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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Epsom therapist seeks to lift our moods in gloomy weather

8 February 2026



It feels like Epsom has hardly seen the sun lately, making winter feel longer and delaying the arrival of spring. This kind of dullness is often described as “typical British weather”, but at the time of writing some parts of the UK have seen rain fall every single day of the year so far.

When daylight is limited and the rain never seems to stop, it is entirely normal to feel low, tired, or less motivated than usual. The good news is that there are some simple, evidence-based steps that can help support your mood, even when the weather is working against you.

Here, Mark from Mind & Meaning Therapy shares three proven mental health tips to help give your mood a boost.

A small social check-in each day

We are social creatures, and even small social connections can improve our mood. These do not need to be big events or require a lot of energy. Simple ways to stay socially connected include sending a text to a friend, scheduling a short phone call, or asking someone to meet for a drink.

These small check-ins can significantly increase feelings of connection. Research shows that regular positive social interactions are linked to better mood, greater life satisfaction, and lower levels of stress.

Get outside and get some natural light

Even on grey days, daylight is far stronger than indoor lighting. Try to dodge the showers and get outside for 10–20 minutes once a day. A walk to the shops or a quick loop around the park is enough to help.

Natural light helps regulate the body clock, which in turn supports both mood and sleep. Studies have found that people who spend more time in daylight during the winter months are less likely to report depressive symptoms than those who remain indoors with low light exposure.

Do one thing to improve your sleep

Sleep and mood are closely linked, and improving sleep can make a noticeable difference to how you feel emotionally. Simple, proven steps include going to bed and waking up at roughly the same time each day, reducing smartphone use before bedtime (for example by leaving your phone in another room), keeping the bedroom cool while ensuring a warm bed, avoiding caffeine late in the afternoon, and leaving an hour or two between your last alcoholic drink and bedtime.

Better sleep helps the brain regulate emotions and reduces stress, making it easier to cope with everyday ups and downs.

What to do if low mood is persistent

If your mental health feels poor over a longer period, or if everyday life feels unusually overwhelming, speaking to a mental health professional can help. Support can make a real difference.

You can contact Mark at Mind & Meaning Therapy in Epsom to explore what may be behind how you are feeling and to find support that suits you.

Mind & Meaning – Therapy in Epsom & Online
mindandmeaning.co.uk
Email: hello@mindandmeaning.co.uk



Sponsored article.

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Images: Pink umbrella in the rain, Erik Witsoe and The sun is shining through the clouds in the sky, Alireza Banijani Unsplash License

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5th February 2026

8 February 2026

Community Council Letters

Appeal to twin Epsom with Bucha in Ukraine



4 February 2026

From the committees of Surrey Stands With Ukraine and the Bucha-Epsom Association to all Councillors of the Borough of Epsom and Ewell. Re: Motion to Support Twinning with Bucha, Ukraine … Read More

Crime News Policing

January crime and safety round-up



2 February 2026

Epsom and Ewell Times does not normally report individual crime incidents. However, as a trial, we are publishing a monthly round-up of crime and community safety matters with a local … Read More

Helen Maguire Westminster

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The New Year view from Westminster



2 February 2026

From Epsom and Ewell Member for Parliament – Helen Maguire The new year often brings a quieter moment. A chance to take stock once the noise and festive chaos of … Read More

Rugby Sports

Sutton & Epsom beaten by Gravesend as yellow card proves decisive



1 February 2026

Sutton and Epsom RFC v Gravesend Saturday 31st January. On an autumnal October afternoon Sutton & Epsom defeated Gravesend 29–12 at the Rectory Field. That victory in Round 6 sent … Read More

Council Housing Social care

Now regulated, Epsom and Ewell greenlights children home



31 January 2026

Plans to turn a ‘quiet’ family house into a children’s home for vulnerable young people have been approved despite strong objections from neighbours, warnings from police, and a heated council … Read More

Council Housing Planning

Red rag at Bull Hill as residents rage over high-rise plans



31 January 2026

Huge high rises including hundreds of homes near a small Leatherhead park will kill the town and plunge precious playspace into shadow, say campaigners fighting the plans. Mole Valley District … Read More

Business Council

Epsom on course to connect Surrey businesses

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31 January 2026

An innovative initiative to help Surrey businesses benefit more from spending in the region’s £50 billion economy will soon launch. Source in Surrey has been developed by Surrey Chambers of … Read More

News Policing

Penchant for porn on Surrey police computer leads to ban



31 January 2026

A Surrey Police officer was dismissed for watching porn, taking pictures of his genitals and buying cocaine on a work device. Former Detective Constable (DC) Luke Turner has also been … Read More

News Policing

Paradox of Protection policy for tenants: triggers Surrey police evictions



31 January 2026

A pregnant mum says families have been left facing a “very real prospect of being homeless” after being told to leave Surrey Police subsidised housing. At least 15 households living … Read More

Council Education

“Go all in” is Surrey’s literary call to read books

31 January 2026

Surrey Libraries are thrilled to be taking part in the National Year of Reading, a UK-wide campaign designed to inspire more people to rediscover the joy of reading. A Department … Read More

Council Planning

Epsom & Ewell’s Council responds to Local Plan concerns



31 January 2026

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has responded to questions raised about the handling of its Local Plan examination,

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following criticism from a local resident that key issues were not discussed … Read More

Education News

A recipe for success – Dame Prue Leith visits Ewell's Nescot



29 January 2026

Dame Prue Leith DBE visited students at Nescot college in Epsom today, to share her experience, expertise and enthusiasm with students, including the next generation of culinary talent. Prue, a … Read More

News Policing Westminster

Epsom & Ewell MP presses government on firearm licensing safeguards



29 January 2026

Epsom & Ewell's MP Helen Maguire led a Westminster Hall debate on 28 January calling for tighter safeguards in the firearms licensing system, with a particular focus on making medical … Read More

Council Council constitution

Surrey declares experiment in community engagement a success



29 January 2026

Surrey County Council has endorsed the continuation of its pilot Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs), hailing them as a successful new way of ensuring that "community voices are heard" during the … Read More

Education News

Royal visit to Surrey University



29 January 2026

On 28 January, HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh and the University of Surrey's Chancellor, HRH The Duke of Kent, visited Surrey to celebrate the University's innovation, research and hands on … Read More

Business Council

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Council agrees to continue jobseeker support in Epsom & Ewell



29 January 2026

On 27 January 2026, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Strategy & Resources Committee approved continued funding and delivery arrangements for the Epsom & Ewell Hub (EE Hub). This decision ensures … Read More

Appeal to twin Epsom with Bucha in Ukraine

8 February 2026



From the committees of Surrey Stands With Ukraine and the Bucha-Epsom Association to all Councillors of the Borough of Epsom and Ewell.

Re: Motion to Support Twinning with Bucha, Ukraine – Full Council, 10 February 2026

Dear Councillors,

We write to you as a residents of Epsom and citizens of Ukraine resident in Epsom who believe we should stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine. Surrey Stands With Ukraine was founded in Epsom — a grassroots, volunteer-run charity formed at the outset of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.

Since then, our community has come together in ways few could have imagined. Epsom and Ewell has sent over **£5 million worth of humanitarian aid** to Ukraine. Through initiatives by *Surrey Stands With Ukraine*, *Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network*, local schools, churches, and dozens of individual volunteers and host families, we have built bonds of solidarity, compassion, and friendship with Ukraine — and especially with **the people of Bucha**.

This is why we urge you to support the motion at Full Council on 10th February to **endorse a twinning arrangement between Epsom and the town of Bucha**.

Now is the time:

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to do something meaningful — not just symbolic — that reflects the values our Borough has shown in abundance since 2022.

The hand of friendship has been extended to us by Bucha, a town now known around the world for both the suffering it endured and the resilience it has shown. Its Mayor, Anatolii Fedoruk, has held office for 28 years and has personally asked that Epsom become its **first UK twin**. That offer may not remain open forever. Delay may see it pass to another town.

This is not a political issue. Nor should it be subject to any "party line". We appeal to you all to treat this matter as a *free vote of conscience*, guided by your role as civic leaders, not party representatives.

This twinning initiative has nothing to do with sending aid or diverting council resources. **No funding or council officer time is required.** As with our Town's twinning with Chantilly, the operational side will be entirely run by a dedicated **Bucha-Epsom Association** — a volunteer-led, self-financing group which will invite councillors and community leaders on to its committee and work closely with the Chantilly association to avoid duplication.

What is needed from the Council is a **symbolic yet vital endorsement** of the principle of twinning — the first step to recognising what our community has already built, and what it can go on to achieve.

Twinning with Bucha now — *during the war*, not after — carries a deeper meaning. True friendship is shown in hard times as well as good. Kindness should always be forefront of our minds in all our actions. That is the kind of friendship Bucha seeks, and one we should be proud to offer.

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Imagine the future educational and cultural benefits:

- Our children participating in moderated online exchanges with students from Bucha.
- English-learning Ukrainian youth paired with Epsom school pupils for real-life conversation.
- Artists, musicians, sportspeople, and teachers collaborating across borders.
- Civic resilience and peace building projects that our Borough could help shape.

At a time when war continues and local government reorganisation looms, it may feel tempting to delay. But we urge you not to let that be an excuse. If anything, the imminent changes make it *more compelling* that **Epsom and Ewell makes this decision now**, while it still exists as a borough council with a distinct identity. Let our legacy be something enduring, generous, and globally visible.

This proposal brings no burden, only benefit. It requires no budget, only goodwill. It demands no partisanship, only perspective.

We ask each of you, as elected representatives of our community, to do what Epsom and Ewell has done again and again since 2022: **extend your hand, open your hearts, and lead with humanity**.

With hope and determination,

Alan **Avis**

Tetyana **Bilyk**

Lionel **Blackman**

Roy **Deadman**

Galyna **Donstova**

Denise **Faulkner**

Vladimir **Nakonechniyi**

Lisa **Stewart**

Pierre-Michel **Tarrant**

Surrey Stands With Ukraine

Bucha-Epsom Association

The New Year view from Westminster

8 February 2026



From Epsom and Ewell Member for Parliament – Helen Maguire

The new year often brings a quieter moment. A chance to take stock once the noise and festive chaos of December fades. This year, that moment felt especially important to me.

Politics in Britain feels deeply unsettled right now, and the wider world even more so. One day brings news of geopolitical relationships breaking down in violent and inhumane acts; the next, warnings of democratic fragility from our neighbours across the Atlantic. It can all feel relentless. I don’t blame anyone who feels disillusioned, or let down by establishments and leaders that are meant to provide stability and reassurance. I feel that frustration myself at times.

When that sense of turbulence sets in, I remind myself where my focus belongs. My responsibilities are not abstract; they are here. My priorities and primary interest are with the people of Epsom and Ewell, my community. That clarity matters. It keeps my work grounded, and it shapes what my work in Westminster will be this year.

One tangible example of that focus is recent progress on the issue of pavement parking. Residents have raised this issue with me consistently since before my election in July 2024, and for good reason. Obstructed pavements are not just a minor inconvenience; they affect people’s safety. Parents with pushchairs, wheelchair users, people with visual impairments, and older residents are often the ones forced into the road just to get by.

After sustained campaigning, both locally and in Parliament, we are finally going to see meaningful change. This month, the Government gave councils new powers to tackle problematic pavement parking. What this means is that councils, not

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the police, can act where pavements are clearly blocked or unsafe, without long, street-by-street processes every time. Here's what it doesn't mean: this is not a blanket ban. Councils can still allow exemptions on narrow or busy residential streets where pavement parking is genuinely needed.

This is an important change that puts safety and accessibility first. I'm proud of this progress, not just for the outcome, but for what it represents: local voices being heard and practical problems taken seriously. I was pleased to receive recognition of my campaigning in a letter from Lilian Greenwood MP, the Minister for Local Transport, announcing the changes, and this year my priority will be ensuring that this change is implemented properly and consistently.

Another issue that comes up repeatedly is antisocial behaviour. This can take many forms, from vandalism and loud noise to the misuse of shared spaces. These issues can quietly have a real impact on our community and sense of belonging.

One specific concern constituents raise with me regularly is the growing problem of illegal or unsafe e-scooter use. I hear from parents worried that pavements or public pathways are no longer safe, and from older residents who no longer feel confident on their quick walk to the shops. One parent described a moment where their young child was mere millimetres from being knocked over by an e-scooter travelling far faster than it should have been, on a pathway it had no business being on. I dread to think what kind of irreparable damage could have been done if it weren't for just a few millimetres of space.

When e-scooters are used responsibly and legally, they can have a place in society. But reckless riding and a lack of coordinated enforcement create real and costly risks. Last year I worked with campaigners, police and transport partners to push for a more cohesive, joined-up response to the problem. This isn't about targeting young people or stifling new technology; it's about, as with the pavement parking issue, ensuring our public spaces are safe for everyone who uses them.

For anyone doubting just how much devastation an electric scooter can bring to someone's life and family, I would encourage them to read about Jacob's Journey, and the powerful work his mother Carly is doing as a result.

My work as Primary Care and Cancer spokesperson continues alongside my constituency campaigns, and the two remain closely intertwined. I will continue to fight for better healthcare across the constituency, whether that is through better access to GP appointments or timely treatment for cancer patients.

If there is a running thread through my priorities this year, it is a belief in the value of steady, practical action that is tangible for every single member of the Epsom and Ewell community. In the uncertain times ahead, the basics matter more than ever: safe streets, responsive public services, and a more affordable cost of living. I will continue to work hard delivering this for our constituency.

Helen Maguire MP



29th January 2026

8 February 2026

Council Finances

Bit of monkey business in Epsom's Town Hall Chamber



27 January 2026

A meeting of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council on 22nd January saw councillors approve a new schedule of planning fees and charges for … Read More

Council Culture Finances

Independent view of Ewell's Bourne Hall

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27 January 2026

BBC LDRS reports: Up to £359,000 could be spent on rejuvenating Ewell's Bourne Hall Museum under new plans but opposition councillors have stressed that key information on the decision has … Read More

Letters Nature

100 years campaigning to keep Surrey Green

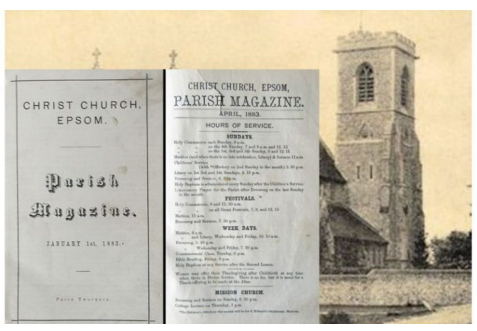


26 January 2026

Dear Surrey, The countryside is your greatest achievement. A beautiful masterpiece built by centuries of collaboration between people and nature. From meadows and woodlands to rivers, coasts, and the green … Read More

Faith Local History

A surprise glimpse into 1883: Christ Church Epsom Common's Parish Magazine



26 January 2026

Out of the blue, Christ Church Epsom Common was recently approached by a Worcestershire-based bookseller and gratefully accepted her kind gift of a bound volume (about the size of a … Read More

Council Finances

Surrey council budget published



25 January 2026

Surrey residents can expect to pay 4.99 per cent more council tax next year under plans in the new budget. Surrey County Council has revealed it is losing a huge … Read More

Council Finances

A Surrey Council's finances don't add-up for 6th year running

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25 January 2026

Spelthorne Borough Council’s finances are still so muddled that they will not be fully fixed before it disappears into a new mega-council in West Surrey, says a new report. External … Read More

Council Housing Planning

Redhill developers make a towering mistake



24 January 2026

Two major landmark towers that would have dominated a Surrey town have been dismissed with campaigners claiming a major victory in their long-running battle. Developers Solum Regeneration had been hoping … Read More

News Transport

Heathrow 3rd runway green-light by 2029?



24 January 2026

Heathrow Airport has begun working on its third runway planning application with the aim of getting the green light by 2029. Last November, the Government indicated that the West London … Read More

Crime Policing

Surrey Police’s AI powered face recognition cameras in the spotlight



23 January 2026

Surrey Police will continue to use AI-powered surveillance vans to scan thousands of people’s faces in public locations despite fears over ethnic bias, said councillors calling for their use to … Read More

Council Environment

EEBC reports air quality milestone and revised carbon emissions figures

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23 January 2026

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Environment Committee has noted a series of climate and air quality updates, including the formal revocation of the Ewell High Street Air Quality Management Area … Read More

Business Community Education

Ex-Gendarme launches Epsom safety awareness programme for children



23 January 2026

A new safety awareness programme for children has been launched in Epsom by former French armed police officer Xavier Vollin, who now works in the UK as a close protection … Read More

Council Council constitution

The process of appointing the new local government chiefs begins



22 January 2026

Councillors from across Surrey met this week for the very first time as part of two new committees set up to manage the county's biggest council shake-up in decades. The … Read More

Council News

Goldman sacks the Epsom and Ewell Residents Association



22 January 2026

A councillor representing Nonsuch ward has become the latest member of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to change political alignment mid-term, with Shanice Goldman joining the Conservative group. Cllr Goldman, … Read More

Council Editorial Finances

Process matters — but so does the balance sheet

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22 January 2026

Epsom & Ewell Times has recently published a run of stories raising concerns about process, openness and transparency at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC). Those issues matter. A council … Read More

Athletics Sports

Epsom and Ewell’s MP in the running for …. running



20 January 2026

A hardy team of Epsom & Ewell Harriers women braved freezing conditions for the third fixture of the Surrey Cross Country League season at Oxshott Woods on 10th January, hosted … Read More

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100 years campaigning to keep Surrey Green

8 February 2026



Dear Surrey,

The countryside is your greatest achievement. A beautiful masterpiece built by centuries of collaboration between people and nature. From meadows and woodlands to rivers, coasts, and the green spaces that bind us together, the countryside connects and sustains us all.

For a century, the Campaign to Protect Rural England has been its guardian. Despite the relentless, growing pressure on our landscapes, we’ve stood up for the countryside and helped give the people who love it a voice. That will never change.

Many of the pressures facing our countryside today were familiar to our founders – not least the challenge of providing homes, infrastructure and prosperity on a small island. But new pressures have emerged with more catastrophic impacts on the land we love. Nature is in freefall and climate change threatens to alter our landscapes for good.

Now more than ever, decisions about how we use our land are leading to the needless loss of landscapes and everything they support. Without drastic action, much of what makes our countryside unique and beautiful will be lost.

Wherever we live, we rely on the countryside for clean air, home grown food, thriving wildlife and resilience in the face of climate change. Yet these foundations are being chipped away. Too often decisions are shaped by profit, not what’s needed most – and the countryside pays the price.

Here in Surrey, we have even been faced with a series of major housing developments, access roads, ‘solar farms’ and ‘battery energy storage systems’, in Green Belt countryside. Many of these sites are on the edge of the Surrey Hills National Landscape itself.

Now, as 2026 dawns we are now battling a growing number of planning applications which rely on councils downgrading Green Belt land to so-called ‘grey belt’, as well as excessive and unsustainable housebuilding targets imposed on local communities.

Our centenary vision is for a countryside that’s greener, more resilient and protected for future generations. There is a better way – one we’re calling for, and one everyone can be part of:

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• Stop the loss of countryside. Let's protect what we love and do everything we can to make sure green fields and woodlands aren't needlessly lost.

• Improve the quality of the countryside for future generations. That means thriving communities, clean rivers, healthy food and resilient landscapes rich in nature.

• Inspire more people to care for the countryside. A countryside for all where more people take action to enjoy and protect it.

Across the country, people are already showing what's possible – restoring hedgerows, rethinking development and sustainable farming, and making space for nature.

As we begin our centenary year, we're sending this message to everyone: love your countryside and be part of its future. This is just the beginning – and we all have a part to play in shaping what comes next.If you share this vision, join the movement today, add your name to this letter and stand with us.

Yours faithfully,

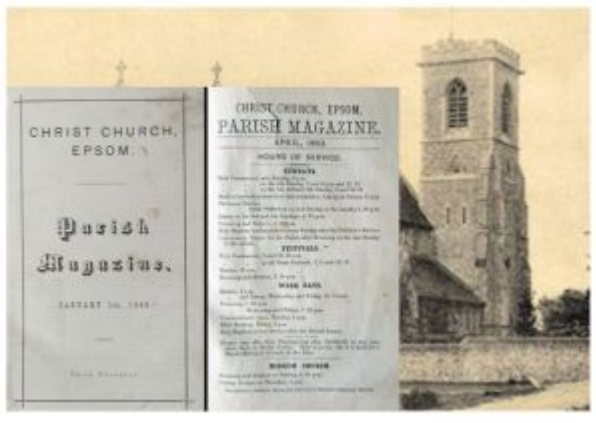
Andy Smith

Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (Surrey)

Photo: Surrey Hills Credit Aleksey Maksimov CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 DEED

A surprise glimpse into 1883: Christ Church Epsom Common's Parish Magazine

8 February 2026



Out of the blue, Christ Church Epsom Common was recently approached by a Worcestershire-based bookseller and gratefully accepted her kind gift of a bound volume (about the size of a modern paperback) of parish magazines from 1883. The volume, too battered and niche for resale, nonetheless provides a fascinating glimpse into the life of the parish just seven years after the church's consecration in 1876.

There were Christ Church parish magazines before this: the January 1883 edition refers to an item in the now-lost December 1882 magazine. As with many such publications, they were seen as ephemeral at the time. Although issued monthly, the next surviving edition in the Christ Church archive dates from 1900, with records then remaining patchy until the late 1940s, when systematic retention began.

Both the gold-stamped spine and the frontispiece give the contents simply as *Parish Magazine 1883*, with no mention of the parish name. The editor is listed as J Erskine Clarke MA, an Anglican clergyman who, in January 1859, launched what is regarded as the world's first commercial parish magazine inset, prosaically titled *Parish Magazine*. Each monthly edition ran to around 24 pages and combined religious material with a surprisingly wide range of secular content.

Alongside sermons and Bible studies were items of fiction (often moralising), practical advice, articles on British wildlife, and descriptions of churches and places at home and abroad. The 1883 editions included pieces such as *First Aid to the Sick*, *Making a Will*, an account of a visit to Malta, an unexpectedly open-minded article on Islam and the Prophet Mohammed, and the intriguingly titled *Worms and their Habits*. Each issue carried at least two engraved illustrations, particularly to accompany the travel articles.

The inset was published by Wells Gardner, Darton & Company of Paternoster Buildings, London, specialists in ecclesiastical publishing, and printed by Strangeways & Sons. It was always intended to be surrounded by locally produced parish material. At Christ Church this usually amounted to a further eight pages, printed and bound with the inset by local firm L W Andrews & Son. In some months, when local material ran to only four pages, the usual plain cover was altered to make better use of the available space.

Parishioners paid 2d per issue – roughly £1 in today's money.

Much of the local content was routine but revealing. Each issue set out the full schedule of services for the coming month, listing not only Sunday services but weekday Mattins and Evensong, along with the hymns to be sung. Lists of baptisms, marriages and funerals followed, together with a standard notice inviting women to offer Thanksgiving after Childbirth, "there being no fee, but it being usual for a Thank-offering to be made at the Altar". Details of the previous month's collections were also carefully recorded.

Christ Church did not acquire its own church hall until 1899, so meetings and events were held in a variety of venues. The

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January 1883 magazine lists the Vicarage, the Working Men's Club, the Infant School and the Guild Room. The then-new Working Men's Club, opened in 1881 and later renamed the Epsom Common Club, stood just across Stamford Green.

The Infant School, now lost, stood on West Hill (then known as Clay Hill). Founded through an 1844 endowment by Miss Elizabeth Trotter of Horton Manor, O'Kelly's former racing stables were converted for the education of children from families on Epsom Common. The school closed in 1925 and was later demolished.

Another regular feature was the "Penny Bank", encouraging thrift among parishioners. Deposits could be made weekly at the Vicarage, with interest paid at 2½ per cent – or 5 per cent for children attending Christ Church Sunday School.

The January issue opened with a letter from the Vicar, the Revd Archer Hunter, then barely a year into what would become a 30-year incumbency. After setting out his vision for the developing parish, he appealed for more Sunday School teachers and closed by wishing all a Happy New Year – though only, he cautioned, for those "determined to spend it in the constant Presence of their God and Saviour".

Later editions offer vivid glimpses of parish life. February records a recitation of *Dickens' Christmas Carol* in the Infant School room, delivered by Mr Mechelen Rogers before a large audience. While not all were amused, those "qualified to give an opinion" spoke in the highest terms of his performance, promising him an "enthusiastic and noiseless" reception should he return.

March saw the founding of a parish branch of the Church of England Temperance Society, with 37 parishioners unanimously adopting a strongly worded resolution identifying intemperance as a source of poverty, crime and irreligion. Members signed pledges ranging from total abstinence to more qualified commitments, and the movement quickly attracted both adult and juvenile members.

The same edition listed the parish's current "Wants", including Sunday School teachers, a parish bier, a bookcase and books for a parochial library, and a new organ stop. It is a pleasing historical coincidence that this very volume survives bearing a library label inside its front cover, suggesting it was once item number 436 in that collection and heavily used.

For parishes that bound their magazines into annual volumes, the national publishers supplied a frontispiece and index, with the binding undertaken locally. A small label inside the rear cover of this book shows it was bound by John Snashall of Epsom High Street. Though now in poor condition, the quality of the leather spine and gold-blocked title speak of careful craftsmanship.

More than a century on, this battered volume offers a remarkably intimate picture of parish life in Victorian Epsom Common – practical, moral, communal and often surprisingly vivid.

This article is reproduced with permission from the Epsom and Ewell History Explorer (www.eehe.org.uk). The original article, written by Roger Morgan, forms part of EEHE's extensive and richly illustrated archive of local history. EET readers are warmly encouraged to explore the many other fascinating histories available on the site.

Image: Christ Church from postcard 1900 and the front pages of the January and April 1883 editions by Roger Morgan © 2022

Process matters — but so does the balance sheet

8 February 2026

Epsom & Ewell Times has recently published a run of stories raising concerns about process, openness and transparency at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC). Those issues matter. A council can deliver services and still fall short on how it explains itself, records decisions, shares information, and responds to scrutiny.

But if we are going to judge the borough fairly, we should also place EEBC in a wider Surrey context — particularly on the question that has become existential for parts of local government: financial resilience. In this respect we are all lucky not to be living in one of a number of other Surrey boroughs which carry massive debt.

A Surrey league table no council wants to top

Using each district and borough council's reported borrowing position and dividing by population, the county picture is stark. A small number of councils sit in an entirely different universe of debt-per-resident — Woking and Spelthorne above all, with Runnymede also far ahead of the pack.

At the other end, councils such as Reigate & Banstead report minimal borrowing compared to the Surrey outliers.

EEBC, on the same simple "borrowing per head" measure, is firmly in the low-debt group — nowhere near the high-risk profile that has dominated headlines elsewhere.

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What this means for EEBC's story

It would be a mistake to pretend that "good finances" cancels out "poor process". It doesn't. Residents are entitled to proper explanations, accessible records, timely disclosure, and a culture that treats scrutiny as a civic asset rather than a nuisance.

But it would also be a mistake to ignore that, in Surrey terms, EEBC's financial position looks comparatively restrained — particularly when set against the scale of borrowing reported by the county's worst-affected councils.

That relative prudence matters because Surrey is heading toward local government reorganisation. When structures change, it is the underlying financial inheritance — and the habits that created it — that shape what services survive, what investments stall, and what risks get handed on.

The Residents' Association question

EEBC is unusual in one respect: it is dominated by Residents' Associations rather than the national parties. Some voters might reasonably assume that an administration not driven by national political goals would be **best-in-class** on the basics of local stewardship — especially finance.

Yet "not being party political" is not, by itself, a guarantee of excellence. A locally rooted administration can still fall into bad habits: weak challenge, insularity, a defensive attitude to information, or an over-reliance on officer-led process that leaves elected members appearing remote from key decisions.

If EEBC wants to claim the mantle of the "competent local alternative", then the test is simple: keep the financial discipline — and raise the bar on transparency to match it.

Cllr Shanice Goldman's defection to the Conservative Party and her reasons contain some irony in this context. The super-debt league leaders of Surrey Districts' table of financial infamy are or were Conservative led during their plunges into debt despair.

A constructive conclusion

EEBC's comparatively modest borrowing position gives it something precious: room to manoeuvre. The council should use that room not to relax, but to improve how it governs: publish clearer narratives, make decision trails easier to follow, treat FOI and public questions as part of democratic health, and build trust through routine openness rather than reactive disclosure.

In other words: Surrey shows us what happens when the balance sheet breaks. EEBC should ensure that, locally, the democratic culture doesn't.

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Goldman sacks the Epsom and Ewell Residents Association

Surrey districts "debt per head" league table

(£ per resident; higher = more debt per head)

1. **Woking** – **~£21,145 per head** (total borrowing ~£2.180bn at 31 Mar 2025).
2. **Spelthorne** – **~£10,299 per head** (long-term borrowing ~£1.042bn at 31 Mar 2025).
3. **Runnymede** – **~£6,553 per head** (long-term borrowing ~£587.1m at 31 Mar 2025).
4. **Surrey Heath** – **~£2,029 per head** (borrowing ~£183.4m at year end).
5. **Guildford** – **~£1,842 per head** (borrowing shown as £74.040m short-term + £201.508m long-term at 31 Mar 2025).
6. **Mole Valley** – **~£1,192 per head** *(see caveat)* (snippet-reported "external borrowing" ~£103m, referenced to its audited 2022/23 position).
7. **Tandridge** – **~£1,088 per head** *(see caveat)* (figure inferred from the draft accounts extract available in search results; I was not able to open the full PDF again to verify the precise borrowing line-item).

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8. **Epsom & Ewell** – **~£796 per head** (borrowing ~£64.427m at 31 Mar 2025).
9. **Elmbridge** – **~£353 per head** *(see caveat)* (accounts page was blocked to me; borrowing figure comes from the published accounts snippet indicating borrowing outstanding at 31 Mar 2025).
10. **Reigate & Banstead** – **~£33 per head** (balance sheet shows **£5.0m short-term borrowing** and **no long-term borrowing** at 31 Mar 2025).

Caveat

Councils report "deficit" in several non-equivalent ways (e.g., accounting deficit on provision of services, general fund outturn variance, in-year overspend funded by reserves). EET had difficulty sourcing the figures for Waverley.

22nd January 2025

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A Decision Not Fully Bourne Out?

8 February 2026



From Councillor Alex Coley.

Dear Editor,

I read Emily Dalton’s article *Ewell’s “UFO” shaped Bourne Hall to take off anew* in the *Epsom & Ewell Times* with great interest, for a number of reasons.

I took part in the LGA Cultural Peer Challenge which looked at options for the future of Bourne Hall Museum in August last year. At that time, I was the lead Independent councillor in England for sector-led improvement, which is the local government policy area under which LGA peer challenges take place.

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The peer challenge was notable for two things: firstly, the short notice and brevity of information provided; and secondly, the non-attendance of all but one Residents' Association councillor (a former employee of Bourne Hall) at the group session where we met with the peer team. Seven RA councillors were invited, including the Leader of the Council. All four leaders of the opposition political groups were in attendance.

In October, I wrote to the Council's Chief Executive asking when the report would be published, as is expected in all LGA peer challenges. I was told it would form part of the Community & Wellbeing Committee papers on 13 January 2026. When I noticed that the report was not included in the committee papers, I wrote again to the Chief Executive asking why not, and was told this would be sorted out, with the admission that she had thought it would be included. Yet it was never published or shown to members at the committee.

The day after members voted on the decision, I received a further email from the Chief Executive explaining that it had been decided to incorporate a high-level executive summary of the peer challenge report instead, as this was felt to better fit with the focus of the committee report. I was told this decision was taken in conjunction with the committee chair, Cllr Clive Woodbridge. The peer challenge report has still not been made public and, as such, I have submitted a Freedom of Information request to obtain it.

Internally, I understand that the report contains findings by the LGA peer team which are not favourable to Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. These reportedly include:

- General confusion and mixed messages about the museum's closure
- A decision to exclude stewardship and governance questions from the scope of the museum's future
- Failure to complete work recommended in a 2023 review of Bourne Hall
- Disproportionate recharge costs which do not reflect the true running costs of the museum
- Frustration on the part of the peer team at being unable to access more detailed income and expenditure information relating to Bourne Hall
- Fragmented staffing structures which may be contributing to gaps in communication, information-sharing and missed opportunities

Should I infer that the reason the report has not been made public is embarrassment to the Council, rather than a genuine desire for a high-level summary to better fit the focus of the committee report?

Cllr Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee, accepted that, *"in hindsight"*, the LGA report should have been included in the committee papers, after being challenged by Cllr Bernie Muir and Cllr Rob Geleit during the meeting. And yet, at the time of writing, it has still not been shared with the public.

Will it be made public before the Strategy & Resources Committee considers the £359,000 requested spending?

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Alex Coley

Independent – Ruxley

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Puppy School has arrived in Epsom!

8 February 2026



■ Owning the perfect puppy has never been easier now that "Puppy School" has arrived in Stoneleigh, Epsom!

■ "Puppy School" is a UK-wide network of professional dog trainers and Angelika received her own tutor training from renowned author, dog trainer and canine behaviourist Gwen Bailey.

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Six weekly lessons held in St John's Church Hall, Stoneleigh run by Angelika, are based on kind, gentle and effective methods. Angelika teaches owners how to improve their dogs' obedience and ensure their puppies become good-mannered, well-balanced pets − friendly with adults, children and other dogs, and responsive to basic commands. Based on behavioural research and a better understanding of how animals learn, Angelika will teach owners to train their pets using kind, reward-based techniques, rooted in science. This helps produce obedient, well-mannered dogs who are not timid or fearful.

Angelika attends regular courses in the latest animal behaviour and training techniques and keeps up to date with information that may be useful to pet dog owners.

Angelika says, "My classes are designed to make training simple, and to be fun for both owners and puppies. They are ideal for dogs aged up to the age of 20 weeks and I teach owners and their puppies how to enjoy a healthy and happy life together." She continues. "I am passionate about what I do, I feel that I am a friendly, approachable trainer and I shall always be on hand to give all the advice owners need to turn their puppies into well behaved adult dogs and beloved family pets."

Classes held at St John's Church Hall, Station Approach, Stoneleigh, Epsom KT19 0QZ

■ Studies show that it's never too early to begin training and socialising pups. The earlier the better (and the easier it is) Socialisation and Habituation are key!

■ Puppy School was formed in 2002, and professionally trained tutors are running classes UK-wide.

■ Puppy School founder Gwen Bailey worked for the Blue Cross animal welfare charity, from 1988 to 2002 and pioneered the use of dog behaviour knowledge in the rehoming of unwanted animals. She was the first person to be appointed by a national animal welfare charity as a full-time animal behaviourist, eventually heading a team of behaviourists. Gwen has successfully solved behaviour problems in thousands of rehomed dogs, helping to prevent dogs with behavioural problems being passed from home to home and improving the rehoming success rate

■ For further information or to make a booking please contact Angelika on email:

Angelika@Puppyschool.co.uk alternatively, please visit: **www.puppyschoolepsom.co.uk**

Sponsored article.



More erudition on local government reorganisation in Epsom and Ewell

8 February 2026



Dear Editor,

In his letter of 13 January Trevor Burt makes a number of good points, including rightly calling out the determination of the ruling Residents Association (RA) clique to impose parish councils on the residents they claim to represent without giving them the opportunity to express support for an alternative "community governance" model.

He is also correct that Epsom and Ewell residents will have proportionately more influence in the smaller council of East Surrey than in the bigger pond of Surrey County Council.

But the RA's determination to force through the creation of parish councils that have little support in the borough is explained by a simpler mathematical calculation. Even in the unlikely event that the political party that claims not to be a

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political party were to win all the seats available in our current borough, it would still be in a minority on the new council.

As I and others have said, parish councils are about preserving the relevance of a clique that is used to seeing Epsom and Ewell as its fiefdom.

In the meantime, the RA will continue to mismanage the council, as the latest fiasco over the Rainbow Leisure Centre shows, as it wastes the valuable time of council tax payer-funded officers on the pursuit of the RA councillors' vanity project.

The Rainbow Centre fiasco also shows how determined the RA are to keep the truth of their incompetence from residents. It may interest your readers to know that I have written to the administration to seek confirmation that the decision to keep the huge repairs bill secret included an assessment of what the public interest required.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Chris Ames (Labour – Court Ward)

Dear Editor,

Sadly, in his support and criticism of my stance on both SCC's Neighbourhood Councils and the Town Council alternative, Trevor Burt (Letters to the Editor 13/01/26) seems to miss my point.

As I state in my penultimate paragraph, the engagement of residents in determining the outcomes of policies and spending in their area does not necessarily require replacement frameworks, large expenditure and more elections. It can be undertaken by devolving funds to Unitary Authority Councillors individually or jointly to spend on local priorities, more local consultations, the co-designing of local services with residents, regular pulse surveys, as well as transferring local assets to communities. These opportunities provide for real localism and for all residents, if they choose, to have their say.

Yours faithfully,

Eber Kington

Residents Association County Councillor

Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington

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8 February 2026



Dear Editor,

I was heartened to read Cllr Eber Kington’s letter of 9th January. For once, a Resident Association councillor has broken ranks with the ruling Residents’ Association line by publicly disavowing the party’s own sponsored option of creating two community councils to replace Epsom and Ewell Borough Council following Local Government Reorganisation. That departure is to be applauded.

However, I must respectfully challenge the assertion that the current options before us truly trust residents — “the people most qualified to decide what is best for the borough,” as Cllr Kington rightly characterises them — with a meaningful say. In reality, EEBC hasn’t offered residents any choice beyond:

* Two community councils (effectively parish/town councils with a precept), or
* No community councils at all.

If Cllr Kington has alternative proposals for how local democratic accountability and community decision-making can supplement ten councillors representing East Surrey on the new unitary authority, he has left it far too late for such alternatives to be prepared, costed, and properly considered before EEBC’s much-awaited March 2026 meeting.

It is worth putting the democratic and financial context in sharper focus. At present, EEBC has 36 councillors servicing a modest borough budget of around £10.27 million for 2025/26. In contrast, Surrey County Council’s budget of £1.2641 billion including responsibilities, covering education, highways, social care and more, account for roughly 76 % of the total council tax bill paid by residents, with EEBC receiving only about 10 %.

Under the new arrangements for two unitary authorities— as confirmed by government decision — the Epsom and Ewell area will be represented by 10 councillors on the East Surrey Council, dealing with the vast majority of public services currently under County control. Crude though it is, this means that for the major service budgets now handled at county

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level, Epsom and Ewell will have significantly greater relative influence than before. Currently, just five county councillors represent the borough's interests on a much larger Surrey budget; in future, ten unitary councillors will cover roughly half of the former Surrey population's budget responsibilities.

Yes, it is true that we lose some of the micro-representation previously afforded by a larger cohort of borough councillors on planning and routine community matters — though even now many planning decisions are subject to Government inspectors overruling local decisions on appeal. But on the biggest pots of public spending — education, adult social care, highways, children's services — residents will likely be better represented proportionately than under the old two-tier county/district system.

So when debating the merits of Neighbourhood Area Committees versus community councils, let us be clear about the alternatives on the table. Both NACs and community councils have limitations and cost implications, and both are artificially constrained by the narrow set of options EEBC has chosen to present. The real democratic choice for residents should be wider than simply more or fewer tiers of parish councils.

If Cllr Kington truly believes, as he claims, that residents should decide how council tax is spent and how their communities are governed, then let us see a credible alternative framework— with transparent proposals, budget implications, and democratic accountability — ahead of March. Otherwise, the debate will continue to swirl around consultancy-driven options that neither trust nor empower the people they purport to serve.

Yours faithfully,

Trevor Burt

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Seven-try storm sinks Epsom and Sutton

8 February 2026



Old Colfeians 44 Sutton & Epsom RFC 22. Saturday 10th January.

The fourth-placed Black & Whites opened their 2026 account at Horn Park against Old Colfeians, who sat one place below them in the league table. Sutton's season has been one of feast or famine — the ecstasy of winning their first four fixtures giving way to the agony of a five-match losing streak — although bonus points in defeat have kept them competitive. Whatever New Year resolutions were made, they did not translate into success on the pitch as Old Colfeians ran in seven tries in a 44–22 victory.

After a week of wild weather, conditions were benign, despite a temporary water cut in the area which thankfully was resolved in time for the teams to shower. There was an early sign of trouble when Sutton were pushed back at the first scrum, although this proved to be a rare moment of dominance by the home pack. Old Colfeians opened the scoring with a penalty from Ollie Burkett. Sutton responded five minutes later when Freddy Bunting kicked to the corner, Ewan McTaggart secured possession and after multiple phases Tom Lennard found winger Kyren Ghumra, who crossed for the opening try. The conversion struck the upright, but Sutton led 5–3.

The hosts soon hit back as centre Louis Baker broke through from 25 metres for the first of his two tries, regaining the lead at 8–5. Sutton replied immediately with what many present judged their try of the season — slick passing down the right wing released Ghumra for his second, nudging the visitors back in front at 10–8. The lead did not last long. A flowing counter-attack, started by full-back Chris Harris, ended with Mylo Mutongwizo finishing in the corner. Another missed conversion left Old Colfeians ahead 13–10.

Sutton pressed again but a sharp interception from Burkett turned defence into attack, leading to a try finished by prop Tom Rameaux. Burkett added the conversion for a 20–10 half-time lead in a fast-paced and entertaining contest.

Sutton were dealt a blow when scrum-half Gareth O'Brien was forced off with concussion, with Tom Lennard taking over his duties. The visitors made a strong start to the second half and were rewarded when McTaggart forced his way over

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from close range after another line-out move. Once again the conversion was missed, leaving Sutton trailing 20–15 with half an hour to play.

Although Sutton enjoyed spells of possession, Old Colfeians' defence was resolute. When the hosts regained territory, Harris kicked to the corner and the resulting catch-and-drive saw hooker Freddie Holland-Oliver score the bonus-point try. Burkett converted for 27–15 and the home forwards, led by captain Andy O'Malley, began to dominate. O'Malley powered over soon after, stretching the lead to 34–15.

Adam Bibby briefly reignited Sutton hopes with a strong run, but Baker then ran in from 40 metres for his second try to make it 39–15. Sutton did at least secure a valuable bonus point when Tom Lennard took a quick tap from a penalty near the line and Eric Duey emerged from the pile to score. Bunting converted to bring the score to 39–22.

Old Colfeians had the final word when O'Malley crossed again following another forward surge. Burkett missed the conversion but the hosts completed a convincing 44–22 win.

Sutton were very much in contention in the first half, but as the game wore on they were increasingly overpowered by a dominant Colfeians pack that laid the platform for victory. Both sides then enjoyed generous hospitality in the clubhouse, where Horn Park remains a favourite destination for travelling supporters.

Next Saturday Sutton return to Rugby Lane to face Sidcup, who won the reverse fixture 22–12 earlier in the season.

Sutton & Epsom
Bennion, Scott, Bibby, Bunting ©, Ghumra, Lennard, O'Brien, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, McTaggart, Finney, Rea, Jones & Hegarty.
Reps: Howes, Duey & Symonds.

Old Colfeians
Harris, Mutongwizo, Baker, Napper, Spaczil, Burkett, Wylie, Rameaux, Holland-Oliver, Agorioge, O'Malley ©, Collins-Oberman, Enskat, Walker & Amor.
Reps: Correa, Ramdhan & Storey.

John Croysdill

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy from a previous fixture.

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