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For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

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ISSN 2753-2771

Criminal convictions follow Banstead construction site death

18 September 2026



Two companies and a manager have been sentenced 9th September), after being found guilty of a health and safety charge of failing to discharge their duties following the death of a labourer who died on a construction site in Banstead in June 2020.

Gheorghita Arsene, 33, died when a 10ft (3m) trench collapsed on top of him, covering him in soil. He had been working on a site in Park Road where an old care home was being demolished to make way for a new purpose-built home.

Following a three-month trial at the Central Criminal Court in London, principal contractor Appledorn Developments Limited were found guilty of a health and safety charge of failing to discharge their duties. They were fined £500,000 with the judge, Her Honour Judy Khan KC, commenting that “their failure to ensure that a safe system of work was motivated by the desire to get the works done quickly and cheaply”.

T Vaughan Limited were also found guilty of a health and safety charge of failing to discharge their duties and were fined £650,000. They were also ordered to pay a further £40,000 in costs. The judge said she was” satisfied that systems were in place, but these were not sufficiently adhered to or implemented”.

Contracts manager Anthony O’Connor, 42, of Romford, Essex, pleaded guilty to failing to discharge his duty under the Health and Safety Act 1974, which was accepted by the prosecution. The judge sentenced him to 10 months in custody, suspended for 18 months, and ordered to carry out 150 hours of unpaid work, saying that “a number of workers were exposed to the risk of harm”.

The jury failed to reach a verdict in relation to a charge of manslaughter against O’Connor.

Site manager Peter Wraith, 54, from New Waltham in Lincolnshire, was found not guilty of manslaughter and assistant site manager Gregory Peake, 51, from Bromley in south-east London, was acquitted of failing to discharge his health and safety duty.

The court was told that a health and safety inspection found there were no supports to the trench and the excavated soil had been deposited unsafely close to it.

Mr Arsene, described in court as a “good man who worked hard and achieved everything through his
hard work”, had been working to replace a damaged pipe at the bottom of the trench and was clearing soil when one of the trench walls collapsed.

Despite desperate attempts by his colleagues, they could not pull him free.

Fire and ambulance crews were called to the scene but faced similar difficulties in digging Mr Arsene out, and he was confirmed deceased at the scene shortly after the incident took place.

Senior Investigating Officer, Detective Inspector Debbie Birch, said: “Gheorgita Arsene’s death could have been avoided if the appropriate health and safety measures had been followed. It can be easy to cut corners to save time and money but this tragic death highlights just how important health and safety legislation is on all building sites.

“Sadly, this resulted in the death of a 33-year-old man who was simply trying to do his job, and our thoughts remain with his family and friends at this difficult time.”

A Health and Safety Executive spokesperson said:

“Gheorghita Arsene’s death was as horrifying as it was preventable. He lost his life because basic precautions were not in place to protect workers from the well-known risks that come with excavation work.

“Anthony O’Connor had observed workers in the trench without adequate protection and was aware of the measures required to prevent a collapse.

“This case is a stark reminder that when basic safety standards are ignored, the consequences can be fatal. Companies and individuals alike have legal duties to protect workers and where they fail to do so, and we will not hesitate to take enforcement action.

“Our thoughts today are with Mr Arsene’s loved ones, as they mourn their loss.”

Surrey Police

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Nature News

Surrey Hills National Landscape to expand?



14 September 2026

East Surrey’s MP has called on the government to approve the expansion of the county’s protected landscapes “as soon as possible”. Claire Coutinho has written to Environment Secretary Dame Angela … Read More

News Policing

Surrey burglary figures spark row



13 September 2026

Helen Maguire MP has accused the Government of leaving Surrey families and businesses to “fend for themselves” after Liberal Democrat analysis suggested that fewer than one in 15 burglaries recorded … Read More

Council Finances

New Surrey Unitary Council CEO salaries to continue to outstrip national leaders



13 September 2026

The CEO of the newly created West Surrey Council is set to pocket a £236,485 annual salary. Susan Halliwell, currently oversees Bracknell Forest Council and is expected to take over … Read More

Council Housing Planning

Kingswood “blot on the landscape” development approved

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11 September 2026

A Grade II* listed site on the edge of the Surrey Hills where a major Hollywood blockbuster was filmed is to be turned into a £200m housing and leisure complex. … Read More

Arts Council News

Ali G statue petition rejected



11 September 2026

A proposed attraction celebrating Ali G in Staines has been rejected by councillors after a petition backing the move gained enough signatures to be put forward for debate. The petition, … Read More

Council Council constitution News

Secret Legal Advice that leaves Surrey high and dry?



10 September 2026

The legal advice that forced the nationwide cancellation of local government reorganisation, with the single exception of Surrey because it was too far down the track, will be kept private, … Read More

Community News Volunteers

A year in the life of Epsom's Citizens Advice Bureau



10 September 2026

Citizens Advice helps nearly 3,900 borough residents Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell (CAEE) has published its Annual Report for 2025/26 following its annual general meeting. During the year, the charity … Read More

Community Council Health

Epsom & Ewell residents invited to share 'Messages of Hope' for World Suicide Prevention Day

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10 September 2026

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is inviting residents to share messages of encouragement and support as part of the Messages of Hope campaign, marking World Suicide Prevention Day on 10 … Read More

Council News

Reigate to be “initial” HQ for new East Surrey Council



10 September 2026

Woodhatch Place in Reigate has been recommended as the preferred location for East Surrey Council’s main office building from 1 April 2027. If approved by the East Surrey Shadow Executive on 14 September, this … Read More

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Request for Rainbow Centre pricing information

18 September 2026



Dear Reader,

As you may know Epsom and Ewell Times has been reporting on issues surrounding the changes at Epsom and Ewell’s Leisure Centre.

If you frequent the Rainbow Leisure Centre we would be very grateful if you helped us obtain information about the pricing of its services and facilities.

We want to know what the charges were immediately prior to October 2025 when the centre was run by GLL.

We also want to know what the current charges are since it was taken over by Places.

Clear and verifiable information is requested.

Thank you!

Reply to admin@epsomandewelltimes.com

A year in the life of Epsom’s Citizens Advice Bureau

18 September 2026

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Citizens Advice helps nearly 3,900 borough residents

Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell (CAEE) has published its Annual Report for 2025/26 following its annual general meeting.

During the year, the charity helped 3,861 people across the Borough of Epsom and Ewell, addressing 11,312 issues.

A team of more than 50 volunteers, supported by 16 paid members of staff, provides the skills and knowledge needed to solve problems, offer reassurance, create stability and help clients towards independent lives.

Lisa Davis, chief executive of Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell, said: “Behind each of these numbers is a real person: someone struggling with energy debts whilst managing serious health conditions, someone rebuilding their life after domestic abuse, or someone working through decades of accumulated hardship.

“It is a privilege to stand alongside people at their most vulnerable and help them find a way forward.”

Linda’s story

Linda approached CAEE with a large energy debt after being unable to communicate with her energy company to resolve the problem.

She had experienced several health conditions over recent years, including cancer, diabetes, a stroke and mobility difficulties. These had affected her mental health and ability to work, leaving her feeling overwhelmed.

A CAEE energy adviser clarified the situation with the energy company and advised Linda on managing her Unreal finances and minimising her energy use. Linda now feels better able to cope in the future.

Fazia’s story

Fazia moved to the UK with her husband on a spousal visa with no recourse to public funds.

After experiencing domestic abuse, her husband was removed from the home by the police and she separated from him.

Fazia instructed a firm of solicitors to apply on her behalf for an independent visa and access to public funds under the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse concession. After receiving no response from the solicitors despite contacting them repeatedly, she approached CAEE.

The charity applied on her behalf and her application was resolved within a week.

An adviser also helped Fazia claim benefits, as she had been without funds for many months, and provided foodbank and Household Support Fund vouchers until she received her first Universal Credit payment.

Fazia is now working towards independently supporting herself and her child.

Clive’s story

Clive’s story is one of many missed opportunities to prevent someone falling into serious debt.

After losing his wife a few years ago, Clive struggled with bereavement and lost his well-paid job. While trying to provide for his children, he began accumulating credit card debt.

His life became harder still when he was the victim of a hit-and-run road accident and lost his son to Covid-19.

By the time he approached CAEE, he was living in his daughter’s flat with several significant health conditions, poor mental health and debts totalling more than £40,000 across nine financial institutions.

More than 12 months later, CAEE is still working with Clive to alleviate his circumstances. With considerable perseverance by both parties, most of his debt has been written off and Clive is on track to live an independent life, financially in control and debt-free.

Lisa Davis added: “CAEE gives people the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward – whoever they are and whatever the problem.”

Citizens Advice Epsom and Ewell

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Council Council constitution Finances

The shake up of Epsom and Ewell’s local government: was it all a waste of time as Rayner puts pause on LGR elsewhere?



7 September 2026

Surrey’s political leaders insist the replacement of the county’s 12 councils by two large unitary authorities remains on schedule. But a government review of local government reorganisation elsewhere in England … Read More

Council Finances

Tourist tax to boost Surrey finances?



7 September 2026

Surrey’s two new unitary councils are considering a “tourism tax” to help buoy their finances amid major changes to local government in the area. This tax on overnight stays, which … Read More

News Transport

Conservative Mayoral hopeful seeks ULEZ review



7 September 2026

Surrey’s Conservative shadow authority opposition leaders have thrown their weight behind a London mayoral candidate’s pledge to review the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ). Braintree MP Sir James Cleverly resigned … Read More

Community Crime

Progress at Banstead’s High Down prison – but drugs and poor conditions remain



7 September 2026

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A prison near Epsom and Ewell has made encouraging progress in safety and the time prisoners spend out of their cells – but illicit drugs, poor living conditions and delays … Read More

Council Finances

Government to pay a chunk of Woking’s record debt



7 September 2026

Crushing debt set to be inherited by hundreds of thousands of West Surrey residents will have a big chunk taken out of it after the Government officially began the process … Read More

Council Crime

Cyber security threats to Surrey’s local councils



7 September 2026

Cyber security threats to local government remain a “significant strategic risk”, according to a report, with the creation of two new unitary councils posing “further complexity” to IT security. Guildford … Read More

Crime News Policing

Crime and Safety Round-Up: June to August 2026



7 September 2026

The summer months brought a mixture of serious incidents, court outcomes, crime-prevention work and neighbourhood policing activity across Epsom and Ewell. The Epsom and Ewell Times does not normally report … Read More

Community News

Friendly finding puts Epsom and Ewell in England’s top fifth



6 September 2026

Epsom and Ewell has been ranked among the friendliest and most connected places in England in a new national index examining the strength of community life. The borough placed 56th … Read More

Community Volunteers

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Epsom Scouts joined Swiss adventure



4 September 2026

More than 700 Scouts and volunteers from Surrey, including Scouts from 3rd Epsom & 8th/14th Epsom (Air Scouts), have returned from an unforgettable international adventure in Switzerland as part of KIX … Read More

Council Council constitution

Secret Surrey leaders’ talks challenged by Epsom councillor



3 September 2026

An Epsom and Ewell councillor has launched a sustained Freedom of Information campaign to uncover what Surrey’s council leaders have discussed and agreed behind closed doors. Councillor Alex Coley (Independent, … Read More

Health News

Surrey health literacy warning



3 September 2026

Nearly one in three working-age Surrey residents is not adequately health literate, a council committee report has warned. The report, which is due to be considered at a joint meeting … Read More

News Transport

Surrey campaigners seek independent appeal rights over new flight paths



3 September 2026

Surrey countryside campaigners have joined a national call for residents to be given an independent right of appeal when changes are proposed to flight paths over their homes. CPRE Surrey … Read More

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Epsom Scouts joined Swiss adventure

18 September 2026



More than 700 Scouts and volunteers from Surrey, including Scouts from 3rd Epsom & 8th/14th Epsom (Air Scouts), have returned from an unforgettable international adventure in Switzerland as part of **KIX 2026 (Kandersteg International eXpedition)**.

The expedition marked a significant milestone, celebrating **25 years of Surrey Scouts' modern-era expeditions to Kandersteg International Scout Centre (KISC)**, one of the world's premier Scout destinations. The 2026 contingent was the largest group of Scouts to leave the UK this year.

The first Surrey expedition to Kandersteg took place in 2001 under the name **SWaK (Scouts with Altitude – Kandersteg)**. Since then, Surrey Scouts have returned through a series of major international expeditions, including Expand 2004, K9 in 2009, and KIX events in 2014, 2018, 2023 and now 2026.

During their week in the Swiss Alps, Scouts from 3rd Epsom & 8th/14th Epsom (Air Scouts), joined fellow participants from across Surrey to experience a programme packed with adventure, challenge and international friendship. While at Kandersteg, they met Scouts from Canada, Portugal, Spain, Australia, Ireland, Switzerland, Germany and other parts of the United Kingdom, demonstrating the truly global nature of Scouting.

Participants travelled to Switzerland aboard twelve coaches provided by Baker Dolphin, departing from Cobham Services.

The expedition offered a wide range of activities, including hiking in the mountains led by trained and KISC-qualified mountain walkers, rafting on the river Aare from Thun to Bern, and high ropes adventures in Interlaken. Scouts also had opportunities to explore local towns and communities, gaining first-hand experience of Swiss culture and life.

Each troop selected a special activity day tailored to their interests. Activities included visiting the Schilthorn, famous for its appearance in a James Bond film; exploring the Jungfrau region; travelling to the Rothorn by steamship and mountain railway; relaxing in the thermal pools at Brigerbad; tobogganing at Lake Oeschinensee; visiting the St Beatus Caves; and climbing in Winteregg.

In addition, the Young Leader (YL) Squad helped KIX in helping to protect local biodiversity through a partnership with the Forestry Commission. KIX has partnered with Flora from the local Forestry team to contribute to the protection and preservation of biodiversity in the Kandertal area.

The Kandertal is one of the regions in the Canton of Bern with the highest concentration of reptiles. Eight of Switzerland's sixteen native reptile species can be found there, including the sand lizard, grass snake, and the rare smooth snake. Many of these species are under threat, and some are critically endangered, largely due to the loss of important habitats. These habitats include sun-exposed features such as rock piles, dry stone walls, wood piles, and brush piles, as well as natural riverbanks, forest edges, and rocky areas. As part of the Kandertal Reptile Conservation Project, valuable habitats have been surveyed and documented to support their long-term preservation. Working alongside Flora and Luke, the YL Squad helped to maintain and enhance these habitats by clearing brush, creating piles of branches and stones, and improving existing habitat structures. These practical conservation activities make an important contribution to protecting local biodiversity and supporting the survival of the area's native reptile species.

Mel Wedlock, Young Leader Development Team Lead for Surrey Scouts, said: "Supporting projects like this is a fantastic opportunity for the Surrey Young Leader Squad as part of their service project with KIX. The Squad are taking part in the expedition as members of the wider staff team, giving them valuable experience of supporting and delivering a large-scale international event for young people. Alongside developing their leadership skills, they have been able to make a meaningful contribution to an important local conservation project. It has been great to work with KIX, supporting the local community and helping to protect the natural environment in the Kandertal region."

A particularly memorable moment came thanks to local shop owner **Patrick Straubinger**, who gifted every Scout and volunteer a commemorative Swiss pin badge in recognition of Surrey Scouts' 25-year connection with Kandersteg. Patrick has welcomed generations of Surrey Scouts, alongside visitors from Scout groups across the world, throughout that time.

The expedition also attracted local media attention, with Surrey Scouts appearing on the front page of the **Frutigländer**, Kandersteg's local newspaper, as well as featuring in a detailed report inside.

Supporting an event of this scale required an enormous effort from volunteers. Over the course of the week, the catering team provided enough evening meals to feed one person for more than 13 years. The contingent consumed more than **1,322kg of fruit and vegetables**, **3,500 wraps**, **195kg of cheese**, **21,456 slices of salami**, **489kg of meat**, **1,548 schnitzels**, and **255kg of breakfast cereal**.

Meanwhile, the high walks team supported participants in covering more than **19,000 kilometres** of mountain trails and climbing a combined elevation gain of nearly **650 kilometres**. The activities team also coordinated more than **500 cable car journeys** and **400 swimming pool visits** during the expedition.

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As the Scouts returned home, they brought with them new friendships, increased confidence, valuable #skillsforlife and memories that will last a lifetime. Showing Scouting has a #placetobelong.

Ian MacQueen Expedition leader said “KIX 2026 took two years to plan with and aim to give 700 Scouts and leaders the opportunity to try new activities, make new friends and learn skills for life. I think it is safe to say we achieved our aim and more. My thanks to the staff and leaders who made the event a success. We will now start to plan KIX 2029”

Scouts were asked “What were you expecting from the trip before you came?”

A Scout from 3rd Epsom said “I was expecting to be tired from hikes and I was looking forward to the activities, thought it was always cold and there would be lots of always hiking. I also thought it was going to be like a school trip and was expecting to be fun but wet.”

A Scout from 8th/14th Epsom said “I was expecting adventures, and to meet other Scouts from other countries.”

Scouts were then asked “What’s been the highlight of the week?”

A Scout from 3rd Epsom said “I enjoyed the rafting and going to Brigerbad and it was nothing like a school trip it was much more fun (different to expectations), I got to know lots of Scouts and doing all the different activities including, high ropes. It was a really nice place in general and I want to come again as everything was really fun.”

A Scout from 8th/14th Epsom said “I liked swimming in the pool in the park in Bern after rafting and also the rafting from Thun to Bern.”

We then asked the Adult Volunteers “Why did you want to bring your Scouts on this trip?”

An adult volunteer from 3rd Epsom said “We have been many times before and they get a lot out of the trip and gain great experiences. It is also great to see true scouting in operation but there are long challenging days but full of fun and excitement.”

An adult volunteer from 8th/14th Epsom said “There is a program for our scouts which is organised by the County team with support & food provision.”

We finally asked the Adult volunteer, “What was there highlight of the week?”

An adult volunteer from 3rd Epsom said “The friendliness, organisation and true Scouting spirit is second to none. Activities are organised very well with tasks as necessary. The Scouts found the walks challenging but all survived and surprised they could walk so far and so high. The food was also very good.”

An adult volunteer from 8th/14th Epsom said “The location, amazing scenery, swimming in Spiez, getting to know other adult volunteers better and hiking way beyond what I would normally do.”

Neil Wibberley

3rd September 2026

18 September 2026

Community Local History News

Heritage doors open across Epsom and Ewell



2 September 2026

Historic buildings, forgotten stories and rarely seen corners of Surrey will be brought to life when Heritage Open Days return from Friday 11th to Sunday 20th September. The annual festival ... Read More

Community Health

Epsom Hospital in top national league for car park charges



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1 September 2026

Epsom and St Helier parking among UK's most expensive, study claims Patients and visitors parking for more than eight hours at Epsom or St Helier Hospital face a £20 charge, … Read More

Community Faith News

New vicar returns to his Epsom roots



31 August 2026

The Revd Tom Hill has returned to the church where he came to faith more than 25 years ago, following his institution as Vicar of Christ Church Epsom Common. The … Read More

Football Sports

Five-star Epsom and Ewell FC bounce back in style



30 August 2026

Godalming Town 1–5 Epsom & Ewell FC. 29th August – Bill Kyte Stadium – Combined Counties League Epsom & Ewell produced the perfect response to last week's FA Cup disappointment … Read More

Council Finances

Bailiffs knocking on Council tax debtors in Epsom and Ewell



29 August 2026

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council passed 552 council tax debts on to bailiffs in 2025/26, according to new Freedom of Information data compiled by National Debtline as part of its annual … Read More

Local History News

Bringing centuries of Surrey records into the 21st century



29 August 2026

Residents, researchers and history enthusiasts will soon find it easier than ever to explore Surrey's rich heritage thanks to a major investment in a new collections management system at the … Read More

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Bailiffs knocking on Council tax debtors in Epsom and Ewell

18 September 2026



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council passed 552 council tax debts on to bailiffs in 2025/26, according to new Freedom of Information data compiled by National Debtline as part of its annual Stop the Knock campaign. This is a reduction of 39% compared to 2024/25.

The findings come as total council tax arrears in in and around Epsom and Ewell were revealed by MHCLG to now stand at £1.9 million. This forms part of a national total which has now hit £7.4 billion, up from £6.6 billion in 2024/25.

The charity's figures also show that across England and Wales a total of 153 councils (48%) increased their use of bailiffs for council tax debts. And that 1.72 million council tax arrears cases were passed to bailiffs by councils during 2025/26, a figure largely unchanged from 1.74 million in 2024/25. The charity says these numbers demonstrate the continued reliance on enforcement action despite ongoing cost-of-living pressures.

As their budgets have become more stretched, councils are increasingly reliant on council tax revenue to fund essential services like social care, local schools and rubbish collections. This has led many councils to increase council tax for residents, a move which often deepens the financial challenges for people already hit hardest by the high cost of living.

Councils reduce support for most vulnerable residents

National Debtline's research found that last year, just 26 of 317 local authorities were exempting residents in receipt of Council Tax Support from bailiff action, a decrease of 26% from 35 in 2024/25. Epsom & Ewell Borough Council does not exempt Council Tax Support recipients from bailiff action in this way – something National Debtline is calling on councillors to change.

The charity is calling on local authorities to recognise that people receiving Council Tax Support will be some of the most financially vulnerable so are highly unlikely to be able to be able to repay quickly and in full and so should be exempted from bailiff action.

Charity urges local people to seek advice

With council tax being one of the top three most common debts its advisers hear about, alongside credit cards and energy bills, National Debtline, the free independent debt advice service, is calling on anyone in and around Epsom and Ewell worried about their council tax bills or facing bailiff action to seek advice as soon as possible.

Currently a third (31%) of people who contact National Debtline have council tax debt.

Edward Ware, spokesperson for National Debtline, says:

"We understand that councils are under increasing financial budget constraints, and council tax is vital to funding the local services we all rely on, but collecting this money cannot come at the expense of its most financially vulnerable residents.

"We are pleased to see that Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has reduced its bailiff use recently, but we would urge councillors to review whether there is more the council could do to support residents who are struggling to pay."

"With council tax now one of the most common debts we see we need councils to adopt fairer approaches to collection, not harsher enforcement. Exempting residents who receive Council Tax Support from bailiff action is a key way in which councils can help – and we would urge Epsom & Ewell Borough Council to put this in place urgently."

Changes on the way, but more reform still needed

There is some positive news on the horizon. Following the Government's wide-ranging consultation on council tax administration, several reforms are expected in 2027. These are aimed at creating a fairer and more proportionate system for people struggling with payments.

The changes will require councils to wait longer – 63 days, up from two weeks – before demanding a full year's council tax following a missed instalment; offer more affordable repayment arrangements; and a new £100 cap on court-related fees. Alongside this, there will be stronger emphasis on reducing aggressive enforcement practices such as the use of bailiffs, better protections for vulnerable households and a shift to 12 monthly payments, instead of the current 10, by default to make bills more manageable.

The charity has welcomed these changes following years of campaigning on council tax reform, but says further action is

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still needed. It is urging the government to set out a series of statutory steps councils must take before passing debts onto bailiffs, including councils working with residents and debt advisers to put in place an affordable payment arrangement before any enforcement action is taken.

The charity is also calling on the Government to follow through with proposals to regulate the bailiff industry and give the Enforcement Conduct Board statutory power to oversee the sector.

Edward continues, *"The proposed changes to council tax collection practices should make a meaningful difference to financially vulnerable households, but we need to see more progress when it comes to regulation of the bailiff industry.*

"We need to stop people falling behind with council tax in the first place. The Government should also invest more funding in local Council Tax Support schemes, so that all councils can offer 100% Council Tax Support for its most financially vulnerable residents.

"Anyone struggling to pay their council tax bill should seek free, independent advice from National Debtline as soon as possible. Our advisers are here to help and can talk you through your options."

1. Full dataset of bailiff use in England and Wales in 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 available on request or via https://www.stoptheknock.org/

2. The latest council tax arrears statistics (from MHCLG) can be accessed via: https://www.gov.uk/government/-statistics/collection-rates-for-council-tax-and-non-domestic-rates-in-england-2025-to-2026 **(Table 9a)**

3. Government's consultation on council tax: https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/modernising-and--improving-the-administration-of-council-tax/modernising-and-improving-the-administration-of-council-tax

4. National Debtline provides free, independent, expert advice. People worried about their finances can contact National Debtline for free on 0808 808 4000 or via **www.nationaldebtline.org**.

27th August 2026

18 September 2026

Council Council constitution Editorial

How two became one became three – how "unitary" means "trinity".



25 August 2026

The central promise of local government reorganisation was easy to understand. Surrey's confusing two-tier system would be swept away. Surrey County Council and the county's 11 borough and district councils … Read More

Council Council constitution Planning

Tiers not shed for local government in Surrey after all….?



25 August 2026

Surrey's shadow authority leaders have insisted that devolution in the county must be "done right" after the government proposed beefed up new planning powers for mayors. Proposals due to be … Read More

Community Volunteers

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Ukrainian Independence Day celebrated with music, film and community spirit in Epsom



25 August 2026

Epsom Picturehouse was filled to capacity yesterday afternoon as the local community came together to mark Ukrainian Independence Day with an afternoon celebrating Ukrainian culture, music and film. The event … Read More

Council News

The young have their place in new Surrey governing



25 August 2026

Surrey’s youngest councillors want to see more young people get involved in local government – and not let growing hostility towards elected representatives deter them from standing. Elections to Surrey’s … Read More

Football Sports

Salts bow out of FA Cup to Crowborough



23 August 2026

Epsom & Ewell FC 0–3 Crowborough Athletic. 22nd August – Chalky Lane – The Emirates FA Cup Preliminary Round Epsom & Ewell bowed out of the Emirates FA Cup after … Read More

Community News

Epsom woman celebrates remarkable 100th birthday



23 August 2026

An Epsom woman has celebrated her 100th birthday surrounded by three generations of her family and dozens of friends. Helen Blackman, née Aldridge, was born in Richmond upon Thames on … Read More

Community Education Sports

Olympic star helps launch children’s gymnastics and ninja club

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in Epsom



22 August 2026

Children in Epsom will have a new opportunity to try gymnastics, parkour and free running when a community sports club opens at Blenheim High School in September. Gymfinity Kids is … Read More

News Planning Policing

Police headquarters in Leatherhead a step closer



22 August 2026

Work is set to begin on Surrey Police’s long-awaited new eastern headquarters, bringing an end to a saga stretching back to 2023, when the force was compelled to vacate its … Read More

Community Council Sports

Free community football sessions and more for Epsom and Ewell

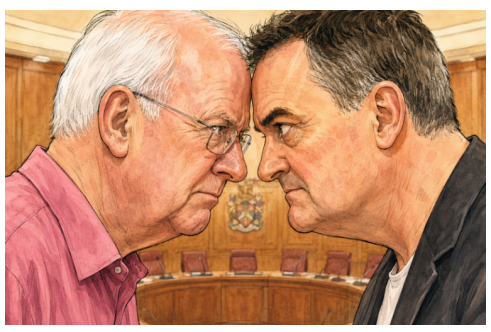


22 August 2026

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is pleased to announce that free community football sessions will be available for young people aged 10 to 16 who live in the borough, from … Read More

Council Council constitution

Epsom & Ewell Council refuses to explain complaints disparity



21 August 2026

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has refused to answer detailed questions about the apparent disparity between its vigorous pursuit of a complaint made by Cllr Neil Dallen (RA Town) and … Read More

Council Education Local History

UK’s “first and only” craft museum in Surrey open day

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21 August 2026

One of Surrey's most important buildings, and the UK's 'first and only' craft museum, is to host a special event to show off the vital restoration work going into saving … Read More

Education News

Options are open at Nescot – GCSE students reassured there's still time to apply



20 August 2026

Students collecting their GCSE results today are being reassured that there is still time to apply for courses at Nescot college in Epsom. Options range from Animal Care and Public … Read More

News Transport

Heathrow expansion consultation deadline



20 August 2026

Night flights in and out of Heathrow could be changed as part of new plans being consulted on – as moves to ramp up to a third runway continue and … Read More

News Transport

Surrey train timetable overhaul pending



20 August 2026

Once in a generation changes aimed at improving rail schedules are being set to be introduced across Surrey but there are concerns about how these may impact level crossing downtime,

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How two became one became three – how "unitary"

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means “trinity”.

18 September 2026

The central promise of local government reorganisation was easy to understand. Surrey’s confusing two-tier system would be swept away. Surrey County Council and the county’s 11 borough and district councils would be replaced by streamlined unitary authorities.

One council would deliver the principal local services in each area. Duplication would be removed, accountability would become clearer and residents would know which authority was responsible.

That was the theory.

The emerging reality looks rather different. The Government is abolishing two tiers of local government, but Surrey now appears to be heading towards three separate layers or bodies: a countywide strategic authority or elected mayor, the new East Surrey Council and, within Epsom and Ewell, Charter Trustees preserving the borough’s civic and ceremonial functions.

Not all three would have equivalent powers. Charter Trustees would not run ordinary council services and a strategic authority would operate at a regional level. Nevertheless, each would be a public body with functions, office-holders, meetings, administration and potential financial consequences.

Residents might reasonably ask: how exactly is this simplification?

From two councils to one – and then back again

At present, Epsom and Ewell residents are served principally by Surrey County Council and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.

From April 2027, both are due to disappear and be replaced locally by East Surrey Council. On paper, that reduces two councils to one.

But the reorganisation was always linked to a wider devolution agenda. A Foundation Strategic Authority covering Surrey is proposed as a possible first step towards a Mayoral Strategic Authority headed by a directly elected Surrey mayor.

The latest Government proposals would give regional mayors substantial powers, including the ability to intervene in major planning applications. Those powers could extend to developments of more than 150 homes, large commercial schemes and buildings of 30 metres or more.

Whatever view one takes of those powers, this would plainly be more than a decorative office. A Surrey mayor and strategic authority would sit above East and West Surrey councils, making decisions across the county on matters potentially including planning, transport, housing, infrastructure and economic development.

The old county council tier would therefore disappear, only for a new countywide strategic layer to emerge in a different form.

It may have different boundaries of responsibility, a different constitution and a directly elected mayor. But to residents looking up the governmental ladder, it may feel remarkably like the return of a second tier.

A new body below as well as one above

Epsom and Ewell also came close to acquiring an additional layer beneath East Surrey Council.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council conducted a Community Governance Review into establishing two parish councils, styled as Epsom Community Council and Ewell Community Council. Parish councils are statutory local authorities with elected councillors and the power to raise their own Council Tax precept.

The proposal was rejected decisively by residents. Around 82 per cent of approximately 2,200 respondents opposed it, and the plan was abandoned.

That should have settled the question of creating another precepting body below East Surrey Council. Yet the abolition of the borough leaves a genuine question about what happens to Epsom and Ewell’s mayoralty, civic identity and ceremonial traditions.

The Borough Council’s preferred answer is Charter Trustees.

Charter Trustees are not parish councils. Their role would be much narrower, principally preserving the mayoralty and civic and ceremonial functions of the disappearing borough. They would probably be drawn from East Surrey councillors representing the Epsom and Ewell area rather than forming another separately elected council.

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But they would still constitute another public body. They could seek funding from East Surrey Council during their first year and thereafter would have the power to levy a precept through Council Tax. The Borough Council's report suggested that the average Band D charge imposed by existing Charter Trustee bodies is about £2.50 a year.

That may sound modest. The more important question is one of principle and accountability. Residents rejected two new parish councils carrying separate precepts. They may nevertheless find another precepting body created to preserve civic arrangements after the borough council is abolished.

There may be a respectable case for maintaining the mayoralty and Epsom and Ewell's civic identity. But if residents are to pay for it, however small the initial sum, they are entitled to be consulted and told clearly what the body will cost, what it will do and how its spending will be controlled.

Three bodies where two once stood

The prospective structure can therefore be summarised simply.

Today, Epsom and Ewell has two principal councils: the borough and the county.

Tomorrow, it may have East Surrey Council in the middle, a Surrey strategic authority and mayor above it, and Charter Trustees below it.

Two bodies become three.

That does not necessarily mean three full tiers of service-delivering local government. Ministers and council leaders will no doubt insist upon that distinction. They will describe the mayoral authority as strategic and the Charter Trustees as ceremonial.

Technically, they would be right. From the resident's perspective, however, government is not simplified merely by giving every new layer a different description.

Residents will still want to know who is responsible for a decision. They may have to distinguish between East Surrey councillors acting as members of the unitary authority and some of those same councillors acting as Charter Trustees. On major strategic issues, they may have to determine whether responsibility rests with East Surrey Council, a Surrey mayor or central government.

If the objective was clearer accountability, the emerging structure risks producing the opposite.

Powers must be matched by money and accountability

There is a legitimate argument for devolution. Decisions about Surrey's transport, infrastructure, economy and housing may often be better made in Surrey than in Whitehall. A directly elected mayor could provide visible leadership and secure powers and funding which individual councils could not obtain alone.

But devolution must mean more than transferring obligations without sufficient money. West Surrey Shadow Authority leader Councillor Paul Follows is right to warn that local government cannot continue absorbing unfunded mandates.

Nor should devolution become a convenient name for rebuilding the hierarchy that reorganisation was supposed to dismantle.

If a Surrey mayor is necessary, ministers should explain why the strategic functions cannot be exercised jointly by the two unitary councils. If Charter Trustees are necessary, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council should explain why the civic functions cannot be preserved more simply and without another Council Tax precept.

Above all, the complete structure and its cost should be presented openly. Residents were asked to accept the disruption, expense and democratic upheaval of abolishing 12 councils on the promise of simpler and more efficient government.

They should not discover, piece by piece, that the promised single tier comes with another body above it and another below.

Local government reorganisation was sold as the removal of layers. Surrey now appears to be replacing them under new names.

That may be devolution. It may be reorganisation. It may even produce better government if it is properly designed and funded.

But nobody should call it simplification.

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Epsom woman celebrates remarkable 100th birthday

18 September 2026



An Epsom woman has celebrated her 100th birthday surrounded by three generations of her family and dozens of friends.

Helen Blackman, née Aldridge, was born in Richmond upon Thames on 22 August 1926. She later married Epsom resident Derek Blackman and has lived in the borough ever since.

Mrs Blackman was widowed when her husband died in his 50s, leaving her with three children. She never remarried and has remained closely involved in the local community, where friends describe her as a public-spirited woman who is always willing to help anyone in need, without waiting to be asked or expecting anything in return.

A committed monarchist, Mrs Blackman joined the crowds on The Mall for the coronation of the late Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. She has amassed a treasured collection of royal memorabilia marking coronations and other important anniversaries, to which she can now add a centenary message from King Charles III.

A keen traveller and sightseer, she has enjoyed numerous coach holidays across Europe and the United States. Her other interests include crosswords and the arts, particularly theatre, ballet, opera and classical music.

She continues to attend Glyndebourne Opera each year, courtesy of a nephew who is a conductor and countertenor.

Although her sight is now badly impaired, her speech, hearing and memory remain strong, and she continues to walk with no more assistance than a walking stick.

Mrs Blackman marked her milestone birthday at a celebration organised by her three children at her eldest daughter’s home and garden in Tadworth.

Around 60 guests attended the gathering, including many of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The festivities took place in near-perfect weather and came as a surprise to the centenarian, who had known she was visiting her daughter but had little idea of the large gathering awaiting her.

Friends and family describe her as “a very exceptional and remarkable lady”.

A special correspondent.

[Despite sharing a surname, the late Derek Blackman is not believed to have been related to Epsom & Ewell Times director Lionel Blackman.]

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20th August 2026

18 September 2026

Arts Culture Education Local History

Epsom and Ewell’s rock history goes under the hammer

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19 August 2026

Rare posters from Ewell Technical College (today's NESCOT) concerts featuring Nick Drake, Genesis, Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin are among more than 300 pieces of music memorabilia being auctioned from … Read More

Health News

Patient injuries quadruple in Surrey's largest mental health trust area



18 August 2026

This article has been amended to include statistics relating to the total number of patient restraint incidents across the trust in the relevant timeframes, and to clarify this number is … Read More

Arts Community Culture

Discover the magic of Ukraine in Epsom



18 August 2026

Looking for a summer holiday family day out? Discover the magic of Ukraine in Epsom Families looking for something different to do this summer holiday are invited to Epsom Picturehouse … Read More

Football Sports

Epsom and Ewell FC's blessed hat-trick advances team to next round



17 August 2026

Horsham YM 1–5 Epsom & Ewell FC. 15th August – Herbert Direct Stadium – The Isuzu FA Vase First Round Qualifying Epsom & Ewell marched into the next round of … Read More

Education News Transport

Does Epsom and Ewell have the geo-thermal energy to solve

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our pothole problems?



14 August 2026

Could geothermal roads help prevent potholes before they form? Surrey trial aims to find out. The UK’s pothole problem could one day be tackled from beneath the road surface, as … Read More

Family Notices Notices

Valerie Flanagan



14 August 2026

Valerie Flanagan passed away suddenly at home on Friday 17 July 2026. She will be dearly missed by her Daughter Louise, Son in Law Paul, Grandchildren Abi & Oli, Grandson … Read More

Business Environment

Dirty water double: sewage spills and blocked drains put Epsom and Ewell under pressure



14 August 2026

Epsom and Ewell recorded the longest duration of storm-overflow discharges among seven constituencies examined in a new study of sewage spills across parts of South London and Surrey. Research undertaken … Read More

Council Education

Surrey help with school uniform costs



14 August 2026

Families experiencing financial hardship across Surrey will receive additional support with the cost of sending their children back to school this year, thanks to funding from Surrey County Council’s Crisis … Read More

Letters News Transport

Free bus travel is a good idea; so why does it stop at 15?

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14 August 2026

Dear Editor, This August, children aged five to 15 can travel free on local buses across England. I think that’s genuinely good. It makes days out cheaper, helps children get … Read More

Council Elections

Reigate and Banstead goes a bit greener



14 August 2026

The Green Party has won a crucial by-election in Reigate and Banstead that could impact the balance of power on the council. Nick Abear, who also serves on East Surrey … Read More

Horse racing Sports

Epsom Racecourse: Preview and Tips for Friday’s Six-Race Meeting



13 August 2026

Racing returns to Epsom Racecourse this Friday with a six-race meeting, consisting of five handicaps and a fillies’ novice race. Read on for a preview of and tips for the … Read More

Education News

Record A level results open doors for Epsom and Ewell students



13 August 2026

Students at two Epsom and Ewell secondary schools are celebrating impressive A-level and vocational qualification results, with Rosebery School recording its best results to date and seven Glyn School students … Read More

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Discover the magic of Ukraine in Epsom

18 September 2026



Looking for a summer holiday family day out? Discover the magic of Ukraine in Epsom

Families looking for something different to do this summer holiday are invited to Epsom Picturehouse on Monday 24 August for an afternoon of Ukrainian music, crafts and film, marking Ukrainian Independence Day.

From 4.30pm, visitors can enjoy live Ukrainian music and meet Ukrainian craft makers displaying their work at the cinema, before a short introduction and a 5pm screening of *Mavka: The Forest Song*. Every culture has stories that bring families together. Inspired by Ukrainian mythology and folklore, *Mavka: The Forest Song* brings one of those stories to the big screen through a colourful animated adventure. Rooted in Ukrainian culture, its themes of love, belonging, courage and protecting the natural world have helped the film connect with audiences far beyond Ukraine.

With the event falling during the school summer holidays, it's a great day out for families looking for something a little different. Children's tickets at Epsom Picturehouse are just £3 throughout the summer, with adult tickets from £9.99, while the music and crafts before the screening add even more to the afternoon.

The film will be shown in English, making it as inclusive as possible and giving families from across the community the chance to enjoy the story and discover Ukrainian culture together.

Joe Stroud, Marketing Manager at Epsom Picturehouse, said:

"Every culture has stories that bring families together, and Mavka is a brilliant example of that. It's rooted in Ukrainian folklore, but its themes of love, belonging, courage and protecting the natural world are universal. It's colourful, funny and visually spectacular too, so you don't need to know anything about Ukrainian folklore to fall in love with it. That makes it a perfect film for celebrating Ukrainian culture while bringing the whole community together."

Organised with Surrey Stands with Ukraine, with support from Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network, the event is open to everyone and will bring together Epsom's Ukrainian and wider local community for a colourful, family-friendly celebration.

The celebration takes place at Epsom Picturehouse, Derby Square, Epsom, on Monday 24 August 2026, with Ukrainian music and crafts from 4.30pm and *Mavka: The Forest Song* at 5pm.

Valerie Flanagan

18 September 2026



Valerie Flanagan passed away suddenly at home on Friday 17 July 2026.

She will be dearly missed by her Daughter Louise, Son in Law Paul, Grandchildren Abi & Oli, Grandson in Law Chris, Grandaughter in Law Danielle and Great Grandchildren Asher & Aurelia.

Also, extended family in the UK & New Zealand.

The funeral will take place at Randall's Park Crematorium, Leatherhead on Tuesday 1 September 2026 at 11.45, followed by refreshments at The Cricketers Pub, Epsom.

Family flowers only please. In lieu of flowers Valerie's friends may wish to make a small donation to a charity of their

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choice.



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