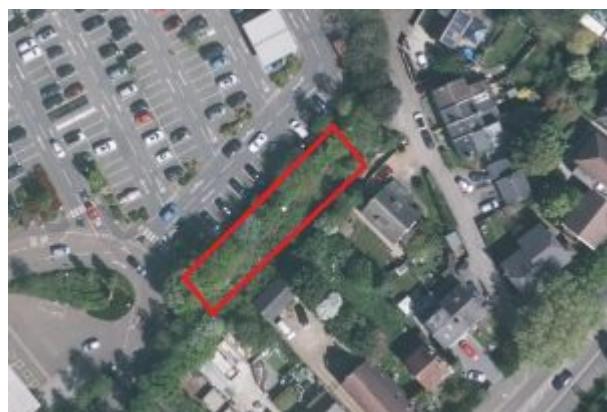




Epsom Housing Project in Access Gridlock

4 May 2025



Imagine starting a new homes project and not being able to drive onto the site. That could be the reality for one Surrey council which has got into a road row with neighbours over access to a street.

Residents down Fairview Road claim Epsom and Ewell Borough Council are not legally allowed to drive into the old builder's yard at the end of their road. The council has launched a scheme to place three 'shipping container' homes on the land to provide temporary accommodation for families on the housing register. The plans were agreed in November last year.

"It's a real David and Goliath situation," said Debbie Ransome, who has together with the neighbours challenged the council's right to enter the site, by Fairview Road. She argued that it is wrong for the council to claim they have the access rights when she believes they are not entitled to use the road.

HM Land Registry has accepted the resident's application to block the council's right of way, and is now considering the claim. A spokesperson for Land Registry said: "Unfortunately, it is beyond HMLR's remit to comment on whether or not the Council are legally allowed to access their land from Fairview Road."

She has accused the council of "bullying" and "intimidating" behaviour as residents have challenged their right to access to the site- and now Ms Ransome is heading to tribunal. "I'm a single parent, I pay my taxes," she said

Ms Ransome, who lives next to the site in Epsom, explained herself and the neighbours have also allegedly received a solicitor's letter from the council threatening police action if they continue 'disrupting' the development.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council state they intend to fight the claim as they head towards tribunal with Ms Ransome. The local authority state it rejects the allegations and said it is following the process laid out by the Land Registry.

An unusual situation, Fairview Road is a private street with a mystery owner. So the council (and future occupants) are not technically allowed to drive down the road to get to the former builder's yard- even though the local authority owns the site.

In September 2024, the council applied for a right of way on the site based on the long-term use from the previous occupant, Mr Adrian Giles MBE. Under a legal tool known as 'lost modern grant', people are able to claim if they have continually used the access route for 20 years without permission or by using force.

But Ms Ransome is disputing Mr Giles was in a position to claim access, saying she believes he forfeited access when he moved his business from the road some time ago. She also claims Mr Giles' late father agreed to sublet the land to a roofer - not part of the rent agreement with the council - and gained money from it.

Documents and emails seen by the author show Mr Giles admitting and apologising to the council he had not told them about the roofer subletting the land in his Land Registry statement. The roofer reportedly left the site in 2014, and the land was given back to the council in 2016.

Calling the council's actions as "deplorable", Ms Ransome said it is "completely wrong" and "not fair on the residents" that the council would try to get access to the site this way. She claimed: "They have got the [access] by lying and they're supposed to be the council. They're supposed to be the people that we trust to follow rules and regulations."

The council approved the application to develop three new 'modular', or pre-constructed, homes to support local families at risk of homelessness on 7 November 2024.

A long-time opponent of the pre-constructed home scheme, Ms Ransome said the development will be "detrimental to hundreds of school kids" who use the road as a cut through to Glyn Secondary School and Sixth Form. With a width of 3.55m, Fairview Road is 10cm below national standards so cars have to mount the curb to carefully pass each other. Objectors said this could be a serious safeguarding risk to children walking to and from school.

Councillor Steven McCormick, Chair of the Planning Committee, said: "The new homes are planned to be located alongside Fairview Road, making use of brownfield land and contributing to the borough's temporary housing availability. These units would allow the council to house local families facing homelessness within the borough, close to schools and local support networks."

The Residents' Association member clarified pedestrian safety concerns were recognised and discussed at length in the planning meeting where the application for temporary accommodation was considered.

He said: "In coming to a decision about the development's use for the provision of temporary accommodation, the Committee noted the comments from the County Highway Authority who were satisfied that: the development would not result in a significant increase in traffic generation, or result in issues of highway safety, or cause issues with the operation of the existing highway network."

Cllr McCormick added: "The council has followed the process laid out by the Land Registry. Residents have challenged the Land Registry's decision, but the council remains confident in its position. The council refutes any further allegations."

Adrian Giles MBE declined to comment and referred back to the council's response.

Link to planning portal: <https://eplanning.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=RQ0JVVGYIQR00>

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Epsom's homelessness crisis

What are the solutions to Epsom's homeless crisis?

Coroner rules on child's death

4 May 2025



Neglect at a Surrey children's care home contributed to the tragic death of a 12-year-old girl, a coroner has found. Raihana Awolaja sadly died of natural causes contributed by neglect on June 1, 2023 at Tadworth Court care home.



Staff at a Surrey care home failed to give the 24-hour, one-to-one support Raihana needed because of her extensive health issues, according to the legal firm representing the family, Leigh Day.

Mike Thiedke, Chief Executive of The Children's Trust, said: "We unreservedly apologise to Raihana's family for these failings [...] Raihana's death has had a profound effect on the way we deliver care and work with families today at The Children's Trust."

Born prematurely at 27 weeks as a twin, Raihana was left with complex disabilities including being non-verbal and dependent on breathing through a tube in her neck. Raihana needed round the clock, one-to-one supervision to ensure her breathing tube did not get blocked, Leigh Day said.

But the coroner Professor Fiona Wilcox concluded there was confusion around the meaning of 'one-to-one' care between Croydon Council and The Children's Trust.

The inquest heard the care home did not have enough staff available to consistently cover patients one-to-one. They were told individual staff members were regularly left caring for at least two patients at a time during staffing breaks and twice daily shift handovers.

Prof Wilcox criticised the nursing staff involved, as she found it was likely had Raihana been properly observed, the deterioration in her condition would have been identified and her life saved.

Raihana was a looked-after child under the council's care due to her extensive needs. In 2022, she was placed by Croydon Council at Tadworth Court in Surrey, a care home operated by The Children's Trust.

Raihana's mother, Latifat Kehinde Solomon, had serious concerns about her daughter's care at The Children's Trust, the inquest heard. Ms Solomon claimed she had repeatedly found Raihana without one-to-one care during her visits.

Ms Solomon said she flagged this potentially dangerous situation several times with Children's Trust staff and Croydon Council. Despite her concerns, she said nobody did anything.

Nandi Jordan, who represented Raihana's family during the hearing, said it is "rare" for a coroner to find neglect in an inquest for medical treatment. She said the conclusion reflects that Raihana's death was "an avoidable tragedy" and there were "substantial failures by multiple professionals and agencies involved in her care".

Records show, on the evening of Monday, May 29, 2023, the nurse responsible for Raihana started her shift and checked the 12-year-old's chart. The inquest heard that despite Raihana appearing more tired than usual the nurse chose not to monitor her oxygen levels. Instead, the nurse left and went to another building to complete some admin work.

The nurse asked a colleague to observe Raihana but no one seemed available, so she was actually left on her own. Records show when the nurse returned from her admin task, she found Raihana in cardiac arrest, a Leigh Day spokesperson said.

Staff performed CPR and called an ambulance. The court heard that paramedics were told Raihana had been left unattended for 15 minutes. Raihana was taken to St George's Hospital, in Tooting, London. But sadly, three days later, she died.

The Chief Executive of The Children's Trust, said: "Raihana was not being observed to the standard that the organisation would expect in the period immediately before she was found unresponsive on the evening of 29 May 2023.

"Following this heartbreaking experience, we have increased frontline staffing levels and changed how we monitor and observe children and young people in partnership with our regulators and the wider health care system.

"On behalf of The Children's Trust, we express our most heartfelt condolences to Raihana's family and acknowledge how difficult the inquest must have been."

Ms Jordan, from Leigh Day said: "It is too late for Raihana, but we can only hope that the findings of this inquest act as a vehicle for much needed change with the agencies involved; firstly, to take carers' concerns seriously when they advocate for their loved ones, and secondly, to ensure the care they are providing is safe for seriously disabled people who may not be able to advocate for themselves."

A spokesperson for Croydon Council said: "Our first thoughts are with Raihana's family, and we want to express our deepest condolences for their devastating loss.

"Raihana was placed at The Children's Trust so she could receive 24-hour care for her complex needs and we worked to ensure Raihana's mother was included in reviews, her voice was heard and any concerns addressed.

"Despite this, and the assurances we received from the Trust, it is clear that the care they provided fell below our expectations. Following internal reviews, the Trust have changed their processes around staffing and one-to-one care and we will continue to work with them to ensure that lessons have been learned from this tragedy."

A towering decision by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

4 May 2025



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has approved plans for hundreds of new homes. The former SGN Gasworks site on East Street in Epsom will see all of its buildings and infrastructure demolished to make way for new homes. The town's "biggest planning application in years" has been approved. Members of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council planning committee agreed to the outline scheme for 456 homes by a majority vote on April 24. The development will see five high rise blocks, ranging from eight to twelve storeys tall. A performing arts centre, educational buildings and an open public garden are also included in the plans. Of the proposed 456 homes, according to planning documents, 210 will be one-bedroom, 180 will be two-bedroom, and 66 will be three-bedroom units. A further 46 of the 456 homes will be social rent units and 21 wheelchair accessible, according to planning documents.

"You cannot build a nine-storey building behind someone's back door," said Richard Coles, an Epsom resident speaking against the scheme. He explained it would be "60 metres from my back door to someone's balcony, for some hundred or so properties". Mr Coles argued the new builds will make life significantly worse for those living immediately around the blocks. "We're not delivering for Epsom if we're not delivering for all our residents," Cllr Kim Spickett said. "We're not talking about overlooking buildings, we're talking about human beings." Responding to concerns, council planners said fears of overlooking is not such an issue in practice because neither resident can really make out the features or activities of a person that far away. Officers accepted sunlight would be reduced for six neighbouring homes and 23 student rooms but said the benefits of the scheme would outweigh the impact.

Wrestling with the application, Cllr Julian Freeman appreciated the residents' concerns but said "fear is often much worse than the reality". He added the borough is in a "housing crisis" and "for the greater good" the development will provide new homes for 600 or more people. Cllr Kate Chinn slammed the council for not building enough homes or social housing over the last five years. "We're now asking residents to pay the price for the failures of the past," she said. With only 68 car parking spaces for 456 homes, councillors urged for something to be done. Members worried about tradesmen needing to use cars for work or families driving to school. Around 21 spaces would be designated for wheelchair users which Cllr Freeman challenged as "excessive". Cllr Jan Mason said: "People living there actually will be defranchised." She claimed future residents might not be able to have visiting the house or getting the work men round.

Officers said fewer parking bays would help "champion a change in attitude" to using cars and support the council's "ambitious target" of becoming carbon neutral by 2035. But some councillors said it was "unrealistic" to demand people to change their motor habits by restricting parking spaces. Just a 10 minute walk from Epsom train station, the applicants argued the development would be an immensely sustainable location. People can get to London Waterloo station in around 35 minutes. Members agreed conditions to the car management plan so it could come back to committee for further approval if needed.

Also included in the scheme, Laine Theatre Arts College will be replaced by a modern building. The development will be further detailed in separate planning



applications, the report said. The site has been used as gas works for more than 150 years, according to documents, while a separate application for the same site has stated the storage facility for natural gas "has been permanently decommissioned and purged".

Image: Site Masterplan (Aerial) Formation Architects

McDonalds run out of Loch Fyne, Cobham

4 May 2025



Plans for a McDonald's in Cobham have been thrown out.

McDonald's had hoped to find a new home on the former Loch Fyne Restaurant in Portsmouth Road on the outskirts of Cobham. Members of Elmbridge Borough Council's planning committee rejected the application by majority vote on April 24, against officer's recommendations to approve.

Councillors were unhappy that the new McDonald's would be within walking distance of schools and near an area of high social and economic deprivation. "McDonald's isn't a proper choice," Cllr Lawrence Wells said, "most of it is ultra-processed food."

The Liberal Democrat councillor for Cobham and Downside argued: "To young people and families who have very little access to healthy food or treats, a McDonald's will be like the witch's candy house to Hansel and Gretel."

North of the potential McDonald's site, argued Cllr Wells, there is a socially and economically deprived area between River View Gardens and Northfield Road. He claimed the 650-odd houses come in the fifth most underprivileged sub-ward in the whole of Surrey.

But Cllr Ashley Tilling accused groups of "middle class snobbery" in opposing the scheme. He said it was unlikely there would be such opposition if a Gail's or a Megan's decided to open there.

Councillors debated whether it was appropriate for a fast food restaurant and take away should be in walking distance from schools, parks and a children's home. Surrey County Council had also raised concerns about the potential health impacts the new burger branch could have, being so close to areas where children congregate.

"You have a duty to protect the most vulnerable, you have the duty to protect the health and wellbeing of your constituents," Mr Sabi said, speaking for residents against the scheme at the meeting. He argued the council was using a London yardstick for walking distance to fast food places for a Surrey borough.

Fearing the chicken nugget chain would exacerbate issues of obesity and not promote healthy living, planning members refused the scheme. Officers said it was a matter of judgement and there was no evidence to suggest the American burger branch would make people less healthy.

Other councillors warned "we don't live in a totalitarian state where people are told what they must and mustn't eat" or that it is even their role on the planning committee to "combat obesity".

Ward councillor Katerina Lusk acknowledged the old Loch Fyne Restaurant is in "disrepair" and no other use has been found. Cllr Tilling also supported bringing the locally listed building "back to life" and re-using it in the community.

Despite the concerns, many people flagged the multi-million dollar company would bring huge financial benefits to the village, increasing visitors and supporting local business.

But Cllr Lusk highlighted the limited indoor dining options (60 covers) and proposed opening hours until midnight, which could mean it would be primarily used for takeaway. "More noise, more traffic and constant delivery movements- all spilling into an area already burdened with congestion and frequent flooding," Cllr Lusk said.

Submitted last year, the application has been hugely contentious. Hundreds of objections flooded in from residents, including an online petition reaching over 34,000 signatures. A similar strength of feeling was also boosted from those who want to see a closer Happy Meal in Cobham.

McDonald's has been approached for comment.

Related report:

Global fast-food giant targets Surrey village

How did Aldi arrive at this Epsom junction?

4 May 2025



Plans for an Aldi store near an Epsom junction described as being "fraught with danger" have been green-lit after an appeal—but with conditions attached. For years, the budget supermarket has been trying to get planning permission on the Former Dairy Crest Site on Alexandra Road in Epsom. The planning inspector recognised the road is "far from easy to navigate and potentially dangerous" but said mitigations to encourage people to walk to the store would help.

Members of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council had thrown out the German company's second application in July 2024 due to fears that increased traffic would have a severe impact on road safety. A previous application was rejected in 2015 over concerns about the site's location, car parking capacity, traffic levels, and the potential effect on the neighbourhood's character. The new £5 million development includes parking and some landscaping, but earlier plans for residential units have been dropped.

Residents and councillors had previously criticised the scheme for exacerbating an already 'challenging junction', often described as a "rat run" and "fraught with danger". Despite these objections, Surrey Highways raised no formal objection and concluded the development would not create unacceptable risks.

Although the planning inspector agreed that the Aldi store would "undoubtedly increase the potential for conflict between vehicles and pedestrians", they concluded that "additional measures to encourage drivers to slow down and take extra care would help to mitigate these increased risks." The decision statement noted: "At the end of the day, nearly all collisions are the result of human error. In this case, the lack of an obvious pattern of collisions suggests that there are not



Developers claimed Epsom is a "thriving town with much to offer" but is "limited in leisure". Planning documents sent to the council read there are "minimal opportunities for young children and young adults" particularly when it comes to their "special annual celebrations", or birthdays.

Details of the scheme include changing the existing agricultural building into an indoor children's Lastertag arena. Two containers could also be installed, making closed arenas, along with a temporary roof covering for the indoor Tactical Paintball.

Planning documents said that "PandaWarz's objective is to modernise the game" by using military skills and techniques from close range to build up obstacles.

The equipment will be modernised and operating with magazines, according to the applicant. Planning documents read: "The games are tactical, not simply spraying paintballs and hoping to hit."

The two purpose play area will be made up of shipping containers, internal rooms, mazes and obstacles. Fine mesh is proposed to cover the arenas so no paintballs can be fired beyond the confines of the play area. A gantry has been designed over and around the arena with a temporary roof covering to protect both spectator and player from any weather.

Planning details read: "Twenty minutes running around a dark room filled with obstacles and UV reactive artwork shooting each other in teams. A successful way of both entertaining [children] and wearing them out!"

Noise will be reduced by containing the games within the existing building and as well as using the constructed containers and temporary roofing, the application states.

Car parking for up to 15 vehicles is included, with additional parking directed to the open, free roadside parking a short walk away on the Downs.

Locals can comment on the proposals until April 30 on the council's website. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council will decide the future of The Paddock site at a later date.

Proposed site layout. Epsom and Ewell planning documents.

New Surrey police division HQ plans

4 May 2025



Plans for a new Surrey Police headquarters have been put forward for its eastern division in Leatherhead.

The force said it hopes to develop a "bespoke and permanent" HQ on the former Electrical Research Association and Cobham Industries site. An application has also been put forward to develop an area of the Cleeve Road site into affordable housing.

After discovering Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in Reigate Police Station in September 2023, the division temporarily moved to the old Surrey Fire & Rescue Services HQ at Wray Park in Reigate.

Deputy Chief Constable Nev Kemp said the planning application is a "key step in our journey" to building a permanent location for police operations in East Surrey. He said the force has been focusing on finding a site that will help staff and officers to investigate and prevent crime and keep people safe.

Surrey Police bought the former Electrical Research Association (ERA) and Cobham Industries site on Cleeve Road in 2018 for nearly £20.5m, aiming to develop a new, purpose-built headquarters from the ground up. But by 2021 the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Surrey Police Chief Officer team decided to scrap the idea and look to Mount Browne, in Guildford, and redevelop the existing HQ.

The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) revealed earlier this year that Surrey Police spent nearly £3 million, on top of the £20.5m used to buy the Leatherhead site, on failed plans to move its headquarters as part of disastrous money-saving efforts. Much of the money used was spent on building designs and surveys for the project which the Police and Crime Commissioner said was directly transferable to the Mount Browne redevelopment project.

The force said it had held public meetings with local residents, businesses, councillors, and community group representatives to share initial plans and gather feedback. The force is also working closely with key stakeholders in the community, including Mole Valley District Council.

Related report:

[Surrey police to move to Epsom and Ewell constituency](#)

[Cleeve Road premises bought by Surrey Police. Google Street View](#)

New priorities for Surrey Police?

4 May 2025



Going "back to basics" is the key part of Surrey Police's priorities under new plans announced by the county's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

Surrey's new Police and Crime plan launched on April 4 includes ambitions to address the issues affecting people's daily lives as well as focus on safeguarding vulnerable children and adults. Seeking to strengthen community trust, the plan details that every neighbourhood will have a dedicated police officer or PCSO with clear contact details.

PCC Lisa Townsend said the new approach will "concentrate on what our policing teams do best - fighting crime in our local communities, getting tough on offenders and protecting people."

The plan, which runs to 2028, names violence against women and girls, the "growing scourge of shoplifting" along with rural offences and antisocial behaviour as priorities to deal with regionally. Boosting police morale and creating a supporting workplace culture is also listed as a prime concern to retaining officers in Surrey.



"I want Surrey Police to focus on tackling those crimes that blight our local communities, while also taking persistent offenders off our streets," Ms Townsend said. "I promised that we would return to a 'back to basics' approach to policing, and this pledge forms the cornerstone of my Police and Crime Plan."

The "back to basics" approach focuses on five crucial elements:

- Getting the fundamentals right - preventing crime, bringing offenders to justice swiftly, and tackling the issues that concern residents most.
- Protecting vulnerable people in Surrey - from children and young people, to elderly residents, rural communities and those in a mental health crisis
- Preventing violence against women and girls - helping women and girls in Surrey both be safe and feel safe whether in public or private
- Strengthening safe and resilient communities - where people feel listened to, feel a visible police presence and confident issues will be resolved
- Fostering integrity, accountability and wellbeing in policing - creating a transparent and supportive workplace culture, aiming to improve officer wellbeing and reduce staff turnover

Safer roads have been left out as a priority from this police and crime plan, much to the dismay of Surrey county councillors at a meeting earlier this year. They slammed the plan for having a lack of objective targets for many of the measures.

However, the new plan does include addressing gaps in road safety, finding local initiatives and to support Surrey County Council's vision to reduce and eliminate deaths and serious injuries on the road.

Early intervention efforts are also set to include tackling knife related-crime, working with schools and community groups to educate young people about the nature and consequences of serious crimes.

Efforts to tackle violence against women and girls include building public confidence in the police's ability to investigate VAWG, but it does not specifically outline how. Plans also detail ensuring survivor voices and the needs of families of perpetrators are heard to understand experiences and challenges.

The plan also includes measures such as using data and intelligence to understand crime trends and find priority areas to keep neighbourhoods safe. Community and stakeholder collaboration will play a more active and important role over the next five years and the PCC hopes to create lasting solutions.

Tim De Meyer, the county's Chief Police Constable said: "There is much that Surrey Police and the PCC can do with our partners to build safe and resilient communities - especially in respect of our fight against pernicious crimes such as shoplifting.

"My meetings with the public have shown that theft, anti-social behaviour and drug abuse trouble people a great deal. I believe that this Plan, allied with that of the Force, will help us redouble our efforts to ensure that Surrey Police applies all its neighbourhood policing experience to combat these issues."

Local engagement has formed much of the basis of the new priorities with residents, community groups, business leaders and victims' services consulted over the last autumn and winter.

Godstone "Sink-hole" residents to return

4 May 2025



After a long wait, good news may finally be coming to some who were forced to evacuate after a massive sinkhole opened up in a Surrey town. Families living on the impacted street in Godstone have been told they may be allowed to return home this weekend.

The huge hole appeared on Godstone High Street on February 17 and was quickly declared a major incident due to its seriousness and complexity. Now scaled down to a 'significant incident' investigations are still ongoing as to what the cause is and how to solve it.

"We have some really good news for residents," said Lloyd Allen, Infrastructure Team Manager for Surrey County Council. "We're expecting them to return this weekend."

Wearing a hi-vis jacket and standing in front of part of the enormous hole, Mr Allen said families on Godstone high street can once again sleep in their own beds. He warned that the news is subject to a couple of issues the team is investigating and depends on them getting the all-clear that water quality is up to standard.

Five weeks after the high street was almost swallowed up by the sinkhole, highway officials still do not know what caused the major incident. "The plan for the future is to carry on doing what we are doing," said Mr Allen with no clear indication of when the saga might end. The infrastructure manager said he and the team, as well as specially hired geo technical engineers are analysing the investigation results and seeing if there is a tunnel network.

In a new video released by the county council, the highways team gave a latest update on Godstone with some crucial insights. Surveys have revealed a lot of anomalies in the area which could be deep sewers, series of tunnels or even potentially soak away from properties. Further investigations are still needed to pin down exactly what they are, the team said.

Afterwards, the team will plot a series of bore holes on the site that they can carry out to look under the surface. If more tunnels or voids are found, they can put cameras down and do some more testing. "But that work might take several months longer," Mr Allen said.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth at Surrey County Council, said: "Highways Officers have used foam concrete to temporarily fill the hole to stabilise the area and to ensure it doesn't get any bigger."

"Specialist surveys are continuing in areas which were previously inaccessible, to determine the underlying cause of the collapse and how best to permanently repair the area so it doesn't reoccur."

"Due to the unprecedented nature of this incident, we expect the full-scale repair of the site to take several more months although we expect residents will be able to return to their homes whilst works are carried out, once it is safe to do so. We thank them for their ongoing patience as we deal with this complex incident."

Related report:

[Surrey sink-hole major incident](#)

Image: Lloyd Allen, Infrastructure Team Manager for Surrey County Council, on Godstone high street. (Credit: Surrey County Council).