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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

“Audit and Scrutiny” under scrutiny

4 February 2024



Every day the **Epsom and Ewell Times** brings you a fresh chess puzzle to solve. Harder to solve than any chess puzzle run so far is what, if anything, at a meeting in the Epsom and Ewell Town Hall Chamber on 1st February of the Audit and Scrutiny committee, was actually resolved on the question of how to get items on the agenda.

We don’t want to get in the way of today’s puzzle, contained in the following transcript of a Council debate, but in fairness to our readers, we should first give a few clues.

Opposition Councillors **Lawrence** and **Ames** had both advance requested items to be on the agenda of the meeting. Both requests were refused. One of the rejected items requested was the question “how to get an item on the agenda?” (!)

That issue then in fact became the matter discussed after a question was asked by Cllr Lawrence on the committee’s annual work programme that had come up for debate.

Cllr. Ames disagreed with Cllr. **Leach** (the Committee’s Vice-Chair) on the latter’s statement that the rules were contradictory and needed re-writing. Cllr. Ames said the rules were clear and an item should go on an agenda if requested by any councillor. Cllr. Leach stated he agreed with Cllr Ames. And that is where things are a bit puzzling.

The Council officer implied that a request for a matter to be on the agenda might be rejected if to deal with it would take up too much officers’ time preparing for the meeting. Cllr. Leach said the point of the committee was, for example, to investigate whether Council practices could be improved and money saved. If that cannot occur because of the resources that would be taken up by such enquiries it follows that the committee may be a waste of money itself.

Over to you to solve this puzzle.

Submit your answers on our online contact form or by email to admin@epsomandewelltimes.com

The TRANSCRIPT:

Audit and Scrutiny Committee 1st February 2024:

Bridger = Cllr Steve Bridger (RA Stamford Ward and Audit and Scrutiny Committee Chair). Leach = Cllr Robert Leach (RA Nonsuch Ward). Lawrence = Cllr James Lawrence (LibDem College Ward). Ames = Cllr Chris Ames (Labour Court Ward). Bercher = Andrew Bercher (Interim Director of Corporate Services).

Bridger:

Move on to item 8, which is the work programme.

Bercher:

Thank you, Chair. Yes, this is the committee’s annual work programme, and again, it has the planned activities for the next few months. This is detailed, and any changes feature in the footnotes at the bottom of each page. So again, happy for any comments on this one.

Bridger:

Do we have any questions at all for it?

Lawrence:

Thank you, Chair. I’m just going to carry on from an email that I was raising about this. So, I was wanting to have an agenda item—maybe there’s more proof for a work plan on how councillors add scrutiny items or agenda items to this committee because I know at some parts in the constitution, we get given a right to add an agenda item, but I was also told it was at the chair’s discretion. So, I just wanted to check, do councillors, as, for example, as members of the committee, do we have the right to add them, or is it a qualified right with the chair’s permission? Thank you.

Bridger:

It is. As long as you submit a written request, yes, we can put things onto the agenda. But it has to be within the correct time frame; obviously, things have got to be added, etc. No problem. Okay.

Lawrence:

Thanks, yeah, because I did send an email—I can’t remember the exact date it was, but it was a while ago. It was about asking for an agenda item. About December. It was asking for an agenda item for the committee on how we have a scrutiny action or some discussion or to say note to the steps for it. So, I remember other committees asking about it, and it wasn’t very clear to me how that process works. I just wanted to check if that’s something that’s possible to add to the work plan. Thank you.

Bercher:

Thank you, Councillor. I think there’s an element of it that depends on this: because if there is a big piece of scrutiny work

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

that the committee wants to carry out, then that needs to be resourced. And it needs to be resourced not only by officers but potentially by members who are going to then form a separate group to go and look into whatever particular issue it might be. And when I've worked with these things in the past typically there's been a little working group that's been set up, and members have met over a number of weeks, possibly months, in order to look into things and have worked alongside officers in order to gather data, analyse data, assess, produce a report, and then bring a report back to committee.

So that kind of scrutiny activity can be quite resource-intensive. And currently, unless it's on the work programme and is resourced, then we won't have the capacity to do it. But it depends on what it is. If someone says, I'd like to hear at the next committee something about X, and that's a relatively important thing but it's an update from a particular piece of work which is already in hand. I don't know; I'm surmising here. Then that might be relatively easy to do. So in the way that with the chair, we've said that we need a report every time we meet on complaints and ICO and something like that that wasn't previously programmed, but it's something that we've been able to accommodate, and very, very happy to do that. So I think it's with your discretion as well, chairs, to what gets on the agenda.

Leach:

I think I can take the matter a little further. I had a meeting with the legal officer. It was on a ward issue, but the conversation strayed into this area. Mr. Bercher, is quite correct in saying that a scrutiny report can be very work-intensive. Yes, it can. It can also be not intensive at all. It could be something where a person could just sit down there on the spot and probably write out a report. A scrutiny really should be, as I understand it, limited to an area of the council's work where we believe that work could be done better, it could be done more quickly and for less cost, or easily. And it is possible that having done the work, we might well conclude that we are doing it as well as it can be done, no changes needed.

I think what Councillor Lawrence is suggesting is there are areas of concern. That's not really a scrutiny issue, but I think it's an area where if you have a concern, and I see this committee as being totally non-partisan. So a Liberal Democrat or a Labour member has exactly the same rights as an RA member to have their concerns dealt with. It could be that just an informal conversation behind the scenes which would then be relayed back to you might be a better way than actually trying to go through a whole scrutiny procedure.

Lawrence:

Thank you both. That makes sense. I understand why you want to have a discussion first before coming to a full meeting. I have some other different agenda items, but I'll see if anyone else wants to ask questions. Thank you.

Ames:

I remain a little bit unclear. I'm trying to reconcile the answer that you gave, Chair, just now about putting an item on the agenda with the response that Councillor Lawrence got when he ironically requested that this issue be placed on the agenda. We're talking about the very issue of getting an issue on the agenda, and that was refused. And it was reported to Councillor Lawrence that this was your view, that this didn't need to be placed on the agenda. I'm trying to reconcile the various responses about this being a subjective decision with the very clear statement in the operating procedure that sets out an unfettered right for councillors to request that an issue be put on the agenda for this committee, any councillor, not just a member of this committee. And that should happen.

What the framework says: Any councillor who wishes to have an item included on the agenda of this committee should give written notice of the item to the scrutiny officer. If the scrutiny officer receives such a notification, he will, in consultation with the committee chair and vice-chair, include it on the first available agenda of the committee for consideration by the committee. I don't see the chair having a veto in that procedure or making a subjective decision.

This provision puts into the council's constitution something that would be in statute for a council that didn't work on the cabinet system. I don't see it as being something that the chair is entitled to reject. There's obviously a discussion about what would be the first available agenda, but I can't see this committee operating its scrutiny role effectively if it's within the gift of the committee chair and the vice-chair, who are both from the ruling party of this administration, to veto requests for something to be brought to the attention of this committee.

It simply isn't possible to reconcile the explanations that we've been given with a very clear statement in the operating framework that there is an unfettered right for councillors to place an item on the agenda of this committee. These are not subjective decisions that are being taken, judgments being taken by the chair, it's to be included on the first available agenda. It is quite clear in the operating framework, and both Councillor Lawrence and myself have had requests for something to be placed on the first available agenda rebuffed. This committee, in this sense, is not operating in line with the constitution and the operating framework. It couldn't be clearer in the operating framework that there is an unfettered right. Things go wrong in local authorities when people are trying to bring this to the attention of a scrutiny committee, and those items are not able to be discussed. So, it's a matter of great concern that this is happening.

Leach:

I'm not aware of the two issues that you refer to, but if you could tell me either publicly now or perhaps privately we'd certainly look into them. The constitution on how you get an item onto this agenda is actually contradictory, as you know. We have no less than 18 versions of the constitution in the last five and a half years, and the result of it is that we have now improved a constitution to the level where it is poor. We still have further to go. I mean, it is a badly drafted document, and in fact, the constitution contradicts itself. I've had a conversation with a view to drafting it into something which is more coherent, which will be the best plan. All this is just basically an idea I've had and a conversation I've had with the legal officer. It's got no further than that, but it is a matter that I certainly would like to take forward to make it clearer.

Ames:

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

I think we're a little bit going around in circles. What Councillor Lawrence has asked for is for this very issue to be placed on the agenda for this meeting, and that request was rebuffed. That's a very clear explanation about what was requested.

If you feel that this item in the framework, which I've read, is in any way unclear, we clearly need to have a discussion on that because it's fundamental to how this committee operates.

If members of this committee, or indeed any other councillor, Councillor Coley, for example, is not able to place an item on the agenda for this committee, as is their clear right here, and somebody says that it's because there's some kind of anomaly in the constitution, we need to have that discussion. This committee cannot operate as it's set out and intended to in the constitution and operating framework if the committee chair has a veto over what can be placed on the agenda. It's simply not what it says in the constitution and the operating framework.

Leach:

You're absolutely correct. That's why I believe that part of the constitution needs to be rewritten. And my idea, and this is purely my idea, it's not an RA group's, it's not even the chairman's view, but my view is if someone puts forward a motion or requests something to go onto the agenda, there should be, first of all, the consideration as to whether it is acceptable. I'm sure your request would be perfectly reasonable, but we have to allow for the fact that you could have people putting vexatious or malicious matters onto the agenda, and I believe there needs to be a filter process there whereby you could turn around and say this is not acceptable.

As for the constitution, if the member is dissatisfied, then that decision will come to this committee as to whether we would be prepared to do a scrutiny. Now that's my suggestion that I'm happy to forward and will be putting forward. I believe that it's necessary to have a filter to stop somebody just filling up the agenda with all sorts of things that aren't scrutiny items while still protecting the rights of members. I stress that's my personal opinion. It's not necessarily something that's going to be happening.

Lawrence:

All right, thank you, Vice-Chair. I understand there needs to be some sort of filter in what comes onto committee or agenda items. I know I'd certainly feel that way if I was the chair of a committee. Just for clarification on what I was also asking for the agenda item, it was what I was just talking about previously to Councillor Ames. It was about this committee, for example, noting the process of how a scrutiny operation would work, certainly would be useful for me, for example, because being a new councillor, I haven't seen a scrutiny operation. I haven't seen what can be added to a committee agenda. I haven't seen what can be a scrutiny item or how the process works or how that filters back to the committee. So, that was the point. That was what I'd requested to go on the agenda item. That's just for a bit of clarification and thank you.

Bridger:

Any further questions?

Thank you,

Ames.

Thank you. I'm just making one very brief comment, and I'll leave it there because we're not getting anywhere. I'm quite shocked by Councillor Leach's comments. We have to have this committee operate as it is set out in the operating framework and not as Councillor Leach would like it to be. I think that's a fairly fundamental process of how a council operates under its constitution and operating framework. We have to follow the constitution and not some version of the constitution that's in the head of a vice-chair that would be like that if he had his way. And we're not following the process, and we really need to follow the constitution. Otherwise, the whole idea of having a council that operates constitutionally is out the window. Thank you.

Leach:

Sorry, can I say, I again, I agree with you. I outlined how I believe the constitutional issue could be sorted out. Until that has been implemented, that's been put to the council and been voted and supported. That is not part of the constitution. I did it as a courtesy to this committee to sort of give you forward notice as to a change that I hope to be able to make to the constitution to resolve it. But Councillor Ames, until that change has been made, if it ever does get made, yes, we have to operate under the constitution as it is. I think your criticism of me was a little unfair.

Related reports:

Local Audit meet: unexpectedly interesting…

Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?

Petition to reclaim Horton Cemetery from property speculator

4 February 2024

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



The trustees of the Epsom charity **The Friends of Horton Cemetery** have appealed to the public to sign an **online petition** on **change.org** that calls for Europe's largest asylum cemetery to be returned to the community. In a bizarre decision in 1983 the Epsom five acre resting place of 9000 patients was transferred by the NHS to a property speculator. Norman Fowler was the Conservative Secretary of State for Health at the time. The property speculator was a darling of the privatisation movement having been the first to obtain and "rejuvenate" Council tower-blocks. A former local Councillor serving Epsom and Ewell at the time recalls no efforts to transfer the Cemetery to the Council, despite it being in law the "burial authority".

It has been neglected ever since with no planning application ever being submitted by the owner. Why he holds on to it is a mystery to the trustees of the Charity. According to Lionel Blackman, the Charity's secretary and local solicitor: "Mr Heighes, who owns Marque Securities, has never replied to any of our correspondence seeking a dialogue about the future of the Cemetery. In my opinion only a special Act of Parliament could allow the Cemetery to be used for any purpose other than a Cemetery. Even using it as "amenity woodland" would be a breach of its recognised planning status."

The Charity's volunteers continue to research and publish on the **Charity's website** the lives of those buried in the Cemetery.

Image: Horton Cemetery in 1952. Well maintained like this until sold in 1983

Complementing this work are the initiatives of the Surrey History Centre (SHC):

Glass slides of patients at the Manor Hospital, Epsom
Did you know that SHC holds a sizeable collection of glass plate negatives, yet to be identified, of male and female patients at The Manor Hospital, Epsom.

A project is currently underway to digitise, identify and catalogue the loose negatives of male and female patients in 6317/3/- that date from the 1890s to the 1910s. They are a fascinating and moving portrait of the men and women who were admitted to the Manor Hospital, and a valuable resource for anyone researching individual patients or generally interested in the history of mental health treatment in the late 19th to early 20th century.



The first stage has now been completed, comprising 79 high resolution digital photographs of male patients, and

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

thumbnail images have been added to the online catalogue (6317/3/-), see http://tinyurl.com/55sasppx.

As well as identifying the patient name and hospital number, importantly the catalogue entries include a cross-reference to the relevant case book in Surrey History Centre reference 6282/14/-. The case book entries, which provide a detailed account of the patient's illness and treatment, also include a photograph of the patient, and this has enabled us to match and identify the glass negatives.

For the next stage, there is one more box of slides of male patients to complete, and we'll then continue with the larger collection of female patient slides.

For more on the history of Manor Hospital, see the Exploring Surrey's Past website.

Was your ancestor in an asylum? This talk traces the history of the care of people living with mental illness or learning disability from the 18th century through to the 1990s. Using the records of Surrey's earliest private asylums, county institutions at Springfield, Brookwood and Netherne, charitable foundations like Royal Earlswood and Holloway Sanatorium and the 'Epsom Cluster' of Horton, Long Grove, The Manor, St Ebba's and West Park, it traces the history of mental health care in Surrey, and uses medical records to uncover the hidden stories of individual patients, including some from Hampshire. It draws on photographs and other records rescued when these vast hospitals finally closed to explore daily life in a psychiatric institution over the course of three centuries.

Tracing the History and Experiences of Our Asylum Ancestors, 1700-c1990

26 February 2024, 6pm to 7pm Online
A talk by Julian Pooley for Hampshire Archives & Local Studies

This talk will take place online, 6.00 to 7.00pm Tickets £6.00. For further information and to book visit:
Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)

When a meeting is not a meeting, in brief.

4 February 2024



The vexed issue of whether a "members' briefing" is a "meeting" or not has received some attention of late. Anxiety was aroused by fears that a "confidential" meeting of **Epsom and Ewell** Councillors might effectively determine whether Green Belt land would remain in the Local Plan as potential sites for housing development. The "meeting" on 10th January was "met" by a small group of protestors who had caught wind of the event.

According to Cllr. **Alison Kelly** (LibDem Stamford) "I did tell a friend that I was going to a member's briefing. I didn't realize that I was not to disclose that. I just gave that out because a friend asked me why I can't come out. I don't understand why they cannot be publicly declared as meetings."

She revealed this at the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee of 25th January. This *was* a meeting and the press and public were allowed in as usual. During a debate about the Council's new "Communication Strategy" Cllr Kelly also said: "we've recently faced accusations over secrecy with response to the Local Plan Green Belt members briefings and some legal guidance; we've also been asked to remain silent on some matters including the existence of a briefing meeting and we seem to have had quite a lot of part two sessions *[sections of Council meetings that are closed to the press and public]*. How does this strategy help us to address the issue of secrecy levelled at us by the residents?"

In response RA leader Cllr **Hannah Dalton** (Stoneleigh) said: "The purpose of member briefings is for members *[i.e., councillors]* to be informed and in a safe and confidential space to ask questions, to understand information, to obtain data from officers, whether from our council or other councils or the LGA *[Local Government Association]* or whomever. To then provide a steer to… what then comes to committee."

The Council's law officer advised: "I don't think there's problem actually saying that you're coming to a council briefing. If you went further to say I'm coming to a council briefing on xxx subject then that is disclosing at times confidential information."

Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley Vale) told the Epsom and Ewell Times 15th January: that the 10th January "members' briefing", "…was not a secret meeting; it just wasn't a public meeting. I stated publicly at the September LPPC Committee and extraordinary full Council on 24 October 2023 that Member briefings regarding the Local Plan would be taking place during this time period assuming the local plan was unpaused by full council, which it was."

Epsom and Ewell's Member of Parliament **Chris Grayling** has weighed in and on 31st January told constituents: "The

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Council has now decided to press ahead with its plans, and while details of the updated proposals remain confidential, I understand from Councillors in the ruling group that they continue to include substantial green belt development in the area. This is despite the fact that existing brownfield sites can deliver most of what is needed."

He urged residents to make their views known to the Council.

Related reports:

Councillors belted-up on Green Belt?

Mystery Local Plan critic revealed

Image: Cllr Alison Kelly at the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting

---

LibDems in the market for power in Epsom and Ewell?

4 February 2024



In a surprising turn of events in Epsom & Ewell, Liberal Democrat Leader **Sir Ed Davey MP** made a noteworthy appearance in Epsom Market last Saturday, marking the launch of Parliamentary Candidate **Helen Maguire**'s 2024 election campaign. Maguire has emerged as the first candidate from the major political parties to kick-start her campaign in the constituency, which is currently under the Conservative stronghold of **Chris Grayling** MP.

The upcoming election, however, presents a unique scenario. With Grayling stepping down, the Conservatives facing a decline in national polls, boundary changes, and a revitalized local Liberal Democrat party, the battle for the next **Epsom & Ewell** MP is shaping up to be a two-horse race.

A recent YouGov poll, commissioned by the Daily Telegraph, surveyed 14,000 voters nationwide and has added a new layer of intrigue to the contest. The poll indicated that the Lib Dems in Epsom & Ewell are marginally ahead of the Conservatives for the first time in many years, leaving Conservative MPs with a gloomy outlook and fueling speculation of a potential general election defeat.

Helen Maguire, a former Captain in the Royal Military Police with service in Bosnia and Iraq, is also known for her charity fundraising consultancy, which has raised over £1 million for charities across the UK. She recently earned the British Empire Medal for her work and management of the project to rebuild the Claygate Pavilion after a destructive fire.

Maguire's campaign is centered around key issues such as the cost-of-living crisis, environmental concerns arising from sewage dumping in the Mole and Hogsmill rivers, and support for the Epsom & St Helier Health Trust's efforts to construct a new critical emergency hospital.

At the campaign launch in Epsom Market, Ed Davey expressed confidence, stating, "I'm here because I think we can win this seat. I think the people of Epsom & Ewell, indeed people across the country, want to get rid of the Conservatives for they have failed our country. Whether it's the cost of living or the health service, they're not listening to people. They are so out of touch, and I think people want change."

Maguire emphasized the Liberal Democrats' 'Fair Deal' promise, advocating for a fair, prosperous, and innovative economy that promotes opportunity and well-being. She envisions a strong economy as the solution to the cost-of-living crisis and a means to provide quality public services for Epsom & Ewell.

Related reports:

Conservatives adopt new contender for Parliament

LibDem PPC awarded Medal by the King

Grayling not to contest a seventh election

Opposition unite against division of opposition

A question of pay for Epsom and Ewell Borough

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Council

4 February 2024



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's annual allowances paid to its elected Councillors has long been lower than all other 10 Surrey Boroughs. Currently standing at the basic allowance of £4031.70 this compares with the highest paid in Guildford of £8348. EEBC is the smallest borough in the County both in size and population.

On Thursday 25th January the councillors serving on the Strategy and Resources Committee (S&R) of EEBC voted to increase the basic allowance for all councillors by 29% to an annual sum of £5736.90 (plus 6%). The committee's recommendation goes to the Full Council.

The printed decision of the meeting refers to the approval of the recommendation known as "option B" that gives the annual figure of £5736.90. The vote taken at the meeting was "option B plus 6%".

Cllr **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch) said that for the average number of hours of 15 per week that Councillors devoted to Council business meant that they were the lowest paid of all Council "employees". That the allowances had increased in the last 10 years at an average of 2.1% per annum. Cllr Leach proposed "option B plus 6%".

Cllr **Alison Kelly** (LibDem Stamford) spoke in favour of option B on the basis that the Council needed to attract a diverse range of people to stand as Councillors.

Subject to other Borough's increasing allowances paid to their members for 2024/2025 the league table of allowances now looks like this:

Council	Allowances
Tandridge District Council	£4,446.00
Mole Valley District Council	£4,793.01
Runnymede Borough Council	£5,500.00
Elmbridge Borough Council	£5,512.00
Waverley Borough Council	£5,609.10
Surrey Heath Borough Council	£5,711.00
Epsom and Ewell Borough Council option B	**£5,736.90**
Reigate and Banstead Borough Council	£5,956.00
Spelthorne Borough Council	£6,531.00
Woking Borough Council	£7,380.00
Guildford Borough Council	£8,348.00

Other increases were recommended for the chairs and vice-chairs of some of the Council's committees.

At the same meeting the 6% increase for Council workers for 2024/2025 was confirmed with the following observations being made in an officer's report to the committee:

The Government has confirmed that the national living wage will rise from £10.42 to £11.44 from April 2024. This represents an increase of 9.8% and it is acknowledged that this is significantly greater than the 6% increase which will be applied to our pay scales from April 2024.

There is currently no formal commitment within our Pay Policy to pay the Voluntary Living Wage (vLW) promoted by the Living Wage Foundation as the minimum hourly rate at which an employee should be paid. The 2024/25 vLW rate for outside of London is £12.00 per hour. This represents a 10% increase on the 2023/24 vLW rate of £10.90.

The bottom of EEBC's lowest pay scale is £21,734 and the top of the Chief Executive scale is £151,979. This is a pay multiple of 1:7. These figures are based on pay scales and not actual salaries.

As at 30 November 2023 the mean average pay for employees other than Chief Officers was £36,177; therefore currently the ratio of mean average Chief Officer pay to mean average pay of other employees was 1:2.9.

The Chief Executive Officer and Directors remuneration was also considered and a 6 % increase recommended:

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Post	2023/24: Bottom of salary range (£ per annum)	2024/25: Bottom of salary range (£ per annum)	2023/24: Top of salary range (£ per annum)	2024/25: Top of salary range (£ per annum)
Chief Executive	£126,072	£131,016	£143,376	£151,979
Director	£89,677	£93,156	£103,135	£109,323

In addition to the basic salary the CEO and Directors may receive the following additional benefits:

*Payment into the pension scheme if the employee has opted in and pays into the required employee contribution rate. The employer's contribution is currently 17.4% of pensionable pay, with the next actuarial valuation due 31 March 2026.

*Chief Executive and Director monthly allowance of 4% of basic salary in respect of subsistence and other expenses, thereby reducing administration and providing a cap on the cost.

*Payment of up to two annual subscriptions to professional institutions where this is an essential requirement of the role. Costs of memberships vary but most are around £200.

*Allowance for the requirement to have a car for the effective performance of duties. The amount varies according to the role of the individual.

Any CEO or Director fulfilling the role of Returning Officer at elections receives additional pay depending on whether an election is contested and the number of electors involved.

Related reports:

Council staff to get 6% pay increase?

County CEO's pay rise triggering strikes?

Pay rises for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Longmead gets a Godly clean-up

4 February 2024



On Sunday, January 21, joined by the Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, Councillor **Rob Geleit** (Labour Court Ward), 40 volunteers from ASEZ (Save the Earth from A to Z), the young adult volunteer group from the World Mission Society Church of God in Epsom, gathered to clean Longmead Road and adjacent streets in Epsom.

In a matter of 2 hours, the volunteers collected a total of 75 bags of litter; allowing the greenery to flourish and preventing plastics and litter from entering the waterways. The residents of Longmead Road were pleased and cheered the volunteers expressing their gratitude. As they walked along the areas of the clean-up and honked when they drove through, as a way to show their gratitude and the glory of God spread.

Out of 35 participants, more than half were young adults aged from 18 to 29. The clean-up event was a great opportunity not only for the environment but also for promoting positive activities and reducing antisocial behaviour among young adults.Ahn Sahng-hongOut of 35 participants, more than half were young adults aged from 18 to 29. The clean-up event was a great opportunity not only for the environment but also for promoting positive activities and reducing antisocial behaviour among young adults.

A passer-by, **Howard Gregory** from the Epsom and Ewell Tree Advisory Board and Elms Over Epsom explained "I saw this amazing crowd and amazing pile of rubbish, and this is fantastic."

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

The World Mission Society Church of God is in East Street Epsom. The Church was founded in South Korea, inspired by the writings of Ahn Sahng-hong, considered by followers to embody the second coming of Christ.

Regardless of beliefs ASEZ did a great job.

“Heat and Dust” epic in Epsom

4 February 2024



You don’t need to read or watch the historical romantic drama set in the British Raj epoch in India by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. The **Chalk Pit** off College Road Epsom has been the source of noise and dust generated heated debate in Epsom and Ewell Council for years.

Conservative Councillors for Horton, **Bernie Muir** and **Kieran Persand**, in July proposed the following motion to full Council:

“That this council mandates officers to install professional noise measurement equipment around the Chalk Pit site in College Road, Epsom, to leave that equipment in place for a minimum period of three months, and to respond to any breaches of noise regulations on the site with the imposition of a noise abatement order on the landowner and any identified operators responsible for the excess noise.”

The full Council referred the matter to the Environment Committee to resolve.

The Chalk Pit site is the centre of a fiendishly complex plot of overlapping planning laws, regulations and three different law enforcement authorities: The Environment Agency (EA), Surrey County Council and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

In a detailed report to Councillors of the Environment Committee of Epsom and Ewell, sitting on Tuesday 23rd January, officers attempted to explain.

Here is a summary of that report:

Background:

The Chalk Pit site in College Road, Epsom, has been used for light industrial purposes for around 40 years. Businesses operating at the site include Skip It, Reston Waste, and a coach company, among others. Noise and dust emissions from various activities, such as trommel processing, materials handling, and vehicle movements, have led to increased complaints from nearby residents since 2021.

Complaints and Regulatory Responsibilities:

Prior to 2021, complaints were minimal, but they increased significantly in recent years. Regulatory responsibilities involve collaboration between the local authority, Environment Agency (EA), and planning authorities (Surrey County Council SCC and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council EEBC).

Complaints related to EA regulated processes are directed to the EA, while non-regulated sources fall under the local authority’s jurisdiction.

Council’s Response to Complaints:

The council’s Environmental Health service conducted an extensive investigation, involving in person monitoring, remote monitoring, and the installation of CCTV. Despite the intensive investigation, a June 2022 assessment did not provide sufficient evidence to issue an abatement notice. A renewed effort in October 2023 identified a specific nuisance related to a particular piece of machinery, leading to the issuance of an abatement notice.

Enforcement Actions:

The council issued Community Protection Warning Notices to the landowner and various users, mandating specific actions. Legal steps included a notice requiring a skip company to cease operations on the site. Ongoing monitoring will determine compliance, potentially leading to further enforcement, including prosecution.

Financial Implications:

The investigation has incurred costs of £5,600. Potential future costs for further investigations, legal proceedings, and appellant expenses may reach £140,000. The council is exploring funding options within existing budgets and may seek additional funding from reserves.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Professional Opinion and Future Actions:

The report suggests that despite previous efforts, there was insufficient evidence for an abatement notice until October 2023. Ongoing construction may impact noise levels, but relevant planning conditions could help control noise. The burden is on the council to demonstrate statutory nuisance, and further evidence may be required for potential legal proceedings.

The report recommends that the Council continues to monitor and take necessary actions to address the noise and dust issues at the Chalk Pit site.

Cllr Muir opened the debate: “I’m alarmed that there is even a suggestion of walking away from funding and monitoring the Chalk Pit against the recommendations of the last Environment Committee and the previous Strategy and Resources Committee. The Chalk Pit site has now increased its activity with another major operator, Reston. Skip-it has not yet completed their building, with major doubts that the building will stop the problems. Anyway, there is still nuisance noise and potential hazard of dust. The Environmental Agency stipulates this operation needs to be enclosed to protect residents. Also, no building will address the noise and dust of skip and truck movements, which is excessive given the massive exponential rise in truck movements. Residents still complain about noise experienced outside permitted hours, starting any time from 5:30 in the morning. It is inevitable that noise will continue.”

She added: “On a personal level, I would not be able to live under these conditions and that they have been subjected to for the last three years. I have sat in on all the borough meetings, which thus far have done little more than kick the can down the road.”

Cllr. **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) said: “the Chalk Pit situation is something that I’ve been involved with, and fellow councillors and I have been involved in trying to find a resolution for a significant period of time. It gets bounced around between the different agencies, and there is no light at the end of the tunnel for our residents, which is deeply upsetting.” He added: ” We are primarily a Resident Association Council; we are driven to support our residents and represent our residents, and if we don’t do this, I think we would be failing significantly in our duty.”

Cllr. **Julie Morris** (LibDem College) said: “It’s a complicated situation, not helped by years of everybody trying to dodge the bullet, really. But we do understand, I think, that the Strategy and Resources Committee are taking the planning breaches quite seriously now, which is good news. There is now light pollution to add to the noise and the dust, isn’t there, because of the various hours of operation and some hefty bulbs that they use to be able to see down there. We can’t just not do anything.”

The debate continued with detailed discussion of the nuisances complained of and the financial implications of the costs of enforcement.

After a lengthy and at times heated debate the Environment Committee finally resolved to “Submit a request to the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Council that funding be allocated from limited Council reserves to instruct external noise consultants to conduct a fresh investigation based upon the activities on the site and that significant complaints continue despite the buildings being constructed and commissioned. It is anticipated that further investigations may require a substantial financial commitment of taxpayer’s funds of up to £140,000”.

Related reports:

Chalk Pit debate deferred by late abatement

Will the dust ever settle on Chalk Pit conflict?

Image – Nick Kenrick – CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 DEED

Different ways to tackle foul-deeds

4 February 2024



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s approach to dog-fouling in its public parks may seem rather tame compared with the nearby Surrey Borough of Spelthorne.

Spelthorne has adopted powers in the Anti-Social Behaviour and Policing Act whereby its parks are made the subject of “Public Space Protection Orders” [PSPO]. Under these orders fixed penalty fines can be imposed on dog walkers who fail to clean up and indeed for walking unready with a “poo-bag”.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

The order, which makes it an offence to take dogs into certain marked areas with fines of up to £1,000 if it leaves its mess behind, has to be renewed every three years. On Wednesday, January 18 Spelthorne Borough Council's neighbourhood services and enforcement committee did just that.

Despite the notices, dog fouling continues to be an issue with the council receiving around 80 complaints a year. Leader of the council, Councillor Joanne Sexton also pushed for new signage to include scannable QR codes in the hope of making it quicker and easier to report offences – and therefore reduce the amount of dog poo lying on the ground.

Officers told the meeting that catching the antisocial behaviour in the act is extremely difficult given how brief the indiscretions are but said that by reporting it the council could find patterns of behaviour and look to target problem areas – turning up at 5am if that's what the data showed.

The zones cover the council's parks and open spaces with dogs excluded from fenced off areas such as tennis courts. Officers told the meeting: "We would like people to report to us. If we know that a dog goes to the park at 3pm on most days we can put in some patrols to give that person some advice – we won't go in heavy. Our aim is always not to give people fines but to make them compliant with rules and regulations. If people see dogs running around like crazy and frightening their dog they should report it."

Spelthorne Borough Council provides about 550 bins as well as dog waste disposal bags in 50 of its parks and open spaces.

Since Spelthorne imposed the order in 2012 it has issued a total of 11 warnings under the PSPO – 2 for dog fouling, 1 for means to collect (not having a bag), 1 dog in tennis courts, 1 professional dog walker with too many dogs, and 6 directions given to keep a badly behaved dog on a lead.

The authority also issued 3 Fixed Penalty Notices for dog fouling offences in the same time frame (all paid).

However, Spelthorne acknowledges that dog fouling (and other dog related issues) are notoriously difficult offences to actually enforce, as unless the dog owner is actually known to the person reporting, or officers happen to be in the right place at the right time, there is often very little to no evidence that allows investigation.

This reality may explain Epsom and Ewell Council's more realistic approach stated on its website:

"What can we all do about dog fouling? Report it and we'll remove it. If you notice dog fouling, let us know by filling in our online form 'Street Cleansing' at the top of this page or calling 01372 732000."

Nevertheless, without the authority of a PSPO it still may be an offence under the Anti Social Behaviour and Policing Act to allow a dog to persistently foul a public area, leading to the possibility of a prosecution and fine.

Should we have a petition about petitions?

4 February 2024



While Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's ePetition platform offers residents a voice in local decision-making, a closer examination of the data reveals a challenging picture. From September 2016 to the present, the Council's ePetition system has faced difficulties in garnering community support and has seen a high rate of rejections, often on vague grounds.

Debate Requests – An Uphill Battle for Support

a) Petition Requests Submitted for Full Council Debate: 13

b) Permitted: 4

c) Successfully Reached Required Number of 1500 for Debate: 1

The stark reality emerges when analyzing the numbers. Despite 13 petition requests for Full Council debate, only four were permitted, with a solitary petition managing to secure the necessary support. The challenges in mobilizing community backing for debates raise questions about the effectiveness of the ePetition platform in truly representing resident concerns.

Rejected Petitions:

1. Continued designation of Hook Road Arena as Green Belt land

   Reason for Rejection: Relates to the Council's Planning or Licensing functions, separate statutory processes in place.

2. Railings outside the Metro Bank and Lester Bowden's

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Reason for Rejection: Relates to a matter for which this Council is not responsible or cannot influence.

3. Petition to EEBC regarding height and density regulations for Proposed building developments

Reason for Rejection: Relates to a matter for which this Council is not responsible or cannot influence.

4. Subject matter not specified in petition submission

Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council's ePetition Scheme.

5. Objection to the Epsom Hospital Development Scheme

Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council's ePetition Scheme.

6. Hook Road speed limit & cameras

Reason for Rejection: Relates to a matter for which this Council is not responsible or cannot influence.

7. Keep Epsom and Ewell Green Belt

Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council's ePetition Scheme.

8. Fairview Road temporary homes for the homeless

Reason for Rejection: Relates to the Council's Planning or Licensing functions, separate statutory processes in place.

9. Compulsory Purchase Order for Horton Cemetery

Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council's ePetition Scheme.

Dismayed at the Council's refusal, made on the basis it was for the Strategy and Resources Committee not the Council (sic), The Friends of Horton Cemetery set up their own petition on change.org

The rejection of petitions, often on grounds as vague as not complying with the ePetition Scheme requirements, underscores the challenges residents face in navigating the system. This pattern raises skepticism about the transparency and accessibility of the ePetition platform.

Scrutiny and Accountability

The removal of the Council Officer appearance request from the Petition Scheme in May 2023 marks a significant shift in the dynamics of accountability, leaving residents with fewer avenues to question and scrutinize Council decisions.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's ePetition system, while ostensibly a tool for community engagement, faces challenges in attracting support and exhibits a high rate of rejections. The rejection of petitions on rather vague grounds raises questions about the system's accessibility and transparency, prompting a critical examination of the Council's commitment to genuinely amplifying resident voices.

For more information and to explore current and past ePetitions, visit www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk.

Image: The Surgeons Petition or The Barbers Triumphant: Science Museum, London. (CC BY 4.0)

Mystery Local Plan critic revealed

4 February 2024



Epsom and Ewell Times reported in full the speech from a member of the public at the Licensing, Planning and Policy Committee (LPPC) of 22nd November 2023. He addressed Councillors forcefully on a response to the Government's revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). See report here.

Undeterred the gentleman appeared again at the Thursday 18th January meeting of the LPPC. Cllr. **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) asked Chair Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley Vale) to identify the speaker. As far as we could tell his name is John Seaston or Seaton.

Following the private "members' briefing" of 10th January about the Local Plan, reported in the Epsom and Ewell Times HERE, there was anticipation that something would be said in public about that meeting on Thursday. Nothing was said.

The only contribution about the Local Plan was the three minutes Mr Season/Seaton was permitted. Again, our transcript of his address is published in full. Epsom and Ewell Times invites corrections and responses to his opinions.

"Last year, this Council voted to pause the Local Plan process. In order to buy time to base its regulation 19 Local Plan on Government's revised NPPF. The great news is that this pause strategy worked. The critical thing now is to take full advantage of the opportunity that you have created. To do this, you need to be very clear about the changes to NPPF that

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Government has made.

There are two very important points that you must fully understand. First point: Government has clearly stated that the standard method calculation just gives an advisory starting point. When I spoke to you at the start of your last meeting, I emphasized how Government has used its standard method to set a negotiation anchor. Government has now admitted that its anchor is not credible. So it has rebranded it as an advisory starting point. It is critical that all councillors and officers involved in a Local Plan process fully understand that there is nothing binding about the standard method number.

You do not need to meet this target in full. You do not even need to meet half this target. You do not have to meet any specific proportion of this target. You just need to meet the actual needs of our borough.

Second point: Paragraph 145 of the new NPPF states there is no requirement for Green Belt boundaries to be reviewed or changed when plans are being prepared or updated. That was a direct quote from NPPF.

Could government have been any clearer? In case you missed it, there is no requirement for Green Belt boundaries to be reviewed or changed. I have highlighted during previous LPPC meetings that this Borough can fully meet its actual housing need over the plan period using only brownfield sites and previously developed land within the Green Belt.

In the Regulation 18 Local Plan, Council used the brownfield sites shortfall versus government's anchor to declare the exceptional circumstances required to alter Green Belt boundaries. The two changes to NPPF that I have just highlighted together with the quantum of brownfield and previously developed sites available in the Borough make this declaration of exceptional circumstances and resulting changes of Green Belt boundaries unjustifiable.

It would not be consistent with achieving a balanced Local Plan which meets Council's legal duty to achieve biodiversity net gain and a credible local nature. Any proposals to change Green Belt boundaries in the regulation 19 Local Plan would expose Council to legal challenge. And the associated cost and programme overruns as well as angering the residents you are supposed to serve."

Related reports:

Local Plan costs eat into Council reserves

Local Plan to move forward after passionate debate

Local Plan (2022-2040) Un-Pause Recommended

Cllr Persand intervenes ahead of Local Plan debate

and many many more. Search "local plan" in search function above.

Image: Clockwise from Chair: Cllrs – Steven McCormick (RA), Peter O'Donovan (RA), public speaker (Seaston / Seaton), Keiran Persand (Con), Julie Morris (LibDem), Clive Woodbridge (RA), Phil Neale (RA), Steve Bridge (RA), Council officers.

Council's contribution to our safety

4 February 2024



Epsom and Ewell's Crime and Disorder Committee met Wednesday 17th January to endorse an updated Community Safety Action Plan for 2024-25.

This followed a period of consultation in which **Chris Grayling** MP called for more attention to be paid to prevent local parks being used for drug dealing, one resident's request for slimy leaves being swept up being disregarded as not relevant to the Plan, the **Liberal Democrats** calling for more action on minor crime such as theft from cars and a citizen asking for the Stones Road tunnel under the railway line to be closed because of drug-dealing.

The plan was adopted unanimously and a summary follows:

In an effort to maintain its reputation as a safe haven amidst changing crime patterns, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has rolled out a comprehensive Community Safety Action Plan for the upcoming year. The plan addresses emerging challenges, emphasizing the protection of vulnerable individuals and enhancing community engagement.

The borough aims to tackle crime at its roots by prioritizing the most vulnerable and those at risk. The implementation of Community Harm and Risk Reduction Meetings (CHaRMM) is a cornerstone of this strategy. These multi-agency gatherings plan interventions for both victims and perpetrators, with approximately 65 cases managed each year.

Key initiatives include attending monthly CHaRMM meetings, ensuring proper resourcing for Domestic Homicide

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Reviews, and conducting Antisocial Behaviour Case Reviews. These actions aim to provide a voice for victims, address hidden crimes, and enhance overall community safety.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council are determined to be on the frontline against serious organized crime. Staff, including the Environmental Enforcement team and Environmental Health Team, will undergo awareness sessions. The council also plans to report intelligence via appropriate channels, using its unique position as landowners, event organizers, and chairing Safety Advisory Groups to contribute to counter-terrorism efforts.

The rollout of ACT Awareness (Action Counter Terrorism) training and the establishment of Serious Organized Crime Joint Action Groups demonstrate the borough's commitment to staying vigilant and proactive in the fight against criminal networks.

Beyond addressing vulnerable populations, the plan includes joint initiatives such as Joint Action Groups (JAGs), which focus on targeted interventions in specific geographical areas. The move towards a standing JAG arrangement ensures a continuous forum for partner agencies to collectively address area-based issues.

Additionally, a thorough review of town centre data will be conducted, utilizing available tools to identify trends and behaviours that require attention.

To foster a safer community, the borough will continue joint initiatives with other enforcement agencies, including "Meet the Beat" and "Violence Against Women And Girls" day of action. Social media will also play a pivotal role in keeping residents informed and engaged.

The Council pledges to amplify partner messages on social media, ensuring targeted and informative content that showcases the results of their community safety efforts.

The meeting lasted 2 minutes 37 seconds.

Council wants to prevent suicides

4 February 2024



Tuesday 16th January Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Community and Well-Being Committee considered local suicides.

In 2019, the Borough Council launched its Health & Wellbeing Strategy (HWBS), recognizing a concerning suicide rate of 10.4 per 100,000 residents from 2016-2018—higher than the Southeast's 9.2. A total of 21 lives were tragically lost. To address this, mental and emotional wellbeing became a priority in the borough's HWBS and subsequent action plan. However, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the plan's execution.

Since the HWBS approval in late 2019, the borough has witnessed a spike in suicide rates, reaching 14 per 100,000 residents between 2018-2020—claiming 29 lives, with 19 being male. The Southeast's rate during this period was 10.1 per 100,000. To counteract this alarming trend, the Council proposes an assertive response in the form of a revised Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

The increase in suicides is reminiscent of a previous increase observed from 2009 to 2013 during a period of significant financial hardship. Recent changes in the standard of proof used by coroners, shifting from 'beyond reasonable doubt' to 'on the balance of probability,' might impact the recorded number of suicides.

In March 2023, the Council's Health Liaisons Panel supported the development of a Suicide Prevention Action Plan (SPAP). This plan aligns with Surrey County Council's Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2026, emphasizing six priorities for suicide prevention.

The Council's SPAP, rooted in Surrey's broader strategy, aims to:

– Enhance the response to individuals in crisis with suicidal thoughts.

– Foster collaboration with Public Health Surrey County Council, statutory partners, and the community & voluntary sector.

– Collaborate with Public Health Surrey County Council to utilize real-time surveillance data for meaningful and effective SPAPs.

Specifically referencing the Alison Todd Protocol, an assessment tool identifying areas of practice and growth, the SPAP demonstrates the Council's commitment to suicide prevention. The plan, to be led by the Council's Community Development Team, spans from January 2024 to January 2025 before undergoing review.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Cllr Kate Chinn (Labour Court ward) was concerned about Council staff who might not assess the risk of suicide correctly and the effect on them if a resident subsequently died. She was assured that training would be given and support for staff provided in that situation.

The committee adopted the plan unanimously.

Image: Licence details rawpixel.com

Local Co-Vid volunteers rewarded with Council support

4 February 2024



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s financial support for five key local voluntary organisations came up for review 16th January at the meeting of the Environment and Well-Being Committee.

Age Concern Epsom & Ewell:

- Focus: Providing support and services for older people in the community.
- Activities: Offering a range of services such as social activities, information, and advice to enhance the well-being of older individuals.

Citizens Advice Bureau Epsom & Ewell:

- Focus: Providing free, confidential advice and support to the local community.
- Activities: Offering assistance on a wide range of issues, including legal, financial, and personal matters, to help individuals navigate challenges they may face.

Central Surrey Voluntary Action:

- Focus: Supporting and promoting voluntary and community work in the area.
- Activities: Facilitating connections between volunteers and local organizations, offering resources and training, and fostering collaboration within the voluntary sector.

RELATE Mid Surrey:

- Focus: Providing relationship support and counseling services.
- Activities: Offering counseling for individuals, couples, and families to improve and strengthen relationships. Addressing a variety of relationship issues through professional guidance.

The Sunnybank Trust:

- Focus: Supporting individuals with learning disabilities.
- Activities: Offering a range of services and activities to enhance the quality of life for people with learning disabilities. This may include social events, skill-building programs, and support for independent living.

Introducing a report to the Councillors the Community Development Officer said: “I have to say that during the COVID crisis, we would not have been able to cope unless we had the support of our voluntary organizations who stepped up and were absolutely amazing in getting volunteers to come forward and help the Council give the service and help the residents in what was a particularly difficult time. This report, I think, reflects the fact that we appreciate that support and that we wish to continue supporting those organizations in what they do on behalf of our residents.”

The support, approved by the committee, is summarised in the table below.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

	Current and Proposed Support for Voluntary Organisations 2024/25 £s											
	Age Concern Epsom		Citizens Advice Bureau Epsom &		Central Surrey Voluntary Action		RELATE Mid Surrey		The Sunnybank Trust		Total	
	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25
Direct Grant Funding	0	0	74115	74115	7989	7989	0	0	0	0	82104	82104
Licence / Rent - Notional Grant	14,616	14,615	28,686	28,686	7,344	7,344	14,910	14,910	0	0	65,556	65,555
Service Charge - Notional Grant	15,639	12,764	30,694	25,052	7,858	6,414	4,800	4,800	0	0	58,991	49,030
Rent paid to EEBC	-2,936	-2,936	0	0	0	0	-1,294	-1,294	-3,420	-3,470		
Grant for Volunteer Parking	100	100	1920	1920	0	0	0	0	0	0	2020	2020
Subsidy for Staff Parking Permits	1,920	2720	3,840	4080	0	0	0	0	453	680	6,213	7480
Subsidy for volunteer Parking	0	0	7600	8000	0	0	0	0	0	0	7600	8000
Totals do not include rent paid to EEBC	32275	30199	146855	141853	23191	21747	19710	19710	453	680	222484	214189

Image Licence details Creator: NCVO London

Relative relief about Epsom and Ewell's debt?

4 February 2024



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's debt is about average with all 381 United Kingdom local authorities. UK councils owe a combined **£97.8bn** to lenders, equivalent to **£1,455** per resident, as of September 2023. Epsom and Ewell's debt per person is £**795**. From highest debt per person to lowest Epsom and Ewell ranks 195 out of 381.

In the national league table of debt shame other Surrey Boroughs occupy the leading positions: Woking is first with debt of £18,756 per resident followed by Spelthorne in second place at £10,415. Guildford is 5th.

Taking into account all types of local authorities, such as police and crime commissioners and combined authorities, the debt pile rises to **£122bn**.

The 11 boroughs of Surrey are ranked in the table below. Highest debt per resident to lowest.

Standing in Surrey	Borough	Population	Total amassed debt 2023-24 Q2 (£)	Debt per person 2023-24 Q2 (£)	National standing out of **381**
1	Woking	103,889	1,948,583,000	18,756	1
2	Spelthorne	102,995	1,072,698,000	10,415	2
3	Runnymede	87,739	637,900,000	7,270	5
4	Guildford	143,929	178,826,000	1,242	132
5	Mole Valley	87,608	102,850,000	1,174	147
6	Waverley	128,878	149,771,000	1,162	151
7	Tandridge	88,143	99,415,000	1,128	156
8	Surrey Heath	90,645	98,695,000	1,089	162
9	**Epsom and Ewell**	**80,998**	**64,427,000**	**795**	**195**
10	Elmbridge	139,369	50,358,000	361	276
11	Reigate and Banstead	151,423	0	0	37 others

Dame **Meg Hillier**, the chair of the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, said some examples of debt were "staggering".

But council leaders say years of under-funding mean they have been forced to take out loans and invest in commercial properties just to keep services running.

In recent years, various commentators have warned that the debts held by councils – which must balance their budgets every year – are unsustainable. In 2020, chair of the Public Accounts Committee Dame Meg Hillier said the Government

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

was “blind to the extreme risks” of council borrowing levels.

Since then, six more councils have had to issue section 114 notices declaring themselves effectively bankrupt: Croydon, Slough, Thurrock, Birmingham, Woking and Nottingham.

In the case of Croydon, Slough, Thurrock, Woking and Nottingham – those effective bankruptcies could be directly linked to failed investments and spiralling debts. Thurrock’s £469m funding black hole, for example, was caused by a series of failed investments in solar farms.

Dame Hillier added: “Small district councils have very little room for manoeuvre when finances are squeezed, relying on charges (such as parking fees) for a lot of their income. Unitary authorities are facing the demographic pressures on social services, social care and special educational needs.

“But beyond these day to day pressures, the PAC warned in 2020 that some councils had not only pursued strategies of commercial investment exposing them to high levels of risk, but normalised behaviour and optimistically believed that there was little downside to commercial activity. Add to this the delay in public sector audits and many councillors and taxpayers were blind to the risk.”

Cllr **Julie Morris**, (College Ward) Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council said “There is no evidence that central government is likely to assist with the broader financial issues affecting local authorities, so we need to budget carefully and 2025/26 is likely to be crunch time. We need a complete review of both mandatory services and those which are discretionary. And central government needs to wake up to what is facing government at local level.”

Cllr **Neil Dallen,** (RA Town) Chair of Strategy & Resources Committee said: “As a council, Epsom & Ewell’s investments are performing as planned. The debts are considered sustainable, with sums set aside each year to ensure they can be repaid at maturity. Through taking a proactive approach to our finances, we have a strong track record of meeting the considerable financial challenges the past decade has brought for local government through reduced central government funding, and we are looking ahead to 2024/25 and beyond to ensure that we remain a financially sustainable council.”

The other parties have also been invited to comment.

Councillors belted-up on Green Belt?

4 February 2024



In a recent closed-door meeting held at the Town Hall, local councillors in the Borough of Epsom and Ewell, convened to *apparently* deliberate on potential areas for housing development, with a particular focus on the contentious issue of Green Belt land. The meeting, held on January 10, has stirred controversy and prompted reactions from concerned citizens, leading to a series of letters and press releases. Councillors were greeted at the entrance by a small and polite protest group.

Yufan Si, a prominent Green Belt campaigner, has expressed alarm over the secrecy shrouding the meeting. The council’s decision to discuss Green Belt development in a closed setting has raised questions about transparency and adherence to government policies.

Ms Si highlights the Council’s statistics, indicating that 84% of residents opposed development on Green Belt land during a prior consultation. The campaigner argues that the government’s planning policies offer a choice to protect Green Belt areas, questioning the need for a clandestine discussion.

She has raised concerns about the council’s sale of Green Belt land to a local business owner three years before the Local Plan’s development, potentially leading to significant financial gains. The campaigner emphasizes the availability of brownfield sites capable of accommodating over 3,700 new dwellings, surpassing the projected household growth from 2022 to 2040. In her letter Yufan Si has urged councillors to prioritize environmental preservation and fulfill residents’ wishes by excluding Green Belt land from the development plans.

Councillor **Julie Morris** (LibDem College) has stated that she challenged the decision to keep the meeting private. While acknowledging the legal standing of the private meeting, Councillor Morris called for greater transparency and public engagement. She emphasizes the need for progress reports on the Local Plan to address residents’ concerns and combat misinformation circulating in the public domain.

She said “The ruling Residents Association party would do well to engage directly with the public on this matter, or at the very least, to explain exactly why these meetings are being held, have to be in private, and why there is no public statement after each meeting to keep local residents informed as to how things are moving forward. Our residents deserve no less than this.”

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Letters from concerned citizens to Councillors echoed the sentiment against Green Belt development. **Stephen Neward**, a voluntary warden at the Priest Hill nature reserve, expressed hope that the revised National Planning Policy Framework would prevent the inclusion of Green Belt sites in the Local Plan. Another resident, **Lynn Munro**, urged councillors to prioritize brownfield sites over Green Belt, emphasizing the irreversible impact on the borough's open spaces.

Tim Murphy, representing the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Epsom and Ewell Green Belt Group, shared the views of planning consultant Catriona Riddell. Riddell clarified that local authorities, including Epsom and Ewell, are not obligated to alter Green Belt boundaries to meet housing targets, challenging the notion that Green Belt sacrifice is necessary.

As controversy swirls around the closed meeting, residents, campaigners, and opposition councillors continue to press for transparency. The fate of Green Belt land in Epsom and Ewell remains a hot topic.

The meeting was not notified on the Council's calendar of meetings and therefore the press do not know if it was a formal or informal meeting nor whether any order was made about publicity. No part of the meeting, including any section excluding the public, has been uploaded to the Epsom and Ewell Borough Council YouTube channel.

Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) Chair of the Licensing, Planning and Policy Committee has responded to Epsom and Ewell Times:

"This was not a secret meeting; it just wasn't a public meeting. I stated publicly at the September LPPC Committee and extraordinary full Council on 24 October 2023 that Member briefings regarding the Local Plan would be taking place during this time period assuming the local plan was unpaused by full council, which it was.

Further clarification was given at the special LPPC meeting held in November when the Local Development Scheme (LDS) was an agenda item. I have given a statement at every council meeting allowing questions from all members. All members have been encouraged to attend each LPPC meeting whether they're a committee member or not. All members have been fully involved and engaged in the development of our local plan.

It is normal and expected practice when a Local Plan is being developed for Members to be able to discuss items of detail outside of the public Committee Meetings. The information briefing for councillors held on 10 January 2024 was not a meeting of the Council or a committee and had no decision-making powers, and there was no right for public access under the Local Government Act 1972 or any other legislation.

There is currently a huge amount of work being done for our Local Plan, including considering the implications of the revised NPPF published in December 2023. Work will continue over the coming months before the next stage of public consultation (Regulation 19), which is due to commence in January 2025, if supported by LPPC in November 2024 and full council in December 2024."

Related reports:

Local Plan costs eat into Council reserves

Local Plan to move forward after passionate debate

Local Plan (2022-2040) Un-Pause Recommended

Cllr Persand intervenes ahead of Local Plan debate

and many many more. Search "local plan" in search function above.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY