



Banned fan cheers on Epsom and Ewell FC from tree

10 August 2025



A lifelong supporter of Epsom & Ewell Football Club has taken to watching matches from a nearby tree after receiving what he describes as an "unwarranted" lifetime ban from the club's ground.

Richard Lambert, 58, has followed the ninth-tier side for nearly 44 years. The ban was imposed in January following a long-running series of disputes with the club's committee.

Mr Lambert told the BBC he believes the suspension was triggered after he altered the name of his personal X (formerly Twitter) account to appear as if it were the club's official account. He has been a frequent critic of the club's management on social media and on his personal website, with some posts directed at individual committee members.

Since April, the BBC says it has approached Epsom & Ewell three times for details about the ban. The club has declined to discuss the matter beyond stating: "We have had a number of issues with this supporter over the years. We do not want to discuss this any further. The matter has been dealt with."

A letter from the club to Mr Lambert, seen by the BBC, cites only a breach of a previous agreement over use of social media. It referred to an "indefinite" ban, but the club has since told the BBC it is now for life. Mr Lambert says he has not been officially informed of this change.

Mr Lambert, who first attended a match as a 15-year-old in 1981, has served as the club's historian for two decades, producing statistical archives and match reports. "All I want to do is see my team play," he said, "but I also want to see the culture at our club change towards valuing its supporters."

Lifetime bans from football stadiums are rare and generally imposed only for serious offences or criminal acts, which is not alleged in this case. Clubs, however, are entitled to refuse entry to anyone without giving a reason.

The Football Supporters' Association told the BBC it had attempted to mediate between Mr Lambert and the club but received no response from the club's committee. "At non-league level, fans are the lifeblood of the game," said the FSA's Gareth Cummins. "In a situation like this, we don't see that either side is winning."

Mr Lambert initially watched games from outside the perimeter fence but says that after the club stationed security to move him on, he began climbing a tree for a better view. He ended last season 30ft up overlooking King George's Field in Surbiton. This season, the Salts have returned to Leg O'Mutton Field in Cobham, sharing with Cobham FC, and Mr Lambert has found a lower tree with a full view of the pitch.

Founded in 1918 as Epsom Juniors, Epsom & Ewell's greatest moment came in 1975 when they reached the inaugural FA Vase final at Wembley, losing 2-1 to Hoddesdon Town. Last season they lifted the Southern Combination Challenge Cup, defeating Abbey Rangers 1-0 in the final. The Salts averaged around 90 spectators at home league matches in 2024-25.

"If the ban stays in place for life," Mr Lambert told the BBC, "then I'll be climbing this tree for the rest of my life - or at least for as long as I'm physically able to."

Richard Lambert sitting in a tree looking on to the pitch where Epsom & Ewell play, with his back to the camera and the pitch in the background

Epsom Mother and Daughter join British Army together

10 August 2025



A mother and daughter from Epsom have completed Army entry training within weeks of each other, marking the start of their respective military careers.

Sherene De Stadler, 40, will join the Army Reserve with the Grenadier Guards, while her daughter Chloe, 17, has graduated from the Army Foundation College in Harrogate.

Chloe was among 750 Junior Soldiers taking part in a parade at Harrogate to mark the end of months of basic training. The programme included military skills, fitness, education and a two-week battle camp and tactical exercise to prepare recruits for Army life.

Having completed phase one training, Chloe will now move on to trade training in her chosen specialism. She hopes to join the Army Air Corps as ground crew, aiming to work with Apache helicopters as part of the rear crew team.

She enlisted shortly after sitting her GCSEs at Epsom High School. "Joining the Army always interested me because of all it has to offer," Chloe said. "I am grateful for the opportunities it will give my future career and the challenges I will need to overcome to get there."

Over 5,000 family members attended the parade, including Sherene. "It felt amazing knowing my mum was in the audience, knowing what I've gone through to be on that parade square," Chloe said. "It's so nice to be able to talk to her about Army life because she understands and can relate to it. I hope my mum is as proud of me as I am of her."

Sherene, who completed her own basic training weeks earlier, said: "There's definitely been loads of tears from myself and her father today. Chloe has quit projects before when they've been hard, so I'm very proud of her for going through the challenges of Army training and enjoying it."

Chloe fought to get time off to attend Sherene's passing out parade earlier this year. "It's very different from watching your daughter graduate from university," Sherene said. "We've completed training so close together that we both have a unique mother-daughter bond that not many people get to have."

Chloe's advice to any young person considering the Army is: "Try your hardest and do not let other people get into your head."

The Senior Inspecting Officer at the Harrogate parade was Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Roly Walker, with former England football manager Sir Gareth Southgate as guest of honour.



The Army Foundation College takes two cohorts of Junior Soldiers each year, offering either a 49-week course or a shorter 23-week course. For more information, resources and how to join junior training at AFC Harrogate click [here](#).

LGR and CGR, what's the difference for Epsom and Ewell?

10 August 2025



Two sets of initials could soon reshape local democracy in Surrey - and in Epsom & Ewell in particular.

LGR - Local Government Reorganisation - is the national government's plan to abolish the county's current two-tier system of Surrey County Council plus district and borough councils. In its place, two or three large "unitary authorities" would run services such as bin collections, road repairs and adult social care.

CGR - Community Governance Review - is something different. It is a locally led process that can create, merge or change parish council boundaries, or set up entirely new ones. Several Surrey councils, including Epsom & Ewell, have launched CGRs to give residents a direct say in how their communities are represented at the most local level.

What CGRs Do

A CGR reviews whether the smallest level of local government - parish, town, community or neighbourhood councils - reflects local identities and meets community needs. Councils must consult the public before making recommendations. The aim is to:

- Give growing communities their own voice
- Reflect population changes
- Ensure fairer electoral representation
- Improve local accountability

Changes could mean creating a parish council for a town centre, merging existing parishes, or adjusting outdated boundaries.

Parish councils have elected members, meet regularly, and can run services such as allotments, parks, bus shelters, community centres, street lighting, litter bins, and festivals. They are funded through a "precept" added to council tax - typically a small sum, but dependent on the services provided.

Why Epsom & Ewell Is Doing a CGR Now

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is preparing for the possible abolition of the borough in 2027 under LGR. Its CGR is asking residents whether new parish councils should be created for areas within the borough so that, after the borough council is gone, communities still have a local voice.

The consultation runs until **9 October 2025**.

The LGR Position - Three Unitary Councils Proposed

This week, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council confirmed its support for a proposal backed by nine district and borough councils to replace the current two-tier system with **three unitary councils** - East, North and West Surrey - rather than one county-wide authority.

Council Leader Hannah Dalton said she has been speaking with residents at community events:

"People care deeply about their communities and local areas. They want to know their voice will continue to be heard after the changes to local government take place in 2027. This echoes what we found earlier in the year when... we asked residents to tell us what is most important to them about local government reorganisation."

A spring 2025 survey found **63% of respondents** preferred three new unitaries, citing local decision-making and understanding of local issues as their top priorities.

The government's decision on the future structure is expected in **October 2025**.

The Link Between LGR and CGR

While LGR is about creating larger unitary councils to simplify services and save money, CGRs are about ensuring that smaller, more local voices are not lost in the process. In effect, as the top tier becomes bigger, the smallest tier could be strengthened.

Epsom & Ewell's view is that parish councils would give residents "a direct route to be heard" after borough councils disappear, keeping decision-making about local facilities and neighbourhood priorities close to home.

Have Your Say

Residents can take part in the **Epsom & Ewell CGR consultation** before 9 October 2025. Details are available on the council's website.

Image shows the three unitary authority solution preferred by most Surrey district councils. Image Waverley Borough Council

What has kept us well in Surrey through the ages?

10 August 2025



How have people in Surrey looked after their wellbeing through the centuries — and what can we learn from them today? That's the question behind a new year-long heritage and wellbeing initiative backed by the National Lottery.

It's Not Your Birthday But... (INYBB), a Surrey-based arts and social impact organisation, has been awarded £99,781 by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver *What Keeps Us Well*, in partnership with the Surrey History Centre (SHC). The project runs from **August 2025 to July 2026**.

Drawing on six miles of historic records held at SHC — ranging from medieval manuscripts to community newsletters — the project will explore how people across Surrey have maintained wellbeing through food, exercise, creativity, connection, and community.

INYBB's artistic team will collaborate with archivists and three local partner groups to deliver the programme:

- **The Halow Project**, supporting neurodiverse young people in Guildford and Woking
- **Surrey Gypsy Traveller Communities Forum**, promoting inclusion and cultural understanding
- **Surrey Youth Groups**, including LGBTQ+ youth, carers and neurodiverse teens in Woking and Knaphill

Together, they will develop:

- **36 creative workshops**
- **Training and community events** at the Surrey History Centre
- **A co-created exhibition** showcasing historic sources and new creative responses
- **A short documentary film**
- **A published anthology** of written work
- **A digital wellness guide**
- **An open call for artists and writers** to create new work inspired by archive material

The project aims to reach over **46,500 people**, with a strong emphasis on engaging communities currently underrepresented in heritage activities.

"At a time when mental health challenges are increasing across our communities, this project will highlight how stories from the past can inspire wellness today," said an INYBB spokesperson.

How to Get Involved

- **Volunteers** are invited to help with exhibitions, research and more
- **Venues** (libraries, community centres, health hubs) are encouraged to host the free exhibition
- **Artists and writers** will be invited to respond creatively to archive materials through an open call launching this autumn

To register interest or find out more, visit itsnotyourbirthdaybut.com or follow @itsnotyourbirthdaybut on social media.

About INYBB

It's Not Your Birthday But... (INYBB) is a creative organisation working across Surrey and the South East to support wellbeing through arts and social connection. It runs participatory projects that explore identity, place, and belonging — often in partnership with community groups and public bodies. The name reflects the idea that celebration, support and attention shouldn't be limited to birthdays alone — everyone deserves moments of care and connection, every day.

See [HERE](#) more news from the Surrey History Centre

Image: The Centurions group was founded at a meeting of long-distance walking enthusiasts held on 11 May 1911. Courtesy SCC

Carers respite at the Crossroads in Surrey?

10 August 2025



A row has erupted over the sudden withdrawal of Surrey County Council funding for respite care provided by the long-standing charity, Crossroads Care Surrey, leaving hundreds of unpaid carers uncertain about their future support.

Crossroads Care Surrey announced this week it has stepped in to safeguard the wellbeing of **274 unpaid carers** after what it calls a "**U-turn**" by the local authority on a previously agreed commitment to honour their full entitlement to respite breaks.

The charity, which has delivered government-funded respite care for unpaid carers across Surrey for **over 14 years**, was **given six months' notice in February 2025** that its contract—due to run until **March 2027**—would end early on **4 August 2025**.

The controversy surrounds carers who were told they would still receive **their full allocation of 70 hours of respite**, even after the early termination of the contract. However, according to Crossroads, the Council has now **withdrawn that commitment**, leaving carers with "just a few weeks' notice" of lost support.

"This abrupt U-turn not only breaks the promise made to unpaid carers, it also places already exhausted individuals in an impossible position," said Terry



Hawkins, CEO of Crossroads Care Surrey. "We know just how vital these respite breaks are for carers' mental and physical health... the loss of this service will undoubtedly place an even greater burden on the already stretched GPs and hospitals across the county."

Despite the withdrawal of public funds, Crossroads confirmed that thanks to a surge of **generous donations**, the charity will **continue delivering the promised respite hours until 30 November 2025**.

"Whilst it's deeply disappointing to see the council walk away from their commitment, we're proud to stand by unpaid carers when they need us most," added Hawkins. "It has given us the means to do the right thing, and we are incredibly grateful."

The charity is urging carers affected by the cut to **contact Surrey County Council** if they wish to **challenge the withdrawal** or explore **alternative respite options**. Carers can also access support beyond November through **Crossroads Direct**, a self-funded version of the service.

"We're Putting Choice Back in Carers' Hands"

In response to the criticism, **Cllr Sinead Mooney**, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, insisted the authority had **worked constructively** with Crossroads to manage the transition.

"We're pleased that Crossroads Care Surrey has confirmed they will honour their agreements with carers by continuing to offer replacement care for those with remaining hours, following the end of the council's contract," said Cllr Mooney.

She explained that the replacement respite care was provided under **individual agreements** between carers and Crossroads, **not directly guaranteed by the Council**.

The Council defended its decision to introduce a **new carers' wellbeing support scheme**, offering **£300 on a pre-paid card** to give carers "**complete flexibility**" over how they arrange their breaks.

"This new offer... has the potential to benefit many more carers across Surrey," said Mooney, adding that it puts "**choice and control back in the hands of carers**. Our priority is to support carers in the best way we possibly can with the resources we have."

The Council also pointed to its "**Good**" rating from the Care Quality Commission, which cited **co-produced strategies with carers** as part of its ongoing commitment to improvement.

Mooney urged any carer affected to contact the County Council's information and advice service.

Crossroads Care Surrey says this is about **trust and continuity**—many carers joined the service with the understanding that **support would remain**, regardless of the Council's early termination of the contract.

As the situation unfolds, the spotlight falls on the **financial and strategic pressures** facing local authorities, and whether charitable donations can sustainably replace **core public service funding**.

Crossroads has reaffirmed its **mission to campaign** for the rights of unpaid carers and is calling on individuals, businesses, and communities to help ensure that "**no carer is left without support**."

For further details, visit: crossroadscaresurrey.org.uk

If you are an unpaid carer affected by the recent changes, contact Surrey County Council's adult social care information and advice line or Crossroads Care Surrey for assistance.

Surrey MPs slam SEND profiteers

10 August 2025



A new analysis of Surrey's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision reveals growing concern over spiralling costs, limited local authority capacity, and soaring profits among private providers – all while many children with special needs remain without adequate support.

The situation has drawn particular attention following the release of financial data from companies operating independent special schools across the UK, including in Surrey. The Witherslack Group, which operates Bramley Hill School in Tadworth, reported a turnover of £208 million and an operating profit of £44.6 million this year – up from £172.8 million turnover and £34.8 million profit the year before. Some private providers, backed by private equity firms, have posted profit margins exceeding 20%.

In contrast, Surrey County Council – responsible for delivering education for over 16,000 children in the county with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) – faces an ongoing struggle to balance growing demand against limited state sector capacity. The Council's own figures show that last year, it spent **£122 million**—almost half of its **£270 million high needs block grant**—on placements at non-maintained and independent schools.

The root of the issue lies in a long-standing shortage of suitable local authority-run SEND schools, which has left the Council heavily reliant on private sector provision. That reliance has come at a cost, both financial and human. According to Council data, **1,809 children in Surrey were recorded as being out of school for over a third of the time during the 2023/24 academic year**. Campaigners and parents report delays in assessments, a lack of transparency in placement decisions, and limited accountability from some providers.

The County Council has committed to increasing in-county SEND provision. Its **SEND Capital Programme**, launched in 2020, aims to create **1,500 new maintained school places by 2030**, with hundreds already in development. But critics argue progress is too slow, and that excessive profits among private providers are draining funds that could otherwise support local services.

Surrey's six Liberal Democrat MPs – Al Pinkerton, Chris Coghlan, Helen Maguire, Monica Harding, Will Forster, and Zöe Franklin – have now called for a **legal cap on profits** made by private SEND providers. They propose a maximum margin of **8%**, aligning with figures cited by the Office for National Statistics for average business profitability. The same threshold has also been suggested by the Education Secretary in the context of children's social care reform.

In a joint statement, the MPs said:

"It is completely unacceptable that the top private SEND providers in Surrey are lining their pockets by exploiting a system that has been left in crisis by repeated failures from the Conservatives. Supporting places at non-maintained independent schools accounted for £122 million last year – money that could go further in public provision."

"We are deeply concerned to see this greedy profiteering from private equity firms, especially when parents across Surrey are raising serious concerns about



standards and support at some schools, including Bramley Hill."

Surrey County Council has not commented directly on the profit figures but continues to highlight its strategic commitment to invest in new local SEND places. Its latest SEND Partnership Strategy focuses on co-producing services with families, improving timely access to support, and reducing reliance on high-cost placements. However, significant financial risks remain. In February, the Council acknowledged its high needs block deficit was continuing to grow, even with Government intervention schemes such as the "Safety Valve" programme.

Meanwhile, media scrutiny continues to follow the role of private companies in special education nationally. The BBC recently investigated complaints involving private SEND schools, and MPs including Monica Harding have raised questions in Parliament about accountability and off-rolling practices.

Parents and campaigners across Surrey continue to call for stronger regulation, more timely provision, and long-term investment in inclusive education. As one parent told *EET*: "We need a system that puts children first - not shareholders."

Image: cc Bruce Matsunaga. Licence details

Leatherhead railway station gets access upgrade

10 August 2025



A major upgrade to Leatherhead railway station has officially opened, marking what local MP Helen Maguire has called a "crucial step" in the campaign to make rail travel more accessible across Surrey.

The improvements, delivered through the Department for Transport's Access for All programme, include the installation of two 16-person lifts and a new footbridge linking both platforms. The £6.2 million project also included platform widening, upgraded lighting and CCTV, and enhanced ramp access. The enhancements are designed to make life easier for elderly and disabled passengers, as well as those travelling with pushchairs, bikes or heavy luggage.

The scheme was developed and delivered by Network Rail in partnership with Southern, with much of the work taking place over the past year. Prior to the upgrade, Leatherhead was nominally step-free, but passengers needing to avoid stairs had to take a lengthy, steep detour under a railway bridge outside the station to move between platforms. The new bridge and lifts provide a direct and safe route for all users, replacing what many had described as an awkward and at times treacherous alternative.

Opening the new facilities, Helen Maguire MP praised the scheme as a long-overdue improvement for passengers in the area. "I'm delighted that Leatherhead has become the latest station in my constituency with step-free access," she said. "These improvements are absolutely vital for our town, and a crucial step in making rail travel more accessible to my constituents regardless of their need."

However, the Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom and Ewell also used the occasion to highlight wider concerns about the state of the rail network in her constituency. In particular, she pointed to the reduction in the number of South Western Railway (SWR) services running to and from Waterloo since the Covid pandemic. "South Western Railways should also increase the frequency of the Waterloo service back to pre-Covid levels to ensure that passengers are not overcrowded," she said, noting that passenger numbers have increased while service levels have not kept pace.

Maguire also raised the ongoing lack of sufficient blue badge parking spaces at local stations, and the need for ticketing systems that are more accessible for people with visual impairments. With SWR now operating under national ownership, she said, passengers would be expecting higher standards of service. "Delays to the Arterio train rollout and extortionate ticket price rises are a worrying start," she added. "I will keep campaigning to ensure that rail passengers in Epsom, Ewell, Ashtead and Leatherhead get a fair deal."

Southern, which manages Leatherhead station, has also introduced cycling improvements alongside the accessibility works. A secure cycle hub with 26 spaces and a maintenance area has been installed on Platform 1, while Platform 2 now features a double-deck cycle rack with space for 32 bikes, as well as new motorbike parking. Lighting and CCTV coverage in these areas has also been upgraded.

Jenny Saunders, Customer Services Director at Southern's parent company Govia Thameslink Railway, welcomed the improvements, saying: "Lifts benefit everyone who finds stairs a barrier, and for some disabled passengers this project has the potential to be life-changing."

Leatherhead joins a growing list of stations to receive Access for All funding, with similar projects completed in recent months at Barnes, Herne Bay and Motspur Park. The scheme forms part of a wider national programme to modernise railway infrastructure and open up travel to all users, regardless of mobility needs.

Network Rail's Sussex Route Director Lucy McAuliffe said: "These upgrades have removed a significant barrier to travel at Leatherhead. We're proud to be making a difference for passengers who, for too long, have had to navigate difficult routes to use our railway."

While the transformation at Leatherhead station represents a clear step forward, campaigners and passengers alike will be watching closely to see whether service levels and surrounding facilities are brought up to the same standard.

Image: MP Helen Maguire opens Leatherhead upgraded railway station

Epsom charity backs Ukrainian wheelchair athletes in world championship

10 August 2025



Surrey Stands with Ukraine, the Epsom-based humanitarian charity operating under Harrop HR Missions Ltd (Registered Charity No. 1117155), is proudly sponsoring the Ukrainian Pickleball Team at the prestigious **English Open Pickleball Tournament** in Telford this summer, taking place from **6-10 August 2025**.

This powerful gesture of international solidarity comes with a particular emphasis on supporting Ukrainian **wheelchair athletes**—many of whom suffered life-changing injuries during the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

Founded in early 2022 by Ukrainian and British friends, Surrey Stands with Ukraine has grown to become one of the UK's most active grassroots support groups for Ukraine. To date, the charity has delivered more than **£4 million** in humanitarian aid, including over **10,000 mobility aids, 40+ tonnes of medical**



supplies, and **140 aid vehicles** to those in need across the country. It also funds Ukrainian NGOs and institutions, with a strong focus over the past 18 months on **rehabilitation from physical and psychological trauma**.

Now, that mission expands to the world of sport.

The Ukrainian Pickleball Team arriving in Telford includes several inspirational wheelchair athletes whose journey into sport has been shaped by wartime adversity. For many, pickleball has become a vital outlet for physical recovery, psychological strength, and renewed purpose. Their participation in this international tournament is seen as a powerful symbol of national resilience—and comes at a time when Ukraine's sporting community continues to suffer, having lost **487 athletes** since the full-scale Russian invasion began.

"We are honoured to sponsor the Ukrainian Pickleball Team and shine a light on these remarkable athletes," said a spokesperson for Surrey Stands with Ukraine. "Their participation in the English Open is a testament to their courage and a reminder of the human toll of the war. They represent not only Ukraine, but also the enduring spirit of all those affected."

As part of its sponsorship, Surrey Stands with Ukraine is covering travel and accessible accommodation costs to ensure that all team members, especially the wheelchair athletes, can compete on equal terms.

The **English Open Pickleball Tournament**, held annually in Telford, is one of Europe's premier events in the sport. This year's edition promises to be especially meaningful with the Ukrainian team's presence on court.

Event Details

- **What:** English Open Pickleball Tournament
- **When:** 6-10 August 2025
- **Where:** Telford, United Kingdom
- **Team:** Ukrainian Pickleball Team, including wheelchair athletes, sponsored by Surrey Stands with Ukraine

About Surrey Stands with Ukraine

Operating under Harrop HR Missions Ltd, Surrey Stands with Ukraine is a registered UK charity supporting civilians, hospitals, and trauma centres across Ukraine. Founded in February 2022, it continues to deliver aid, funding, and solidarity from the UK to those most affected by the war.

Contact

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Donate

Support the charity's Trauma Rehabilitation Fundraiser at
<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/trauma-rehabilitation-pack>

Meet Two of the Athletes: Stories of Courage

Oleksandr, 30, from Mykolaiv, was serving as a frontline medic when a Russian shell strike in 2023 caused devastating injuries to both his legs. After undergoing multiple surgeries and losing mobility, Oleksandr found himself struggling with isolation and trauma. Introduced to pickleball during rehabilitation in Lviv, he quickly found strength in sport and camaraderie. "Pickleball gave me a reason to get out of bed again," he says. Now a wheelchair athlete, he's competing internationally for the first time in Telford.

Natalia, 27, from Dnipro, was wounded in a missile attack while volunteering at a humanitarian centre in early 2022. With long months of rehabilitation behind her, she turned to pickleball as a low-impact sport that helped her regain balance and confidence. As one of the few female wheelchair players on the Ukrainian team, she says the sport has become a symbol of her resilience. "We lost so much—but we didn't lose our spirit," she says.

Busy Epsom and Ewell Borough Council next meets December

10 August 2025



At a busy half-hour meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council on 22nd July, councillors confronted some of the borough's most pressing issues, including the future of Horton Cemetery, the lack of social housing, and the need to reinvigorate scrutiny of Council actions.

Calls to Honour the Dead at Horton Cemetery

Cllr **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) raised a poignant question about the fate of those buried in the long-neglected Horton Cemetery. "My belief is that the culture and heritage of having the Epsom cluster – five large Victorian institutions in which people lived and died – should be remembered," she said. "9,000 people died and are buried in a cemetery in the borough. Will the Chair of Community and Wellbeing do something towards helping remember the people who died there and respecting their resting places?"

Responding, Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) said he shared her sympathies. "It's a place that we should remember and celebrate," he said. "If I can do anything to address the concerns that the councillor raised, I'll do so."

Social Housing: "Three Houses in Five Years is Derisory"

Cllr Chinn also delivered a sharp rebuke of the borough's performance on affordable housing. "It's not going to happen until this Council starts building homes for social rent," she declared. "Can we have all the different departments working towards finally building some homes for social rent within the borough? Three houses in five years is derisory."

Cllr Woodbridge admitted the situation was "particularly disappointing" and noted the Council is not a housing stockholder, which "limits its ability to deliver social housing directly." However, he pointed to the local plan as a potential tool to unlock affordable development. "It won't be enough ever, but it will be something," he said. He added that homelessness prevention would remain a key focus, with increased use of the housing prevention grant to strengthen support teams.

Audit and Scrutiny Committee Faces Questions Over Effectiveness

Discussion over the **Audit and Scrutiny Committee's annual report** revealed dissatisfaction with the body's performance.



"The Audit and Scrutiny Committee has carried out limited scrutiny during the past year," Cllr Chinn noted, quoting the report. "From my memory, that's exactly the same last paragraph as it was a year ago. Can I please ask what will happen to change it so that next year there is some proper, true scrutiny?"

Cllr **James Lawrence** (LibDem College), former member of the committee, agreed there was room to grow: "I do think there are good changes occurring. There is a lot more to go... We would like scrutiny to go further." He acknowledged that the committee's new chair Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) was making good progress.

Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative - Horton) took a firmer stance, calling out enforcement as a glaring omission: "There is a rainforest of information from residents and councillors with their issue on enforcement. It has been identified as a weakness in our local authority. I don't think this report reflects the issues that I believe exist."

Cllr **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) raised concerns about how scrutiny is blocked by bureaucracy: "If the committee is always saying, well, this is just too much trouble... how are things going to be any different?"

Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Steve McCormick accepted the criticisms, noting that scrutiny work had been limited but improvements were underway. "We do have a work plan in place," he said, citing a planning enforcement audit and a forthcoming September item for scrutiny. "If we do have an item to scrutinise, we will find the resource to get that done."

Alex Coley's Motion on Council Property Referred to Committee

Cllr **Alex Coley** (Independent - Ruxley) and Cllr **James Lawrence** (LibDem College) sought to move a motion that included proposals to urgently dispose of 66 High Street, 70 East Street and any other underperforming Council owned commercial properties, and the capital receipts to be placed in Capital Reserves.

However, the details were not debated, as the Council voted to refer the motion to the Strategy and Resources Committee instead.

Epsom and Ewell Property Investment Company is wholly owned by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. It has a property portfolio of £51.2m and in the year end 31st March 2024 made a profit before tax (excluding property re-valuations) of £1.366m and a dividend was paid of £614,986

The company's strategy is to "maintain a diversified, balanced and low risk property portfolio to provide income over the long term to our ultimate shareholder, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council."

The next Full Council meeting is scheduled for 9th December 2025.

Image: Mayor Robert Leach and deputy-Mayor Lucie McIntyre of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council bow heads in prayer with the Chaplain. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council - YouTube.

Casting vote approves 9 new homes in Epsom

10 August 2025



Tripling the number of houses on a brownfield Epsom site vexed Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Planning Committee on 10th July.

The Application from Nuro Homes Limited proposed the erection of 9 new dwellings on adjacent plots of land acquired by the developers in the Whitehorse Drive and Bucknills Close roads of Epsom off the Dorking Road.

A previous application for this development had been refused by the Planning Committee in April 2024 and the developers appealed to a Planning Inspector. The appeal was refused where the Inspector was in agreement with the Council's refusal on the ground of highway safety but the objection concerning hazards in waste collection the Inspector stated could be addressed.

A revised application came before the Planning committee with a widened access from the development onto Whitehorse Drive. RA Councillors Neil Dallen, Jan Mason, Phil Neale and Humphrey Reynolds were not convinced that the revisions were sufficient to address safety concerns for pedestrians and in particular school girls attending Rosebery School in Whitehorse Drive.

Kate Chinn (Labour Court) emphasised the need for more housing - though this development was not providing anything affordable for those on low incomes, she added. With the improved access she stated people are mindful and the fears of pedestrian vehicular collisions should not be overstated.

The officers of the Council recommended the Application be granted.

Cllr Dallen proposed the Application be refused. The Chair of the Committee, Cllr Steven McCormick (RA Woodcote and Langley Vale) required him to cite the planning policies that justified refusal. As Cllr Dallen floundered through his papers an officer identified the reasons given at the meeting that refused the original application in 2024 and Cllr Dallen repeated them.

Cllr Julian Freeman (Liberal Democrat College) questioned the procedure of having a vote on a motion to refuse when the matter to be voted on was the recommendation to grant.

In a bizarre dance on the voting 2 voted in favour of refusal and two voted against refusal. The Chair cast his vote against refusal. This was followed by a vote on granting the Planning Application with 4 voting in favour and 4 voting against. The Chair voted in favour of granting the Application and therefore the officers' recommendation was carried.

Image: Top plan original with narrow access on Whitehorse Drive. Bottom plan revised plan showing proposed housing and widened access. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council planning documents.