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Epsom and Ewell Considers New Community Councils as Local Government Shake-Up Looms

23 June 2025



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) will meet Thursday, 26 June for an extraordinary session to decide whether to launch a formal Community Governance Review (CGR)—a move that could lead to the creation of one or more Community Councils across the borough.

The proposal comes in direct response to the Government's initiative to abolish all 11 borough and district councils in Surrey, along with Surrey County Council, and replace them with fewer, larger unitary authorities. The Government is currently considering submissions for either two, or three new unitary councils for the county. The Government may still impose a single authority for the whole County. A decision is expected in autumn 2025.

If the borough and county councils are dissolved—as is widely anticipated in April 2027—Epsom and Ewell would be left as one of the few areas in Surrey without a "lower-tier" of local government unless it acts now to establish one. Unlike many other parts of the county, Epsom and Ewell is currently "unparished", meaning it has no town or parish councils. The proposed Community Councils would fill that void.

What is a Community Council?

Community Councils are parish councils in all but name, capable of levying their own precept (a share of Council Tax) and taking on responsibilities such as managing parks, allotments, bus shelters, community centres, and street lighting. They may also act as local voices on planning applications and community development.

The proposal is for either:

- One Community Council to cover the whole borough, or
- Two Community Councils dividing the borough between East and West, with four different boundary configurations under consideration.

Maps, population data, and details of council assets in each option form part of the public consultation package.

Consultation and Timeline

If Full Council agrees to proceed, the CGR would begin in July 2025 with a twelve-week public consultation. The review process must be completed within 12 months if it is to inform the April 2027 reorganisation.

A second round of consultation will follow in early 2026, with a final decision due by June 2026. If approved, elections to the new Community Councils would be held in May 2027.

A £300,000 budget has been allocated to fund the consultation and planning stages, to be drawn from EEBC's strategic priorities reserve.

What Would These Councils Do?

Community Councils could inherit some of the Borough Council's functions and assets. However, this would depend on detailed financial and legal planning. Transfers of property and responsibilities would need to comply with any restrictions imposed under a potential Section 24 Direction—special powers the Secretary of State may use to restrict councils from disposing of assets in the run-up to local government reorganisation.

Significantly, the new councils would be able to raise funds independently through a local precept. While this could enable more responsive services, it also raises concerns about an increased financial burden on residents—particularly if a higher precept replaces services that were formerly funded by EEBC without any direct local taxation.

Too Many Layers?

One of the central arguments for creating large unitary authorities is to streamline governance, eliminate duplication, and reduce the cost of running multiple layers of local government.

But the creation of Community Councils risks reintroducing those layers, potentially replacing one borough council with both a unitary authority *and* one or more new Community Councils beneath it. Some have questioned whether such a system would actually reduce costs at all—especially if a new strategic authority is also established to coordinate policy between two or more unitary areas of Surrey.

Critics warn of a complex and potentially costly patchwork: unitary authority, strategic body, and newly-formed parish

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councils—all with their own budgets, meetings, officers, and elections.

EEBC, however, is keen to preserve a strong local voice. In a statement, Council Leader Cllr Hannah Dalton said:

“We’re navigating the biggest change in local democracy for more than 50 years. We want to make sure that, whatever the outcome of local government reorganisation, the voices of our residents and local communities continue to be heard in years to come – this is a vital element of local democracy.” Epsom and Ewell Times 28/05/2025.

What Happens Next?

Should the Council vote to proceed on Thursday, residents will be invited to participate in shaping the future of their local governance. A dedicated consultation website will go live in early July, with drop-in events, online surveys, and stakeholder workshops planned through to September.

Further updates will be provided via the Council’s social media and through local publications, including the *Epsom and Ewell Times*.

Have Your Say

Residents will be asked:

- Whether Community Councils should be created
- Whether there should be one or two (or more) such councils
- What functions they should perform
- How they should be funded
- What boundaries make the most sense

More information is available at www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk and by emailing: cgr@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

Related reports:

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council out – Community Council’s in?

Surrey’s partner organisations support county council plans for local government reorganisation

Surrey Councils launch Local Government Reorganisation engagement

Surrey’s BIG debt question in local government reorganisation

Local Government Reorganisation in Surrey: Key Proposals

Assisted Dying Bill Passes in Commons — Epsom MP Explains Absence

23 June 2025



In a historic moment for UK parliamentary debate, the Assisted Dying Bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons on **Friday 20 June 2025**, following a narrow but decisive vote. MPs voted **314 in favour** and **291 against**, a margin of just 23 votes, paving the way for the Bill’s progression to the House of Lords.

The **Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill**, introduced by Labour MP Kim Leadbetter, proposes to legalise assisted dying for terminally ill adults in England and Wales who are medically expected to live for six months or less. Under the Bill’s framework, individuals would be able to request life-ending medication, to be self-administered following a rigorous process of approvals.

That process would require sign-off by two independent doctors and a special three-member oversight panel comprising a legal expert, psychiatrist, and social worker. Earlier provisions for High Court authorisation were removed in the final draft to streamline implementation, a move both welcomed and criticised in equal measure.

Supporters of the Bill argue that it reflects modern values around personal autonomy and compassionate end-of-life care, allowing individuals the dignity of choosing how and when they die. They point to robust safeguards within the Bill — including mental capacity assessments, a residency requirement, and a mandatory waiting period — as protections for

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vulnerable people. Medical professionals would retain the right to opt out on grounds of conscience.

Opponents, including some religious leaders and palliative care specialists, argue that the Bill could open the door to pressure on the elderly, disabled or chronically ill to end their lives prematurely. They also warn that overstretched NHS and social care services might struggle to implement the regulatory framework effectively.

Among those unable to cast their vote was Epsom and Ewell's Liberal Democrat MP, **Helen Maguire**, who has consistently supported the Bill in previous readings. Ms Maguire issued the following full statement to the *Epsom and Ewell Times* explaining her absence:

"I am disappointed to have been unable to attend the vote. I have consistently voted for this Bill.

My absence on the voting date of Friday, June 20th, was due to a pre-planned parliamentary trip. This visit was scheduled before the voting date was confirmed and unfortunately could not be moved.

This is an issue I care about profoundly, and I gave serious thought as to whether I should be away. In the end, I was paired with another MP who was unable to attend as they hold a different view from me, which meant that our absences effectively cancelled each other out in terms of the final result.

While this did offer some reassurance to my conscience, I appreciate that my absence may still be disappointing to those who had hoped to see a vote recorded in person. Please know that I have made it a priority to attend all other sitting Fridays when the assisted dying bill was debated, precisely because of how important I know these debates and votes are, particularly on such sensitive and personal matters."

With the Bill now heading to the House of Lords for further scrutiny, attention turns to whether peers will support what could become one of the most significant moral and legal reforms in recent decades. While some in the Lords remain sceptical, others are warning against frustrating legislation that has cleared the elected chamber by a democratic vote.

Whether or not the Bill survives its passage through the Lords, the June 20th vote represents a shift in the national conversation — one that brings the UK a step closer to joining countries like Canada, New Zealand, and parts of the United States in legalising assisted dying under carefully controlled conditions.

MP Slams 'Patchwork Repairs' as local Hospitals Face £150m Backlog

23 June 2025



Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom & Ewell, Helen Maguire, has criticised the government's response to the mounting repair crisis at Epsom and St Helier hospitals, warning that the very future of local NHS services could be at risk without urgent and substantial investment.

Speaking in the House of Commons this week, Maguire welcomed a recent £12.1 million allocation for Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust but described the sum as "a drop in the ocean" compared to the scale of need.

"Our current maintenance backlog alone amounts to £150 million," states the St George's, Epsom and St Helier Hospital Group (GESH), which manages the trust. "We estimate our backlog maintenance will rise by £180 million over five years — or £36 million per year."

During Health and Social Care Questions in Parliament on 17 June, Maguire challenged Health Secretary Wes Streeting to visit the hospitals and witness conditions firsthand. "Patients and staff deserve safe and modern facilities, not patchwork repairs," she told MPs.

Read the full exchange in Hansard

The Health Secretary acknowledged the scale of the challenge, saying both he and the Minister for Secondary Care, Karin Smyth MP, had met with local MPs about the issue. He cited a £207 million capital allocation to the NHS South West London Integrated Care Board — covering the broader region — and reiterated that the government was "reversing the trend" of underinvestment, blaming the previous Conservative government for leaving "a £37 billion black hole in NHS capital."

However, Maguire was left unimpressed by the response.

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"It is disappointing that the Health Secretary ignored my invitation to come down and see firsthand the scale of the challenge at Epsom & St Helier," she said after the debate.

"If he spent a day in the shoes of one of our exceptional doctors or nurses, caring for patients amidst crumbling walls and leaking ceilings, I'm sure he too would share the grave concerns that I and my Liberal Democrat colleagues Bobby Dean MP and Luke Taylor MP have for our local hospitals.

"£12.1 million does not even begin to touch the sides compared with what our hospitals need right now."

The MP also stressed the importance of not placing all hope in the new specialist emergency care hospital planned for Sutton. "Alongside the new hospital building in Sutton to ease the pressure on Epsom & St Helier, patients and staff deserve safe and modern facilities wherever they go, not just patchwork repairs and more uncertainty from this Government."

A Local Crisis in Numbers

- **£150 million** – current maintenance backlog at Epsom & St Helier Trust
- **£36 million/year** – projected additional maintenance need over next five years
- **£12.1 million** – recent government funding allocated to the Trust
- **£207 million** – total capital funding to South West London Integrated Care Board

Background: New Hospital, Old Buildings

Plans for a new £500 million specialist emergency care hospital in Sutton — part of the controversial Health Infrastructure Plan (HIP) 1 scheme — have been met with both cautious optimism and concern that core services in Epsom and St Helier will be reduced.

Epsom and St Helier hospitals serve an ageing population, and the majority of the estate dates back to the early to mid-20th century. Campaigners have long pointed to leaking roofs, outdated infrastructure, and chronic staff shortages as urgent priorities.

While some capital funding is being made available for immediate safety needs, campaigners and local MPs argue that unless major investment is directed to the existing hospitals, they will continue to deteriorate, placing patients and staff at risk.

Photo: Maguire MP abseiling St Helier Hospital

Mental Health and Justice in Special Epsom Film Screening

23 June 2025



A powerful evening of film and conversation is coming to Epsom Picturehouse on Monday 23 June, as local mental health charity *Mary Frances Trust* teams up with national organisation *Women in Prison* to present a special screening of the acclaimed documentary *HOLLOWAY*.

The event, beginning at 7.30pm, will include a live Q&A with guest speakers exploring the intersection of trauma, mental health, and the women's prison system — themes at the heart of both the film and the work of Mary Frances Trust.

Directed by BAFTA Breakthrough Brit Daisy-May Hudson and Emmy-nominated filmmaker Sophie Compton, *HOLLOWAY* invites six women back to the now-closed Holloway Prison, where they form a women's circle to share deeply personal stories of incarceration and survival. The result is a compelling portrait of systemic failure and personal transformation, as the women trace the roots of their journeys through trauma and into healing.

Created through a trauma-informed, co-creative process, the film features contributions from Aliyah Ali, Mandy Ogunmokun, Sarah Cassidy, Lady Unchained, Gerrah, and Tamar Mujanay. It won the Audience Award at the BFI London Film Festival and has prompted vital discussions wherever it has been shown.

Following the screening, audience members will hear from a panel of guest speakers:

- **Karryn Robinson**, London Prison Services Manager at *Women in Prison*, who leads the Unsentenced Women project at Bronzefield Prison. Karryn has previously worked as a trauma specialist counsellor, Crisis Team

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Manager at MIND, and as a domestic abuse advocate within the Probation Service.

- **Megan Siarey**, Delivery and Strategy Lead for Co-Production and Community Engagement at *Mary Frances Trust*.
- **Sophie Compton**, Emmy, Grierson and BIFA-nominated director of *HOLLOWAY* and *Another Body*.

The evening promises to be a moving and enlightening experience for anyone interested in mental health, justice reform, and the power of community-led support.

Event details
Epsom Picturehouse
Monday 23 June, 7.30pm
Tickets available at: picturehouses.com

Watch the trailer and find more details via Mary Frances Trust:
https://www.maryfrancestrust.org.uk/mft-co-hosts-special-screening-qa-holloway-at-epsom-picturehouse/

Image: Contributor Mandy opens up about her early childhood trauma during the women's circle. Six women who had been imprisoned in Holloway Prison took part in the women's circle over 5 days, returning to the now-closed Holloway Prison to tell their stories.

Menuhin Hall's Summer Festival Returns for Three Weeks of Music and Community

23 June 2025



The Menuhin Hall, one of Surrey's premier venues for classical music, will once again host its annual Summer Festival from Friday 13 June to Friday 4 July 2025. Set within the tranquil grounds of the Yehudi Menuhin School near Cobham, the festival will feature an exciting line-up of performances by the school's talented pupils, returning alumni and acclaimed guest artists.

Across three weeks, audiences can look forward to a programme ranging from family-friendly events and solo recitals to orchestral and choral works of significant scale and emotional depth. Visitors are invited to bring picnics and enjoy the setting before performances, with generous intervals designed to enhance the relaxed and celebratory atmosphere.

Programme of Events

Summer Solos
Friday 13 June and Friday 20 June – Grounds open 5.30pm, Concert at 6.30pm
Sunday 15 June and Sunday 22 June – Grounds open 1.30pm, Concert at 2.30pm
This four-part series highlights the individual talents and musical progress of the Yehudi Menuhin School pupils. Audiences will hear a broad repertoire including Brahms's Hungarian Dances, Tchaikovsky's Valse Scherzo, Lutosławski's Subito, and Chen Gang's *Sunshine Over Tashkurgan*. There will be a 60-minute interval for refreshments and picnicking in the beautiful school grounds.

Seven Sayings: Triumph
Saturday 28 June – Grounds open 4pm, Concert at 5pm
An inspiring evening featuring Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, described by E.T.A. Hoffmann as "one of the most important works of the time", performed alongside Korngold's Suite for Left Hand Piano and Strings Op. 23.

Family Day: Pictures at an Exhibition
Sunday 29 June – Activities and food from 1pm, Family Concert at 3pm
Family Day offers a chance for children and their families to explore music in a playful and accessible way. The afternoon includes outdoor games, arts and crafts, and refreshments. A special interactive performance of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, led by broadcaster and pianist Keelan Carew and ten young pianists, will take the audience on a journey through whimsical musical scenes, from enchanted castles to Baba Yaga's forest hut. The concert is particularly suitable for children aged 3 to 9, though all are welcome.

Spotlight Concert: Piano Gala
Tuesday 1 July – Concert at 7.30pm
The final Spotlight event of the year showcases the school's finest young pianists performing a programme of Chopin, Debussy, Ravel, Berg and Schubert. Highlights include Debussy's *Suite Bergamasque*, Ravel's *Sonatine*, and Chopin's

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ballades, recently featured in the Oscar-nominated film *A Real Pain*.

Leavers' Picnic
Wednesday 2 July – Grounds open 5pm, Concert at 6.30pm
This special occasion marks the final performance by the school's leavers. Works by Ravel, Schumann, Liszt and Kodály will be performed, with a symbolic presentation of musical scores to those moving on. The evening includes a 60-minute interval for refreshments.

Seven Sayings: Reunion – The Festival Finale
Friday 4 July – Grounds open 5pm, Concert at 6.30pm
The festival concludes with an emotionally powerful programme featuring James MacMillan's *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, performed by the Senior Orchestra, Chamber Choir, conductor Jonathan Bloxham, and the award-winning vocal collective SANSARA. The second half includes Arvo Pärt's *Fratres* and Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings*, performed by current pupils and alumni.

Ticket Information
Tickets range from £10 to £28.50, with half-price concessions for under-30s.
To book, visit www.menuhinhall.co.uk or contact the Box Office on 01932 559400 / boxoffice@menuhinschool.co.uk.

About The Menuhin Hall
The Menuhin Hall is an award-winning concert venue located on the grounds of the Yehudi Menuhin School. It is both a professional resource for the school's pupils and a valued part of the local cultural scene, hosting concerts by visiting artists and community ensembles. The hall has been recognised by RIBA and the Civic Trust, among others, for its architectural excellence.

About The Yehudi Menuhin School
Founded in 1963 by renowned violinist Yehudi Menuhin, the school provides an exceptional music education for gifted children aged 9 to 19, regardless of financial background. Alumni include Nicola Benedetti, Nigel Kennedy, Alina Ibragimova and Tasmin Little. Located near Cobham, the school offers a holistic education, with pupils dividing their time between academic and musical studies, and regular opportunities to perform both in the Menuhin Hall and throughout the local community.

For more information, visit www.menuhinschool.co.uk.

Epsom Therapy Garden in the Running for BBC Green Award

23 June 2025



A tranquil corner of Epsom that has quietly blossomed into a hub of therapy and conservation has earned recognition in the BBC Radio Surrey Make a Difference Awards.

St Ebba's Therapy Garden, located on the former cricket ground of the old hospital site, has been shortlisted for the *Green Award*, which honours individuals or organisations that have made a significant impact on their local environment.

Developed through a partnership between Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Surrey County Council, Natural England and Surrey Wildlife Trust, the garden offers a sanctuary for people with complex mental health and neurodevelopmental needs. Many of those who benefit from the garden have found it difficult to engage with more traditional clinical settings.

Now a finalist for the BBC accolade, the garden's blend of therapeutic purpose and ecological design has struck a chord with both its users and supporters. Local businesses and volunteers—including those from a vocational programme for adults with learning disabilities—have also played a key role in shaping the space.

Therapists trained in nature-based interventions use the garden to support individuals coping with anxiety, depression, trauma and other conditions. Designed to nurture both human wellbeing and local biodiversity, the garden includes native hedgerows for birds and hedgehogs, pollinator-friendly plants for bees and butterflies, and sensory features such as grasses and scented geraniums.

A young person who receives therapy at the garden described it as "a nice, relaxed environment," adding, "The garden is a good place for me to calm down. I feel comfortable being there."

One parent shared how the outdoor space had transformed her daughter's ability to engage with therapy. "She loves the outdoors but is often too anxious to leave the house. This is a safe place for her to enjoy and it has hugely improved her

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wellbeing."

Another parent praised the impact on their autistic son, who volunteered to help build the garden. "He was nervous at first, but came back so proud of what he'd achieved. He's gained confidence—and we're so grateful he had the opportunity."

With the BBC Radio Surrey awards set to highlight community champions across the region, supporters of St Ebba's will be hoping the garden's unique combination of therapy and conservation will earn it the Green Award title.

For more information about the services offered by Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, visit: www.sabp.nhs.uk
Follow them on Twitter: @sabpnhs or Facebook: facebook.com/sabpnhs

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Debate Opens on the Future Shape of Surrey's Local Government

23 June 2025



Residents across Surrey are being asked to help shape the future of local government in what is being described as the most significant shake-up in over half a century. A government consultation launched this week invites public views on two competing proposals to reorganise Surrey's local councils into unitary authorities.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is offering two options for reorganisation:

- A **two-unitary model** (East and West Surrey), proposed by Surrey County Council and supported by Elmbridge and Mole Valley.
- A **three-unitary model** (East, West and North Surrey), backed by a majority of Surrey's borough and district councils, including Epsom & Ewell.

Councillor Hannah Dalton, Leader of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and Chair of the Surrey Leaders Group, is urging residents to take part:

"Residents have consistently told us that they want decisions made by people who know and understand their communities," she said. "Over 60% of respondents to our April survey preferred a three-unitary model. We believe it delivers better services, stronger accountability, and a future that works for every part of Surrey."

The government consultation runs until **5 August**, and is the only opportunity for the public to influence which of the two options is pursued. Dalton emphasised the importance of local voices in the process:

"We've been assured by the government that every response will be treated equally. This is your only chance to shape how your area is governed for future decades."

The consultation follows the rejection of a third submission from Reigate & Banstead and Crawley Boroughs, which will not proceed.

Financial Concerns and Woking's Shadow

Both proposals are said to be financially viable, according to Councillor Dalton, but depend on government action to address what she described as **"unrecoverable debt"**—most notably in Woking.

"We welcome the Government's recognition that this debt cannot be managed locally. But we await details on what support will follow after 2026/27," she said.

The issue of Woking's financial crisis looms large in the background, with some viewing reorganisation as an opportunity to draw a line under past mismanagement—but others fear it could result in spreading liabilities more broadly across the county.

Streamlining—or Complicating?

While the proposals are framed as streamlining governance—abolishing the two-tier system of borough/district and county councils—there is growing concern that new layers may be introduced in their place.

The two-unitary model envisages an **elected Mayor** and a **Strategic Authority** overseeing countywide functions. At the same time, **Neighbourhood Area Committees** (formerly "Community Boards") are being piloted to handle hyper-local

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matters. In towns like Epsom, where no town council currently exists, discussions have begun around establishing new local councils to fill the vacuum left by a dissolved borough council.

Some commentators have questioned whether the term “unitary” has become misleading in this context—raising the possibility that what was intended as simplification may, in practice, become a **reconfiguration of complexity**.

Clash of Visions

Surrey County Council’s Leader, Cllr Tim Oliver, argues the two-unitary model provides the best platform for efficient services and future prosperity:

“Two unitary councils will simplify services, save money and strengthen communities.”

In contrast, EEBC and its allies believe three smaller authorities would be more responsive and rooted in local identity. They also point to stronger alignment with community geography, opportunities for targeted infrastructure growth, and better democratic accountability.

How to Take Part

The government consultation is open until **Tuesday 5 August 2025**. Residents, businesses, community organisations, and parish councils are all invited to contribute their views.

Ways to respond:

- Online: surrey-local-government-reorganisation
- Email: **lgreorganisation@communities.gov.uk**
- Post: LGR Consultation, Fry Building 2NE, MHCLG, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF
- Paper forms: Available at all 52 libraries across Surrey

Further details and background on each proposal can be found at the **Surrey Local Government Reorganisation Hub**: www.surreylgr.co.uk

Related reports:

Surrey’s partner organisations support county council plans for local government reorganisation

Surrey Councils launch Local Government Reorganisation engagement

Surrey’s BIG debt question in local government reorganisation

Local Government Reorganisation in Surrey: Key Proposals

Green Thinking Takes the Spotlight at Epsom Picturehouse

23 June 2025



Cinema-goers in Epsom are being invited to watch, reflect, and act, as a national eco-film initiative gains local traction.

A new strand of community-focused cinema, “Green Screen,” has arrived at Epsom Picturehouse, offering audiences more than just a night at the movies. Instead, it aims to foster conversation and local action around the pressing issue of climate change.

Following its Epsom debut on Earth Day earlier this year — hosted by The Woodland Trust and focusing on the conservation of Langley Vale Wood — the next Green Screen event is set for **Wednesday 9th July 2025 at 8pm**, this time in partnership with **Extinction Rebellion Epsom & Ewell**.

The evening features three short films tackling different aspects of the climate crisis. First up is *#ClimateScam?* (40 mins), a documentary from Cornwall Climate Care which addresses climate change denial and misinformation. It’s followed by *Climate Anxiety* (17 mins), a film from Cambridge Movie Makers exploring the psychological toll of environmental collapse. Finally, *Plan Z: From Lab Coats to Handcuffs* (23 mins), produced by A2Y Productions, tells the story of scientists who risk their careers and freedom by engaging in direct environmental activism.

But it’s not all on-screen. After the screenings, the audience will be invited to stay for a 40-minute panel discussion and Q&A featuring local voices — a doctor, a scientist, an engineer, and a community organiser — all bringing their perspectives to the urgent environmental questions raised by the films.

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Joe Stroud of Epsom Picturehouse said:

“We’re proud to see Green Screen take root in Epsom. It’s a strand that thrives when communities take ownership — the films are the catalyst, but it’s the community that brings together their perspectives, expertise, and passion.”

The Green Screen series is a nationwide initiative by Picturehouse Cinemas, transforming theatres into spaces of environmental learning and grassroots conversation. Events across the UK have seen audiences inspired to take local action, supported by partnerships with schools, charities, businesses, and environmental organisations.

True to its ethos, the Epsom screening will extend the invitation to connect beyond the credits. Attendees are encouraged to continue conversations in the Picturehouse’s meeting space over a free tea or filter coffee — if they bring a reusable cup.

Extinction Rebellion Epsom & Ewell, the local host for the July event, is part of the global climate action movement and is active in local campaigning and awareness-raising through non-violent action and community engagement.

Epsom Picturehouse itself is a relatively new addition to the town, having opened in June 2024. Located in Epsom Square, the six-screen venue blends modern programming with vintage touches and a strong focus on community. Its café-bar offers a menu of pizzas, toasties, cakes and drinks, helping turn cinema visits into a more social, immersive experience.

Anyone interested in organising a future Green Screen event in Epsom is encouraged to contact the venue at **epsom.marketing@picturehouses.co.uk**.

For more information about the 9th July event, readers can contact Warren Bunce of Extinction Rebellion Epsom & Ewell on **07539 069659** or by email at **epsomewell@extinctionrebellion.uk**.

Epsom and Ewell Youngsters Join Thousands for Day of Outdoor Adventure

23 June 2025



Over 2,000 Beaver Scouts and Rainbows take part in Surrey’s Bazzaz event

Young adventurers from Cuddington, Epsom, Stoneleigh, and Ewell were among more than 2,000 Beaver Scouts, Rainbows, and volunteers who gathered at Merrist Wood in Guildford last weekend for *Bazzaz* – Surrey’s flagship activity day for 6- to 8-year-olds.

Held every three years, *Bazzaz* offers a rare opportunity for children to immerse themselves in over 100 action-packed activities, ranging from caving and rock climbing to tomahawk throwing, circus skills, go-karts and inflatable obstacle courses. The event aims to build confidence, teamwork, and resilience through fun and challenge.

Despite soaring temperatures, participants were well-prepared with sun hats, sunscreen and plenty of water. A midday highlight was an unexpected treat as the **Red Arrows flew overhead**, returning from the King’s Birthday celebrations in London.

Feedback from the young participants was as bright as the weather:

“I had lots of fun and I liked the train ride,” said Sam, aged 7, from Epsom.
“Caving was the best because it was challenging and I made a new friend,” added Matthew, 7, from Guildford.
Emily, aged 5, from Woking, said: “It was awesome! I enjoyed climbing because I haven’t tried that before.”
Milly, 6, from Haslemere, shared: “I liked making my dad a Father’s Day card.”
And Noah, 7, from Banstead, summed it up simply: “I liked doing all the activities with my friends.”

The event was supported by an army of adult volunteers, without whom such experiences would not be possible. Richard, a Beaver Scout leader from Surrey, said: “It was a brilliant day for everyone. Some activities were pure fun, others focused on building #SkillsForLife — all of them gave the children something special to take away.”

About Beavers and Rainbows

Beaver Scouts (ages 6–8) and **Rainbows** (ages 5–7) are part of the UK’s long-established Scouting and Girlguiding organisations. Together, they offer thousands of children a safe and inclusive environment to learn through play, develop life skills, and enjoy the outdoors.

Nationally, the Scout Association offers over 200 different activities — from abseiling to coding — supported by more than 100,000 volunteers. But demand continues to outpace capacity, with nearly 30,000 young people currently on waiting lists across the UK.

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Queen of Dictionary Corner Brings Word Magic to Epsom

23 June 2025



Epsom Playhouse set to host a celebration of the English language on 15 October

Britain's best-loved lexicographer, **Susie Dent**, is heading to Epsom Playhouse this autumn with her brand-new live show, *Word Perfect* – a joyous celebration of the quirks, curiosities, and hidden histories of the English language.

Best known for her long-standing role in **Countdown**'s *Dictionary Corner* and its comedy spin-off *8 Out Of 10 Cats Does Countdown*, Susie will take to the Epsom stage on **Wednesday 15 October**, promising an evening packed with surprising etymologies, linguistic delights, and audience interaction.

Ever wondered why a group of crows is called a "murder" or why owls form a "parliament"? Curious whether the colour orange predates the fruit? Or perhaps baffled by Gen-Z slang and fearful that local dialects are fading fast? Susie aims to explore these questions and many more in her witty and engaging style.

"**The English language will never stop surprising and delighting me**," she said ahead of the tour. "It is as wayward as it is majestic, while the dictionary is as full of magic, drama and adventure as you will find anywhere. I can't wait to walk down some more of its secret alleyways with the *Word Perfect* audiences, and to hear their own questions about our curious mother tongue!"

Following the success of her 74-date tour *The Secret Life of Words* (2018–2024), *Word Perfect* builds on Susie's mission to share the joy of words with audiences across the country. The show is a blend of fascinating facts, storytelling, and humour – all rooted in her encyclopaedic knowledge of English.

In 2024, Susie Dent was awarded an **MBE** for services to literature and education, the same year she published her debut novel *Guilty by Definition*. This autumn will also see the release of her latest books: *Words for Life*, and *The Roots We Share: 100 Words That Bring Us Together*.

Tickets for *Susie Dent: Word Perfect* are on sale now via nothird.co.uk/susie-dent
or directly from the Epsom Playhouse box office.

For more on Susie's work, visit: susiedent.com

Epsom born band give birth to first single

23 June 2025



From the parks of Alexandra Rec to the playlists of rock fans across the country, a new local band with deep Epsom roots is making waves with their debut single.

Penny Rebels, a blues-rock outfit formed by long-time friends and musicians, are preparing to release their first original track, *"Bad Man"*, on **July 1st**. The single, described by the band as "gritty, blues-infused rock with big energy and attitude," marks the culmination of years of songwriting, performing, and musical collaboration.

The band's connection to Epsom is woven into its story. Two of its members grew up in the town – attending local schools including **St Martin's**, **Wallace Fields**, and **Glyn** – and spent their formative years playing at **Alexandra Recreation Ground**. The group's bass player, a long-time resident of **Ewell Downs Road**, still calls the borough home.

Formed in **Farnham**, Penny Rebels emerged from a shared passion for music among friends balancing work, family, and

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creative life. “We were in bands when we were younger, but life took over,” the band explained. “Now, with more space in our lives, we’ve returned to music — and we’re loving every minute of it.”

Their debut single is accompanied by a newly completed music video, available via a private link ahead of the public release. The band has also released an **electronic press kit (EPK)** featuring promotional images and media resources for broadcasters and press.

With all members contributing vocals and a sound described as “originals with soul and grit,” Penny Rebels are setting their sights on **festival stages** and **high-energy live performances** throughout the region and beyond.

The band welcomes opportunities to share more about their journey and would be delighted to speak to local media or take part in community music features.

- Website: www.pennyrebels.com
- Instagram | YouTube | TikTok | Facebook: *Penny Rebels*
- Email: pennyrebelsband@gmail.com

Listen to “Bad Man” from July 1st on all major platforms.

Surrey leaders review spending review

23 June 2025



Government Spending Review Falls Short for Surrey Councils and Epsom Hospital, Say Local Leaders

The UK Government’s latest Spending Review has drawn a mixed reaction from Surrey leaders, with concerns mounting over local council finances and delays to urgently needed hospital upgrades in the Epsom area.

Surrey County Council: Welcome Commitments, Ongoing Pressures

Responding to the Chancellor’s announcements, Surrey County Council Leader Cllr Tim Oliver acknowledged “important announcements,” including increases in core funding for local government, funding pledges for children’s services, and a renewed commitment to reforming Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision.

However, Cllr Oliver warned that the headline increase in “core spending power” rests on councils raising council tax by the full 5%—a move that may place strain on households during a cost-of-living crisis. Even with that assumption, county and unitary authorities across England are projected to face a £2.2 billion funding gap next year.

“Whilst our finances have been transformed to a point where we have delivered stable, balanced budgets year after year,” Oliver said, “we are not exempt from the financial challenges faced by councils.”

Oliver stressed the urgency of the upcoming *Fair Funding Review*, calling for a “fair and proportionate” outcome to ensure long-term stability for local authorities like Surrey.

Locally, the council has invested an additional £15 million into a three-year SEND recovery plan, begun in September 2023, which is reportedly beginning to bear fruit. But Oliver added that the government’s announcements stop short of tackling deeper issues. “Provision and support for children with SEND is a systemic issue… and the current system does not work for families, schools or councils,” he said.

SEND Deficits and Budget Certainty

Perhaps the sharpest criticism came over the government’s silence on the spiralling SEND deficits many councils face. Without intervention, these deficits—currently kept off balance sheet—will be formally accounted for from next April.

“Many local authorities, including Surrey, are facing a continuing increase in demand in comparison with levels of funding received,” Oliver said. “Councils will soon start planning their budgets for next year and cannot afford to have this can kicked down the road any longer.”

Future of Local Government in Surrey

The Spending Review did include a continued commitment to *Local Government Reorganisation* (LGR)—a development welcomed by Surrey County Council. Surrey recently submitted a proposal to transition to two unitary authorities, a move that could reshape local government in the county.

“We have worked hard to form that proposal,” said Oliver, “to deliver the best possible outcome for Surrey residents.”

Local MPs Condemn “Missed Opportunity” for Epsom & St Helier Hospitals

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Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrat MPs for Epsom & Ewell, Carshalton & Wallington, and Sutton & Cheam expressed deep disappointment over the absence of additional investment in the long-delayed redevelopment of Epsom & St Helier Hospitals.

Despite a known £150 million repair backlog, the government has only committed £12 million to date, with the timeline for a new specialist emergency hospital now postponed until 2033 under the Labour government. Local MPs Bobby Dean, Helen Maguire, and Luke Taylor said this continued delay threatens the "very future of our hospitals."

"The Government has missed a massive opportunity to deliver real change for Epsom & St Helier Hospitals," they said in a joint statement. "£12 million is simply a drop in the ocean."

The trio highlighted years of cross-party pressure in Westminster, including Prime Minister's Questions and debates, aimed at securing vital upgrades for the "crumbling" estate. "After 14 years of broken promises, the Government has an opportunity to do better," they added.

Rising Council Tax on the Horizon

Further national analysis has added to concerns around the financial implications of the Spending Review for local authorities. Paul Johnson, Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), noted that while English local government fared "perhaps a little bit better than it might have expected," there is a "sting in the tail": council tax bills are now set to rise at their fastest rate of any parliament since 2001–2005.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves confirmed that councils' *core spending power* will rise by 2.6% annually from next year. However, this figure is based on the assumption that councils will impose the full 5% annual increase in council tax—an option many local authorities may feel compelled to take. "We won't be going above that," Reeves said. "That is the council tax policy that we inherited from the previous Government, and that we will be continuing."

Liberal Democrat deputy leader Daisy Cooper described the overall package as a "missed opportunity," warning that council budgets—especially in areas such as social care—remain "very, very stretched." She added: "The Government is now looking to local councils to put up council tax to plug the gap in these particular areas… We cannot wait. This can't be kicked down the road any longer. The Government has got to act now."

For residents of Epsom and Ewell, the message is clear: whether through delays to vital infrastructure or increasing local taxation, the burden of national decisions may be felt most acutely at the community level.

Grafton Stables to Remain Green Space

23 June 2025



Grafton Stables in Cuddington, a 13.5-acre green space bordered by residential properties, is set to remain open to the public after Surrey County Council (SCC) confirmed it will be managed by the council's Countryside Team.

Earlier this year, the council placed the land on the market with the potential for housing development—sparking local concerns that up to 40 homes could be built on the site. The move led to significant opposition from residents, local groups and councillors, who argued that the site's mature trees—some protected by Tree Preservation Orders—and its value as a community green space made it unsuitable for development.

Local County Councillor **Eber Kington** (RA Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington) met with SCC officials to highlight planning restrictions and the importance of the site to the community. "I felt there was a strong case against the sale," he said. "The site is a vital part of our local green space network."

Cuddington Residents' Association, the local sports community at Wandgas Sports and Social Club and other campaigners also put forward an alternative bid to retain much of the green space, alongside limited development to fund its upkeep. Meanwhile, Cuddington Borough Councillors Kim Spickett and Phil Neale launched petitions that attracted more than 1,000 signatures.

In March, a motion was passed at County Hall, calling for SCC to adopt a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy—a process that allows local authorities to transfer land to community groups at less than market value if it promotes social and environmental well-being. With no existing CAT policy at SCC, Councillor Kington's motion cleared the way for Grafton Stables to be considered under such a scheme.

Following discussions, SCC has now confirmed that the site has been withdrawn from sale and will instead be managed as a public green space. Resident Julie Willis, who has lived next to Grafton Stables since childhood, welcomed the decision. "It's an incredible outcome for the community and for the trees and wildlife that call this space home," she said.

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No details have yet been released on how the new countryside management arrangements will operate, but residents and community groups are expected to be invited to help shape the future of Grafton Stables.

Related report:

Shock as Surrey Council Puts Protected Woodland Up for Auction

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Redesigning the Surrey skyways?

23 June 2025



Quicker, Quieter Flights on the Horizon for Heathrow and Gatwick Passengers and Neighbours

Passengers at Heathrow and Gatwick are set to enjoy quicker flights and fewer delays under new government plans to redesign flight paths, aimed at modernising one of the world's busiest airspaces.

Announced on Monday (2 June), the largest overhaul of UK airspace since the 1950s will prioritise London's crowded skies, promising more efficient, direct routes for aircraft. The changes are expected to support expansion at Heathrow and growth at Gatwick, while also cutting delays and noise pollution for communities under the flight paths.

Transport officials say the new UK Airspace Design Service (UKADS) will be fully operational by the end of 2025, run by NATS (En Route) plc (NERL). With 2.7 million flights expected this year alone, the new system will help manage soaring demand more sustainably, with fewer planes circling while waiting to land.

Local residents living near Heathrow and Gatwick could benefit from quieter skies, as modernised 'skyways' will allow aircraft to climb more quickly after take-off and descend more smoothly, reducing noise and emissions.

Heathrow's expansion, including its long-discussed third runway, is expected to generate over 100,000 new jobs, while Gatwick is also poised to gain from increased passenger capacity and investment. Aviation Minister Mike Kane said the changes would "turbocharge growth in the aviation industry", with faster and more reliable journeys for holidaymakers and business travellers alike.

Local airports, airlines and residents' groups are watching closely, with officials promising that community consultation will remain central to the process. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) will oversee the implementation, ensuring transparency and evidence-based decisions.

Rob Bishton, Chief Executive of the CAA, said: "Modernising our airspace is key to enabling growth and helping mitigate impacts like noise."

Martin Rolfe, CEO at NATS, added: "We have one of the busiest and most complex airspaces in the world. To maintain our performance as traffic grows towards 3 million flights per year, we have to modernise. UKADS is a crucial step."

Karen Dee, Chief Executive of AirportsUK, called the move "a vital step in making our airspace fit for the 21st century," while Tim Alderslade of Airlines UK said the changes were "long overdue" and would reduce delays, improve resilience, and lower carbon emissions.

The government's plans also pave the way for future air travel technologies such as drones and flying taxis, with London's airspace set to lead the way.

Local residents can expect more information as the CAA and NATS engage with communities to design the new routes, with a full consultation expected by September 2025.

The Department for Transport says it is determined to strike the right balance between economic growth and protecting communities from excessive noise and pollution.

Notes to Readers:

- UKADS will be led by NATS (En Route) plc (NERL).
- Heathrow's expansion plans, including a potential third runway, will benefit from the new airspace design.
- The initial focus is on modernising London's airspace, but future phases could benefit airports nationwide.

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- A consultation on the regulatory changes will begin later this year.

Epsom man awarded for psychosis interventions

23 June 2025



A Peer Support Volunteer based in Epsom has won a Gold Award at the annual Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust Staff Awards for his extraordinary contribution to the Early Intervention in Psychosis (EIIP) team, which previously supported him.

David Laycock received the Award for a Person with Lived Experience, recognising his remarkable impact on the EIIP team for East Surrey, which supports individuals aged 14–65 who have experienced psychosis. Drawing from his own lived experience of the disorder, David now helps others on their path to recovery, sharing his personal story to inspire hope, reduce stigma, and encourage engagement—particularly among men who may find it difficult to talk about mental health.

He also contributes to the development of EIIP workshops, including the service's innovative Canal Boat project, which teaches service users to drive a boat—an initiative designed to build confidence and aid recovery through hands-on learning and empowerment.

David received his award during the trust's 17th annual Staff Awards, an event held at Reigate Manor Hotel on Wednesday, 14 May. Over 160 guests attended, including Councillor Rich Michalowski, Mayor Elect of the Borough of Reigate and Banstead.

Reflecting on the recognition, David said: "Having been cared for by the team I now volunteer with and to be recognised at such a prestigious event celebrating the incredible work so many people do within the trust has been extremely humbling. Volunteering with EIIP has been so rewarding in so many ways, from helping to organise groups to being able to share my lived experience—every aspect of my journey has been supported by our incredible team."

David's nominator added: "He has overcome his challenges and now proactively supports others. He is warm, welcoming and has a lovely sense of humour he brings to everything."

Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust provides a wide range of specialist services in mental health, learning disabilities, and substance misuse. Operating across Surrey, North East Hampshire, and parts of Sussex, the trust also delivers social care for individuals with learning disabilities in Croydon and autism assessment services in Hampshire. With a workforce of over 2,400 staff across 39 sites, the trust is a major regional provider. This independent recognition underscores the Trust's ongoing role in promoting recovery-focused, person-centred care through the dedication of staff and volunteers alike.

Image L-R: Graham Wareham, David Laycock, Peer Support Worker, Andrew Jackman, Lead Governor

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