, is due to expand to cover all of greater London from August.

The ULEZ currently covers central London and its expansion will see it border several Surrey districts and boroughs including Spelthorne, Elmbridge and **Epsom**.

In response to TfL's plans to extend the zone, Elmbridge councillors previously called for the Oyster Card Zone 6 to be expanded further, highlighting the difference between public transport in London and in Surrey.

Cllr Evans said schemes in Bristol, Coventry, Birmingham and elsewhere had seen the government "pick up the bill for a scrappage scheme".

The council's cabinet member for transport, infrastructure and growth, Cllr **Matt Furniss**, (Conservative, Shalford) confirmed face-to-face meetings had been requested with TfL, but said he was "disappointed to say it only took the threat of legal action to get transport London to respond." He said the council did "ask the government regularly for additional funding" and would be talking to them about the impact of the planned extension.

Meeting documents showed a virtual meeting took place between with TfL, county council officers and Elmbridge Borough Council officers on February 21.

A written response was received from TfL as a follow up to the meeting on March 7, which was being looked at and a response drafted from the council. The documents said: "The council is committed to delivering a greener future, but it must be done in a practical and sustainable way.The impact of an expanded ULEZ on many Surrey residents and businesses will be significant, and we will not stand by and watch that happen with no mitigation offered."

During the meeting, Cllr Evans also reminded the scheme had been brought about by Boris Johnson, during his time as Mayor of London. Former Prime Minister Mr Johnson was London Mayor between 2008 and 2016, and announced the introduction of the world's first ULEZ in London in 2015. It was introduced from April 2019.

A written response was received from TfL as a follow up to the meeting on March 7, which was being looked at and a response drafted from the council.

Cllr **Buddhi Weerasinghe** (Conservative, Lower Sunbury and Halliford) said he was supporting a campaign by residents to get Ashford and Sunbury stations, among others in Spelthorne, added to Zone 6. He also highlighted the needs of the expanding Shepperton Studios that he said had been put in a letter to government regarding its work force needing to travel to and from the studios by train.

On the Hunt for pothole repairs

The Government will give an additional £3.7m for pothole repairs in Surrey. But one Surrey councillor is calling for ministers to "go further" and change the way road funding is allocated from Westminster.

Tuesday's budget, delivered by South West Surrey MP **Jeremy Hunt**, announced an additional £200million for 2023/24 across the country for pothole repair.

Surrey County Council's deputy cabinet member for levelling up, Councillor **Rebecca Paul** (Conservative, Tadworth, Walton & Kingswood) said she was "delighted" the Government had recognised more funding was needed in Surrey for road repairs. She told the LDRS: "The recent spate of potholes across our county affects every single one of us, so this additional money is much welcomed." She called on the Government to "go further and give serious consideration" to changing how highways maintenance funding is allocated to take into account traffic volume.

Cllr Paul delivered a petition to Downing Street in June 2022 calling for funding for road repairs to be allocated by usage rather than the current formula which looks at the length of roads. She said: "This would result in a fairer allocation of funds so that Surrey Highways is better able to address the backlog."

Roads minister Richard Holden said the cash could mean another 75,000 potholes repaired. He also praised Surrey's lane rental scheme, which he said the county had been "at the forefront" of rolling out. The scheme, rolled out in 2021, charges companies for works which cause delay at peak times on the county's busiest roads.

Mr Holden said the scheme minimised delays from roadworks taking place because they were more often carried out at the same time, and this also reduced damage to roads. He told the LDRS he wanted to see that rolled out more across the country.

On Cllr Paul's calls for "fairer funding" from central government, Mr Holden said it was "swings and roundabouts" because a lot of the strategic road network, paid for out of national taxation, was in Surrey. He added: "I'm always willing to listen to local concerns about these issues. I think it's vitally important that we do get the balance right when it comes to road funding."

A motion will be brought to a meeting of Surrey County Council on Tuesday, calling for the adoption of a "Vision Zero Safe System" and setting a target date for zero fatalities and severe injuries on Surrey's roads. **Will Forster** (Lib Dem, Woking South) will bring forward a motion saying: "Road collision statistics in Surrey have hardly changed over the last ten years. In 2021 24 people were killed and 647 were seriously injured. The effects of a road traffic collision can have a physical, emotional, social and economic impact on everyone involved. In financial terms the cost of road collisions in Surrey was approximately £250 million in 2021."

A Surrey County Council spokesperson said: "While any additional funding for potholes is welcomed, as highlighted by the Annual Local Authority Roads Maintenance survey in 2022, the condition of roads across the UK would require a one-time catch up cost (over and above what authorities already receive) of £12.64bn. The current commitment from government for English roads funding prior to the announcement in this week's budget was £2.7bn in total between 2022 and 2025, therefore the funding allocations from government still fall far short of the needs of the UK roads.

"However Surrey County Council recognises the need to invest in our roads and so is investing additional funds beyond government grants and will be spending £188m on improving and maintaining our roads and pavements over the next five years."

From custody to caring - new plans for Epsom's old

nick.

Epsom Police Station has been closed since 2012 along with its several cells for detainees. The Surrey Police are situated in offices in The Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom, where there are no custody facilities for arrested suspects. LDRS reports on the latest plans for the old building.

A former Surrey police station and the neighbouring ambulance station could be turned into a 96-bed care home. Plans for the Church Street site, in Epsom, include a basement car park, croquet lawns and specialist care for people with dementia.

But the The Epsom Civic Society has raised concerns about "the proliferation of specialist elderly accommodation within the borough" while there is an "outstanding need" for housing, especially affordable homes. A letter to the council regarding the application also highlighted the "importance of supporting the vitality and viability of Epsom town centre".

Image. Left: Old station - Google street view. Right: Plans for former Epsom Police Station in Church Street. Credit: Hunters

The society also raised concerns about protecting trees on the site, necessary measures being put in place for demolition works which may involve asbestos removal, and a possible flooding risk associated with the basement car park.

The police station part of the site was granted planning permission in 2020 for a residential development with 29 apartments located in two blocks, but this excluded the ambulance station. While a since withdrawn application was also made in 2019 for a 60 apartment extra care scheme, which saw some local opposition but no objections from the statutory or council consultees, according to documents submitted by the applicant.

The 1960s police station building has been empty since 2012, and could now be replaced with the three to five-storey blocks of a CQC registered residential care home which would offer 24-hour care.

According to planning documents, the 96 bedrooms would provide nursing, residential and dedicated dementia care, and would have an ensuite wet room.

The applicant said: "The care home will be capable of caring for residents of all dependency levels, including those who require dementia care within a specialist unit."

The Church Street Conservation Area, which contains contains 20 listed buildings including the grade II St Martin's Church, The Cedars and Ebbisham House, wraps around the south and west ends of the site.

Plans show the home would include gardens with trees planted and "activity lawns" for residents to include bowling, croquet, gardening.