EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

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A poll on polling – Epsom and Ewell consults

21 November 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will launch a six-week consultation into proposed changes to the polling district and polling places within the borough from 21 November 2024 to 2 January 2025.

In 2023, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England carried out a review of Surrey County Council's electoral boundaries. The resulting Surrey (Electoral Changes) Order 2024 is anticipated to be passed by parliament and will make changes to the County Council's electoral division boundaries.

This consultation will propose changes to Court and Horton wards in order to bring the areas in line with their new County Council electoral division and ensure ballots are placed in the correct ballot box.

There are no proposed changes for any other wards, as issues arising from the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May were resolved for the Parliamentary elections in July.

Jackie King, Chief Executive of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council said,

"I would like to encourage all residents in the borough to have their say on the proposals in this consultation. It is important to review our polling district and places now to ensure the council is fully prepared for next year's County Council election and the changes to the electoral divisions."

The consultation can be accessed via the following link: https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/council/elections-and-voting/electoral-boundaries

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Bourne Hall's Christmas Supremacy

21 November 2024



Visit Bourne Hall from 30 November – 21 December for a whole host of festivities this Christmas.

The celebrations kick off at 2pm on 30 November at the Christmas Lights Switch On, when Ewell Grove players will be hosting a special community panto 'A-Lad-In Ewell', raising money for Epsom & Ewell Foodbank. There will also be bookable wreath-making workshops from 2pm – 4pm and you can enjoy an array of market stalls with mulled wine, live music, carol singing from Heart & Soul Choir, and more from 4pm – 7pm.

The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Councillor Steve Bridger, will Switch the Bourne Hall Christmas Lights on at 4.30pm. Visitors can also meet Cinderella and Buttons from the upcoming Epsom Playhouse pantomime, and Father Christmas will even be flying in especially for the day to open the Christmas grotto, and will return every Saturday up until Christmas.

The Christmas Grotto is open Monday to Saturday every day until Christmas to post a letter to Father Christmas. Then why not pause for a moment to enjoy a hot drink and a delicious home-made cake chosen from the festive menu in the Flying Saucer Café?

A wreath-making workshop will be taking place on Saturday 7 December from 4pm – 6pm and you can enjoy live music from Andrew and Allan's Electric 80s on Saturday 14 December, as well as a Christmas magic show on Saturday 21 December.

Councillor Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee, said:

"Bourne Hall is a fantastic meeting place and it's great to see so many people in the local community working together to bring us these celebrations this year.

The community panto promises a smashing start to the festive season and Bourne Hall is so pleased to welcome back Andrew and Allen's Electric 80s night which is great fun and the perfect opportunity to dance!

With a free Christmas Grotto and Christmas Lights Switch On, as well as the opportunity to buy tickets to the Electric 80s night and the Christmas Magic Show, there is something for everyone at Bourne Hall this Christmas.

Bourne Hall Christmas Lights Switch On.

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Saturday 30 November, 4pm – 7pm. Free event.

- A day of festive fun including the community panto, 'A-Lad-In Ewell' at 2pm and 5pm.
- 4.30pm: The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell and Father Christmas switch on the Christmas lights at Bourne Hall.

To book 'A-Lad-in-Ewell' visit the links below:

2pm show: https://sessami.co/events/07573091-237e-4072-8e0f-404d979f3968
5pm show: https://sessami.co/events/6616b0e2-eaa2-4861-bc56-28356fb677d3

Wreath-making

Revel and Ribbon will be hosting a wreath-making workshop on Saturday 30 November from 2pm-4pm and Saturday 7 December 4pm–6pm. Tickets are priced at £45.

Book here: https://www.revelandribbon.com

Santa's Grotto.

Saturday 7, 14 and 21 December, 10am – 4pm. Free event, no pre-booking required.

- Father Christmas will be in the Christmas Grotto on Saturday 7, 14 and 21 December. On other days, visit the beautiful grotto at Bourne Hall and post him a letter in the Bourne Hall post box.

Live music from 'Best of the 80s'.

Saturday 14 December, 7pm – 11pm. £10 a ticket.

If the 1980s was the fun decade, then there can only be one way to remember those great days and that's with the fun and entertaining 'Electric 80s'.

Andrew & Allan charge this show with AA power and will have everyone up and on their feet from the very first song!!! So, dust off those shoulder pads, get out your eyeliner and back-comb your hair to within an inch of its life and party with Andrew & Allan's "Electric 80s". Music includes greatest hits from 1980's legends including Spandau Ballet, Dead Or Alive, Erasure, Human League, Wham, Tears For Fears, The Jam and many more.

Book here: https://sessami.co/events/1a8f93c2-c3df-4ca7-a967-9ba9762bd2ad?utm_mediu.

Christmas Magic Show starring Ritchie Rosson

Saturday 21 December, shows at 11am, 1pm and 3pm – each show is 45 minutes long.

Join us for a magical extravaganza with the one and only Ritchie Rosson. Ritchie will be doing 3 shows at Bourne Hall delivering 45 minutes of festive fun and amazement. Don't miss the best magic show in town, promised to bring pure entertainment!

Tickets are £6 each and bookable via: https://sessami.co/events/ritchierossonschristmasmagicshow

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Epsom and Ewell remembers

21 November 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is proud to announce that Remembrance Day memorial services, parades and activities will take place to honour those who have died in the service of their country and give thanks to those past and present from the armed forces. Formal Acts of Remembrance commenced with the annual opening of the Garden of Remembrance at Bourne Hall Park on Wednesday 6 November.

The Garden is now open to the public until the end of November, giving people the opportunity to take time and reflect.

The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, the Chief Executive of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and local schoolchildren officially opened the Garden of Remembrance. Children performed songs and poems and placed poppy tokens to honour and remember all those who have died in the service of their country.

Other Remembrance Day activities

Large poppies, kindly donated by the Royal British Legion, have been placed in Epsom High Street, Ewell High Street and Stoneleigh Broadway alongside other poppies placed around the borough.

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Events and activities also taking place around the borough will include the following.

Saturday 9 November 2024
The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, and Chair of the Royal British Legion will carry out many acts of Remembrance around the borough. These will include thanking poppy sellers at different sites, wreath laying including at the War Memorial in Ashley Road, Epsom, and joining a Remembrance Day procession that starts at the Army Reserve Centre and ends at St Mary's Church in Ewell.

Remembrance Sunday: 10 November 2024
At 10:33 am, the Clergy, Mayor, Councillors and the Royal British Legion will lead a formal procession from the Army Reserve Centre to St Mary's Church in Ewell, this will be followed by wreath laying and a Remembrance Day service at the monument in the churchyard.
Armistice Day Service (11/11/11): Monday 11 November 2024
Members of the public are invited to join a ceremony at the Clock Tower at 10:40am in Epsom Market Place. The Mayor, Chief Executive and elected Councillors will join the Royal British Legion, armed forces, veterans and local schools at the service whicht ends with observation of the nationwide Two Minute Silence at 11am.

For more information on Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Remembrance Day activities – Remembrance in the borough of Epsom & Ewell | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Jackie King, Chief Executive said "This poignant occasion provides us all with the time to reflect and think about those who have served their country, those who have paid the ultimate price with their lives, and those who continue to bravely serve in the armed forces. At the going down of the sun and in the morning. We will remember them."

Epsom & Ewell consults on anti-social behaviour

21 November 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is calling on the public to take part in their consultation about a proposed Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) from 4 November. The consultation will run for 8 weeks and ends on 5 January.

PSPOs deal with a particular nuisance or problem in a specific area that is detrimental to the local community's quality of life, by putting restrictions on how people can use public spaces in that area. They are intended to help ensure that the everyone can use and enjoy public spaces, safe from anti-social behaviour.

The consultation will help shape the future of our alcohol-related PSPO, with the public having a say on whether to renew the existing PSPO and extend its reach through the proposed changes.

Proposed changes include expanding the geographical area the PSPO covers to include the entire borough and, in partnership with Surrey Police, to provide additional community support to help counteract antisocial behaviour in public spaces.

The proposed new prohibitions in the PSPO include:

- Harassing or intimidating residents, businesses or members of the public.
- Threatening any person with violence and/or being verbally abusive towards any person.
- Urinating in an open public place.
- Littering or spitting with the intent to cause harassment, alarm or distress to any person.
- Wearing a piece of clothing with the intent to obscure or hide their identity for the purposes of committing crime and/or anti-social behaviour.
- Acting, or inciting others to act, in an anti-social manner, which is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to any person.
- Joining or remaining in a group of two or more people, which is acting in a manner that is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to any person.
- Consumption of alcohol following a verbal warning by an authorised person to stop. An authorised person includes a Police Constable, Police Community Support Officer, a Council Officer, or any other person authorised by the Council.

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Councillor Shanice Goldman, Chair of Crime and Disorder Committee said:

“Our council is deeply committed to ensuring that public spaces across the borough are safe and welcoming for everyone. Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) allow police and council staff to address antisocial behaviour effectively, without immediately resorting to arrests.

“We’re seeking feedback from all residents, workers, and visitors to get a clear understanding of whether the proposed changes will better support the police and council in managing antisocial behaviour.

“I really do encourage your participation as your views will help shape our approach to creating safer, more enjoyable spaces for all.”

The consultation survey is available here – Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) Public Consultation.

Epsom and Ewell Council bank on street art

21 November 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has completed two new community arts projects in Epsom and Stoneleigh during September and October, in collaboration with globally recognised street artists Positive Arts, local charity We Power On and GLF students. The vibrant designs are part of a series of public art installations organised by the council, aimed at revitalising areas within the borough that are tired and in need of improvement.

We Power On, a local charity that supports men with their mental health, worked with artists to create one of the murals near Clandon Close in Stoneleigh which depicts themes inspired by the local area, including the Hogsmill River and neighbourhood architecture.

Chris Waller, Founder of the community group We Power On said,

“We were honoured to be asked to be part of this wonderful initiative between Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and the guys from Positive Arts. We mucked in to help spread a bit of colour and positivity to an otherwise dark space which aligns perfectly with what We Power On is all about. The beauty of initiatives such as this is it brings people together to do good for the local community. We’re not sure we will make it as graffiti artists, but it was fun to have a go and be a part of something brilliant.”

A small cohort of students from a GLF School were also given the opportunity to develop their creative skills and contribute to the transformation of a walkway between Miles Road and Stones Road in Epsom with artists from Positive Arts by creating a mural that gives a nod to Epsom’s racing heritage.

Speaking of the project, a student from a GLF School said,

“I’ve really enjoyed (creating) the picture we’re drawing of racing horses on The Downs. It’s taught me how to control a spray can for artistic purposes. It should really brighten up the underpass and I hope local residents enjoy seeing our work”.

Clive Woodbridge, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council added,

“The amazing thing about these projects is that they’ve allowed the participants to develop their social and technical skills simultaneously. I really hope that everyone who’s had contact with Positive Arts through the creation of these murals has walked away feeling as though they’ve unlocked a skill they didn’t have before – whether that’s practical, via painting the area or socially via the teamwork that was essential for success!”

Both murals have been fully funded via the Arts, Culture and Heritage UKSPF 2024/25 allocation and contribute to the council’s overall vision for curating art projects that build pride with local community stakeholders.

Licensed to walk

21 November 2024

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The Nonsuch Park Joint Management Committee has voted to launch a 12-month pilot Commercial Dog Walking Licensing Scheme in Nonsuch Park, starting in April 2025, following a consultation with the public and dog walkers.

The licensing scheme will bring dog walking in line with other commercial activities in the park and help reassure the public that commercial dog walking in Nonsuch Park is responsibly carried out and regulated.

An annual licence will cost £200 and limits the number of dogs that can be walked at one time to a maximum of six. As with other commercial activities in the park, dog walkers will be required to provide proof of public liability insurance, risk assessments and sign an agreement which sets out how commercial dog walking can be undertaken.

The committee also set out plans to develop a Dog Walking Code of Conduct in collaboration with the dog walking community and enforcement where there is evidence of non-compliance.

Councillor Julian Freeman, who was Chair of the Nonsuch Park Joint Management Committee at the start of the consultation said:

“We’d like to thank everybody who participated in the public consultation. The aim of the consultation was to make sure Nonsuch Park is a safe environment for all park users, after concerns were raised about the increase in dog walkers with multiple dogs.

“With feedback from almost 1,000 people, including commercial dog walkers using the park already, it is clear that this is an important issue to many people.”

Councillor Louise Phelan, from Sutton Council, current Chair of the Nonsuch Park Joint Management Committee, added:

“We know that the professional dog walkers who visit Nonsuch Park take the responsibility of walking multiple dogs in a public area extremely seriously and support the introduction of a licensing scheme that helps protect the reputation and standards of their profession.”

“We hope the subsequent licensing scheme will go some way to create an open space which everyone can enjoy.”

Related report:

Should Nonsuch Park go to the dogs?

Loads of coaches for Epsom tennis

21 November 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council’s Environment committee has authorised the contracts for three tennis coaching providers in Epsom.

R&A Sport will be carrying out coaching sessions at Auriol Park, Sutton Tennis Coaching will be offering sessions at Alexandra Park and Callum Macarty Coaching operating at Court Recreation Ground.

From April, the council moved to a pay-to-play scheme on all its tennis courts. The decision was taken to make the courts self-sufficient with all funds raised being reinvested in maintenance and future improvements.

Since the pay-to-play system was introduced, the council has been committed to ensuring those of all ages, experience, and socio-economic backgrounds are able to participate in tennis. The council offered free tennis sessions throughout the summer, when 173 residents played free of charge.

In addition to this, as part of the tennis coaching contract, all tennis coaching providers are required to take part in the Barclays Free Park Tennis Initiative, offering at least one hour of free, supervised, community tennis activity at their

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designated location each weekend.

The council is also looking for local volunteers willing to be tennis activators. These activators will lead free tennis sessions in the parks on Saturday mornings. Until these sessions are up and running in all tennis courts across the borough, the council is offering two free, bookable sessions between 9-10am and 10-11am each Saturday.

Councillor **Liz Frost**, (RA Langley and Woodcote) Chair of the Environment Committee said:

“We are committed to the pay to play model which will future-proof our courts so that residents can enjoy access to tennis now and in years to come.

Residents can pay to play or purchase a membership, including a discounted membership for those or in receipt of Universal Credit or Full Time Carers Allowance or with a disability.

We would also urge anyone interested in volunteering as a tennis activator at one of our courts to get in touch – we’d love to hear from you.

We’re pleased to sign up three coaching providers, which not only provides extra investment income for the courts but also more opportunities for free coaching sessions.”

Related reports:

Anyone for tennis?

LibDems call “Love All” for local tennis

Anyone for tennis? If you pay.

Tennis at 95 is the norm.

Image – C. Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd

Epsom’s Master plan to walk and cycle

21 November 2024



On 24 September, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council’s Licensing and Planning Policy Committee approved the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan. The Masterplan sets out clear and comprehensive guidelines for the development of Epsom Town Centre. The Committee also endorsed the Epsom & Ewell Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan that aims to increase walking, wheeling and cycling across the borough. Together, the plans feed into the vision of the borough and form part of the evidence base for the borough’s Draft Local Plan.

Epsom Town Centre Masterplan

The Masterplan sets out a vision to make Epsom Town Centre a place that attracts, connects and inspires people, with a strong sense of community, commerce and creativity. Climate change is the cornerstone of the Masterplan with a comprehensive approach to transport, low carbon development, green infrastructure and health. The Masterplan also identifies site locations where regeneration and improvements could take place, subject to planning permission being granted.

The Masterplan was subject to two rounds of public consultation, with over 2,000 individuals or organisations responding to the consultations, highlighting interests, attachments and aspirations.

Epsom & Ewell Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

The Plan aims to provide a safe, attractive and convenient infrastructure to encourage residents, visitors and workers to walk, wheel and cycle. Plans include expanding the existing network and improving connectivity to key destinations within the borough.

The Epsom and Ewell LCWIP is part of Surrey’s broader LCWIP programme to develop LCWIPs county-wide. Following endorsement of the LCWIP, Surrey County Council can formally adopt the document.

Cllr **Peter O’Donovan**, (RA Ewell Court) Chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee said: “The Town Centre Masterplan and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan provide Epsom & Ewell with a fantastic opportunity to bring wide ranging benefits to our community.

Our lifestyles and working patterns have changed dramatically over the last few years, especially since COVID-19, and I’m proud that these plans allow us to strategically improve areas for residents to enjoy, and help us to provide solutions for broader issues that we, as a borough, face including housing and climate change, which is at the heart of the Masterplan and supports the transition towards zero-carbon transport throughout the borough. The Masterplan will also help in the process of assessing planning applications.”

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He added: “I would like to thank all the residents who took part in the public consultations and feeding into our vision for the borough. We want our community and visitors to be proud of Epsom & Ewell and through these plans, we are in a position to deliver!”

About the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan

The Town Centre Masterplan forms part of the evidence base for the Draft Local Plan and will be taken into consideration for decision-making, however it will not be a statutory planning document. Local Plan FAQs | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (epsom-ewell.gov.uk)

The Town Centre Master Plan was approved at the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee on 24 September 2024. The responses received to the consultation have been published on our consultation portal and a summary of the responses received is attached as Appendix 3. Epsom *Town Centre Masterplan information starts from p.169* –

democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/documents/g1657/Public reports pack 24th-Sep-2024 19.30 Licensing and Planning Policy Committee.pdf?T=10

Epsom & Ewell Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

The Epsom & Ewell LCWIP was approved at the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee on 24 September 2024. *E&ELCWIP information starts from p.421* – democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/documents/g1657/Public reports pack 24th-Sep-2024 19.30 Licensing and Planning Policy Committee.pdf?T=10

In 2017 the Government produced a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) outlining its ambition to make cycling and walking a natural choice for shorter journeys or as part of longer journeys by 2040.vSecond cycling and walking investment strategy – July 2022 – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The Epsom and Ewell LCWIP is part of Surrey’s broader LCWIP programme to develop LCWIPs county-wide. These have been considered during development of the Epsom & Ewell LCWIP for greater connectivity across political boundaries.

Plans to improve walking and cycling – Surrey County Council (surreycc.gov.uk)

Image: Google street view Epsom

Walking the talk on Epsom Downs

21 November 2024



On 10th September, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council hosted a Walk & Talk event at Epsom Downs Racecourse to mark World Suicide Prevention Day. Over 65 people, including residents and representatives from voluntary and statutory organisations, joined this insightful, moving and inspirational event, developed and delivered as part of the council’s Suicide Prevention Action Plan, produced in January 2024.

Chris Waller, founder of We Power On, led the walk around Epsom Downs. **Dale Millar** MBE from the Samaritans opened the second part of the evening talking about skills used in conversation and the impactful nature that this can have. **Joe Stroud** from End Stigma Surrey talked about the negative impact that silence can have and how we, as a community, can stand together to break the chains of stigma around mental health. And finally, Chris shared his own experiences including the importance of being able to talk openly. Cllr **Clive Woodbridge**, the Chair of the Council’s Community and Wellbeing Committee, also joined him to discuss his journey from crisis to hope.

Local scribe, **Annalees Lim**, designed boards and captured key messages at the event. These boards will be shown at locations around the borough, starting at the Epsom Downs Racecourse and finishing at the Epsom Picturehouse around 10th October to coincide with Mental Health Awareness Day. More information to follow.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee said:“I’m proud that through our Suicide Prevention Action Plan, we’ve been able to provide a platform for residents and organisations to come together and have conversations about mental health and suicide, and also raise awareness of where support and resources can be found for those suffering from mental health issues or directly impacted by the loss of someone to suicide.

A huge thank you to We Power On, Epsom Downs Racecourse, End Stigma Surrey, the Samaritans and to the scribe who captured messages at the event. Thanks also to everyone who volunteered their time at the event. Without the support of all the volunteers and supporting organisations, this event would not have been possible. We look forward to continuing building on these relationships for the benefit of those who need our help the most.

As Chris himself said, “there is hope, and there is help out there”.

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Funding was allocated by the council from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to We Power On to help residents access support in the borough. Chris, founder of the organisation, led the walk for adults aged 18 and above.

For more information on some of the mental health support and resources available across Epsom & Ewell – https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/resources-support.

Epsom and Ewell Press Release on Homelessness

21 November 2024

Media Release: Housing Pressures and Homelessness: How Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is Tackling a National Issue

Insufficient housing levels, particularly affordable housing, is a national issue affecting individuals and families up and down the country and Epsom & Ewell is no exception.

The Government recently released their 2023 statutory homelessness figures, revealing a 12% increase nationwide in the number of households in temporary accommodation, with the figure now standing at over 112,000. The number of households with children in temporary accommodation rose even more sharply by 15%, now totalling 74,530 households.

As Councillor Hannah Dalton, Chair of the Epsom & Ewell Residents Association (Majority Group) and Housing Spokesperson for the District Councils' Network, recently said in a letter about the homelessness crisis sent to the Deputy Prime Minister, The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP:

"The human impact of this crisis is enormous. Families in temporary accommodation face huge challenges including disrupted education, health issues, and difficulty holding down a job. Homelessness undermines people's lives and life chances."

There are many factors that contribute to this nationwide problem; the lack of affordable housing, high rental rates, the ongoing cost of living crisis; and higher interest rates and mortgage costs to name a few.

Epsom & Ewell has proportionately one of the highest numbers of homeless households living in temporary accommodation in England and is in the top seven boroughs outside of London.

In Epsom & Ewell we face the additional challenge of the South East's very high housing costs, coupled with a severe shortage of housing. Affordable housing options in the borough are severely limited, partly due to the low level of affordable housing development in recent years. There is also only a small stock of private rented properties available which are in very high demand.

So as a borough, we urgently need more housing of all types including, but not limited to, affordable housing. Every house fulfils a need that makes other housing available, improves supply and demand, and lowers costs.

The rising cost of temporary accommodation

We don't have enough temporary accommodation in the borough to meet the large rises in demand we've seen over the last few years, so we often need to place people in nightly paid accommodation outside the borough. This can impact the household's wellbeing and is very expensive: Epsom & Ewell Borough Council spent £1,665,493 on nightly paid accommodation in 2023/24[1].

At present, we have 160 homeless households in temporary accommodation in the borough and more than 90 homeless households in nightly paid accommodation outside of the borough. Many of these families may have to wait more than three years before temporary accommodation in the borough becomes available, and even longer before a permanent housing solution can be found for them.

Councillor Woodbridge, Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee, Epsom & Ewell, said: "The vast majority of homeless households are those who cannot afford suitable accommodation. Perhaps they are sofa surfing or living with family in overcrowded households.

43% of homelessness is due to eviction from a private rented tenancy, with a further 24% people experiencing homelessness after living with family or friends who are no longer willing or able to accommodate them. There is also a significant percentage of households fleeing violence."

Epsom & Ewell's very low supply of social rented housing is in high demand. Fewer than 90 social housing properties become available each year against about 1,300 households who are on the housing register.

The average waiting time for applicants with a high housing need[2] is between 18 months and more than a decade, depending on the size of the property required. Those in lower housing need bandings have little or no prospect of being offered social housing.

The only alternative to social housing is private rented accommodation, which is very expensive – rising to an average of £1,630 in June 2024, an annual increase of 10.7% (the rise in the South East over the year was 8.2%)[3].

"The housing team at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council undertake a huge range of actions and activities to mitigate and help solve the many challenges, as set out in the council's Homelessness Strategy. Without the incredible work being done by this team, the situation would be much worse." – Councillor Woodbridge, Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee.

Initiatives that Epsom & Ewell Borough Council undertake to prevent homelessness include:

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- Prevention focus – liaising with family and friends of people at risk of homelessness, negotiating with private rent sector landlords on their behalf, and assisting with deposits.
- Private Sector Leasing (PSL) Scheme – the council leases a property for between three and five years from a private landlord for use as temporary accommodation: Epsom & Ewell Borough Council calls on landlords to sign up to their Private Sector Leasing Scheme | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (epsom-ewell.gov.uk)
- Rent Deposit Scheme: the council is able to support residents with rental deposits that would otherwise be unaffordable, to help secure accommodation.
- The borough's Local Plan, if approved, will bring much-needed development to the borough to help ease the pressure, costs and demand for housing. This includes a policy to increase affordable housing delivery on all eligible sites.
- Working with partners to increase local temporary accommodation options including utilising any Council owned sites and properties.
- Lobbying government in partnership with other local authorities, via the District Council Network (DCN) – recently, this has resulted in the Local Housing Allowance being increased, having not previously seen any increase since 2019.
- Working in partnership with landlords to bring empty properties back into use.
- Downsizing households in social housing to free up larger accommodation.
- Challenging developers to provide much needed affordable housing on eligible development sites.
- Working in partnership with Registered Providers to increase affordable housing.

Development of affordable housing

There are limited sites in the borough to develop affordable housing due to the size of the borough, the existence of the green belt and the cost of redeveloping brownfield sites.

Furthermore, the current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that smaller sites (fewer than 11 homes) are exempt from providing an affordable housing contribution, and commercial to residential 'permitted development' sites are not required to provide affordable housing either.

Councillor Woodbridge, Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee, said: "As a council, we are working hard to ensure that local people have a suitable home to live in. This is crucial for the wellbeing of our residents – a home is not just a physical space to live safely and comfortably. A home provides roots, identity, a sense of belonging and a place of emotional wellbeing.

We also want to be able to reduce the very high expenditure that is currently required to manage the housing crisis in the borough, so that we can continue to invest in, develop and protect the many other services that the council offers its residents. The many actions we are taking will help to ease the crisis for some, but this is a situation which requires significant action to bring about a long-term and sustainable solution."

Case Study: Mr K

Mr K[4], a self-employed professional and single father of two young children, had been renting privately for a number of years.

His rent was already £295 per calendar month (pcm) over the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate when he learnt that the landlord wanted to increase his rent by a further £200 pcm. Mr K could not afford to pay this increase and the landlord served an 's21 no fault' eviction notice.

The average market rent for a 2-bedroom property in Epsom is £1,720 pcm, however the LHA rate is £1,200 pcm. The LHA rate is the maximum rent that is used to calculate how much Housing Benefit or Universal Credit someone is entitled to. Anything over the LHA will not be considered, and the shortfall will have to be paid by the tenant, in addition to their usual rent liability.

Mr K was unable to find alternative affordable accommodation as letting agents wanted prospective tenants to have either:

· a minimal annual income of at least 30 times the monthly rent

· a guarantor who earns 36 to 40 times the monthly rent,

· or pay 6 month's rent in advance (even harder for Mr K as he was self-employed).

In addition, there were very few properties on the market and a lot of competition for them, with some properties going to sealed bids.

When the s21 notice expired Mr K felt he had no option but to approach the council as homeless. He was not previously known to the council and is an example of the increasing number of residents who are now unable to resolve their own housing problems and are becoming more reliant on the council for emergency homeless assistance.

When Mr K became homeless, the council provided self-contained temporary accommodation in the Croydon area. However, one of Mr K's children has special educational needs, and they were struggling being placed out of borough, with childcare, access to schools, family support and specialised support services. This was the only accommodation

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available to the council at the time.

After a number of months in temporary accommodation in Croydon, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Move-On Officer was able to find Mr K to find a privately rented 2-bedroom flat in Epsom and helped Mr K secure it by utilising the council's Rent Deposit Scheme.

Ends

Editors Notes

[1] This was due to a number of factors: the consistently high number of households approaching as homelessness, a 15% increase in rental costs by our accommodation providers and a lack of alternative accommodation options. The average net cost of nightly paid accommodation for a small family is about £23,000 a year, nearly 20% higher than it was in 2022/23. For those families who require three-bedroom or larger accommodation, the cost is £27,900 per year – we currently have 27 of these families in our borough.

[2] High housing need includes issues such as: their current accommodation lacks basic facilities, doesn't have enough bedrooms, they are experiencing homelessness, or they have high medical needs.

[3] Office of National Statistics, 17 July 2024.

[4]In order to protect our resident's anonymity, we have changed some of the details of this case study and amalgamated details from more than one person. The case study remains a fair and accurate representation.

Walk on the Downs to feel Up.

21 November 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is hosting a walk around Epsom Downs on 10th September to coincide with World Suicide Prevention Day. This event supports the council's Suicide Prevention Action Plan and aims to raise awareness of support and resources available to help those suffering from mental health issues or directly impacted by the loss of someone to suicide.

Funding has been allocated from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to **We Power On** to help residents access support in the borough. Chris, founder of the organisation, will lead the walk for adults aged 18 and above.

Immediately after the walk, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will host another event where Chris will talk about his story and the importance of having support available for people suffering from mental health problems. A scribe will create artwork which will then go on a 'tour' of the borough ending up at the **Epsom Picturehouse** on 10th October to coincide with Mental Health Awareness Day.

Residents will need to register to attend – 50 spaces are available for the walk and talk, and a further 50 spaces for those who only wish to attend the talk. Register HERE

End Stigma Surrey is also supporting this event, they are dedicated to raising awareness and reducing the stigma of mental health and are part of the council's wider Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee said: "Mental health issues can have a devastating effect on sufferers and those close to them. No one should have to face mental health challenges alone and it's important as a council that we do all that we can to ensure vulnerable residents are informed, and can access, vital support when they need it.

Working with partners is an essential part of our Suicide Prevention Action Plan and I'd like to thank We Power On, End Stigma Surrey, and The Jockey Club for their support with this event.

I'd encourage anyone experiencing mental health issues to seek help. One life lost is too much."

Chris, founder of We Power On said: "I'm pleased to be able to support the council with its walk and talk. Walking helped me especially during Covid lockdown and I'm looking forward to leading the walk across Epsom Downs and also sharing my experiences in the following event. It's important for everybody to know that they're not alone, encourage conversations and keep highlighting where those people suffering from mental health issues can turn to for support."

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Council works with local charities for needy

21 November 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is working with three local charities to distribute up to £88,700 from the Household Support Fund to people experiencing financial hardship across the borough. The council will work with The Good Company, Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell and The Meeting Room to ensure that funds can be accessed by vulnerable residents including families, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people, before 30 September 2024.

The Household Support Fund was first introduced on 30 September 2021 by Central Government to offer cost of living support over the winter months. This is the fifth time the scheme has been extended.

Councillor **Neil Dallen**, (RA Town Ward) Chair of the Strategy & Resources Committee, said "We know that the last few years have been difficult for many of our residents. By working with The Good Company, Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell and The Meeting Room, we aim to ensure that the financial support offered by the Household Support Fund can be accessed by the people in Epsom & Ewell who need it most.

"These trusted partners connect with vulnerable residents across the borough through their fantastic services which include, but are not limited to:

- The Epsom and Ewell Food Banks and Epsom Pantry, in South Street Epsom, run by the Good Company
- The Financial Wellbeing Support Service, run by Citizen's Advice
- Drop-ins and activities for residents at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness, run by The Meeting Room.

In addition, they have the expertise and administrative experience to ensure that allocations are distributed across the borough both promptly and efficiently."

Residents who require financial aid can contact one of the three organisations mentioned above.

Find out more about the Household Support Fund, including how to apply for funding in Epsom & Ewell: https://epsom-ewell.gov.uk/residents/cost-living-support/household-support-fund

Applications for Household Support Funds can be made through Citizen's Advice Epsom and Ewell: www.caee.org.uk/household-support-fund

For advice about cost of living support, residents can also visit:

- The Advice Café in Epsom, for advice and support through a wide variety of services, on Friday mornings between 10am-12noon at St. Barnabus' Church, Epsom: Community Hub — St Barnabas (stbarnabas-epsom.org.uk)
- The Cost of Living pages on Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's website to view a range of information and support: Cost of living support | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (epsom-ewell.gov.uk)

The Household Support Fund

The Household Support Fund is for anyone who's vulnerable or cannot pay for essentials. Residents do not have to be getting benefits to get help. If a resident does receive benefits, they will not be affected if a payment from a Household Support Fund scheme is awarded.

Good Company

Good Company is a charity working to prevent and alleviate poverty in East Surrey.

Their mission is: "To lead our community towards a poverty-free future, while supporting those who need our help. We demonstrate our values by being compassionate, kind, trusting, engaged, non-judgemental and resourcing."

Good Company Trust incorporates: Epsom & Ewell Foodbank, Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network, Poverty Truth Commission, Epsom Pantry (Part of Your Local Pantry network) and more. goodcompany.org.uk.

Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell Citizens Advice provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone regardless of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or nationality.

Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell was one of the first Citizens Advice Bureaux to be created in 1939 and is the member of

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the national Citizens Advice network serving people who live or work in the borough of Epsom and Ewell. Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell – Home (caee.org.uk).

The Meeting Room

The Meeting Room is a registered charity operating in the Mole Valley and Epsom areas. The charity was founded in 2014 by Graham Peddie MBE, who was a leading advocate for assisting the most vulnerable people in our community. Their clients are of all backgrounds and ages and their focus is to provide meaningful support to those with a wide variety of issues including homelessness, poverty, physical or mental health difficulties, breakdown of relationships, social exclusion and loneliness and issues with alcohol or drugs. Home | The Meeting Room – Helping Vulnerable People.

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