

Cllr Dalton seeks another layer of local government

13 April 2026



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has apparently joined Surrey leaders in backing a bid to Government for a new county-wide “Foundation Strategic Authority” (FSA), prompting questions about how such a significant step has been taken locally.

A letter dated 20 March 2026, signed by council leaders across Surrey including Epsom & Ewell’s leader Cllr **Hannah Dalton**, (RA Stoneleigh) confirms an Expression of Interest to form the authority by April 2027 .

The proposal forms part of the Government’s latest devolution programme, under which areas without existing mayoral structures are invited to establish FSAs to coordinate transport, housing, infrastructure, skills and economic development.

What is being proposed?

An FSA would sit above the new unitary councils planned for Surrey in 2027, providing strategic oversight across the county. The submission to Government describes it as offering “unified strategic leadership” and supporting long-term planning across a coherent economic area .

FSAs are also widely seen as a potential stepping stone to deeper devolution, including the possibility of a future elected mayor.

A changing local government landscape

The proposal comes as Surrey undergoes major reorganisation, with existing borough and district councils — including Epsom & Ewell — due to be replaced by two unitary authorities.

Alongside that, some areas are exploring the creation of parish or community councils.

The combined effect could see a structure emerging of:

- unitary councils delivering local services,
- a county-wide strategic authority shaping major policy,
- and more localised parish-level bodies in some areas.

Local concerns over authority and process

In a **letter to the Epsom and Ewell Times**, Cllr **Alex Coley** (Independent) raises concerns about how the decision to support the Expression of Interest was taken .

He questions whether the Leader of the Council had authority to sign on behalf of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, or whether the action was taken without formal approval through committee or full Council.

That distinction is not merely procedural. If the Expression of Interest was submitted on behalf of the Council, it would ordinarily be expected to rest on some identifiable constitutional or delegated authority. If not, it raises a different question as to the capacity in which the letter was signed.

Council leader declines comment

The Epsom and Ewell Times invited Cllr Hannah Dalton to clarify the position. She responded: “As we are in the pre-election period it is my understanding that elected members should not be making any comments on council matters and so I will not be providing a comment.”

Cllr Dalton is closely associated with the failed attempt to create parish councils for Epsom and Ewell.

Are pre-election publicity rules engaged?

The pre-election period places restrictions on **local authority publicity**, under the Code issued pursuant to the Local Government Act 1986.

However, those provisions are directed at preventing **the authority itself** from using public resources to publish material that could influence an election. They do not impose a general prohibition on elected members explaining decisions or clarifying the basis on which actions have been taken.

More importantly in this context, the issue raised is whether the Expression of Interest was in fact an authorised act of the Council at all.

If it was, the question of authority is plainly a legitimate matter for public explanation. If it was not, it is difficult to see how statutory restrictions on “local authority publicity” could apply to a request for clarification of an individual member’s actions.

Either way, the question goes to **accountability, not publicity**.

What happens next?

The Government will now consider Surrey’s Expression of Interest. If progressed, further detail will be required on governance, powers and accountability.

For residents, the immediate issue may be more straightforward: understanding how decisions of this scale are made locally, and on whose authority they are taken.

Sam Jones - Reporter

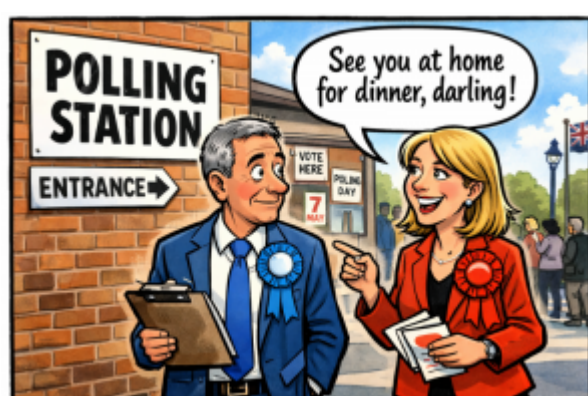


Cllr Coley’s letter to Epsom and Ewell Times



Epsom and Ewell unitary election, a family affair?

13 April 2026



The forthcoming East Surrey Council elections in Epsom and Ewell are shaping up to be something of a **family affair**, with a number of candidates sharing surnames – and, it appears, households.

The official Statement of Persons Nominated reveals several instances where voters may find familiar names appearing

more than once on the ballot paper.

In the **West Ewell ward**, two candidates named **Chambers** - Sarah Jane and Simon - are both standing for Reform UK, while the Conservative slate includes **Christopher Charles Muller** and **Tracy Margaret Muller**.

Meanwhile, the surname **Persand** appears no fewer than **three times across different wards**: Aaron in Epsom Town & Downs, Kieran in Epsom West, and Meera in Ewell Village, Stoneleigh & Nonsuch - suggesting a family presence spanning multiple parts of the borough.

The pattern continues elsewhere. Labour candidates **Kate Chinn** and **Richard Chinn** appear in different wards, and the **Ng** surname also features twice, with Keew and Jeanne standing for Labour and the Liberal Democrats respectively.

Perhaps most notably, in **West Ewell**, Residents' Association borough councillor **Neil Dallen** is joined on the ballot in the same ward by borough councillor **Lucie McIntyre**. While the surnames differ she is his daughter - underlining the extent to which family ties intersect with local political life.

None of this is improper. Local elections have long attracted candidates from the same families, particularly in areas with strong traditions of civic involvement such as Epsom and Ewell. Political engagement often runs in families, with experience, networks and commitment passed from one generation to the next.

But for voters, it does add an extra layer of intrigue. With **multiple shared surnames across party lines and wards**, the ballot paper will require careful reading to distinguish between candidates - and perhaps a sharper awareness of the personal connections behind the names.

In an election already notable for ushering in a new era of local government under the Surrey reorganisation, Epsom and Ewell's contribution may also be remembered for something more personal: a contest where politics, quite literally, runs in the family.

[Click here for](#) : Details of all candidates for East Surrey Unitary Council standing in Epsom and Ewell

Sam Jones - Reporter



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Unitary Council candidates standing in Epsom and Ewell

13 April 2026



[Click here for](#) : Details of all candidates for East Surrey Unitary Council standing in Epsom and Ewell

In the weeks ahead Epsom and Ewell Times will publish the personal statements of all candidates that wish to provide them to us.

Residents across Surrey - including Epsom and Ewell - will go to the polls on **Thursday 7 May 2026** in elections that will reshape local government for a generation.

The vote is part of the Government's programme of **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**, which will replace Surrey's current two-tier system with **two new unitary authorities** from April 2027.

For Epsom and Ewell residents, this means voting not for the existing Borough Council, but for councillors who will form

the new **East Surrey Council**.

What voters are being asked to decide

The 2026 elections will choose councillors for the “**shadow**” **East Surrey Council**, a body that will operate alongside existing councils during a one-year transition period.

These councillors will:

- Set the first budgets and council tax levels for the new authority
- Establish governance structures and staffing
- Oversee the transfer of services ahead of April 2027

Once the new system comes into force, they will continue as full councillors of the new authority until at least 2031.

How the new system will work

Under the reorganisation:

- Surrey’s **12 existing councils** (county plus districts/boroughs) will be abolished
- Two unitary councils - **East Surrey** and **West Surrey** - will take over all services
- East Surrey will cover areas including **Epsom & Ewell, Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge**

Each new authority will deliver everything from bin collections and planning to education and social care - functions currently split between borough and county councils.

Voting system and representation

Voters will be able to choose **up to two councillors per ward**, with the top two candidates elected under a first-past-the-post system.

Across East Surrey:

- 72 councillors will represent 36 wards
- Elections are based broadly on current county council divisions

What it means locally

Importantly, **no elections are taking place in 2026 for Epsom & Ewell Borough Council itself**. Existing borough and county councillors will remain in post until March 2027, creating a period of overlap.

For residents, day-to-day services are expected to continue unchanged during the transition.

Registering and voting

To take part:

- You must be registered to vote by **midnight on 20 April 2026**
- Photo ID is required at polling stations
- Postal and proxy voting options are available

A pivotal local moment

The Surrey LGR Hub describes these elections as a key step in creating a simpler system of local government, with councillors elected in May playing a “key role in setting up and then running the new councils.”

For Epsom and Ewell, the vote represents a significant shift away from long-standing borough governance towards a much larger strategic authority - with consequences that will shape local services, taxation and representation for years to come.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Related reports

Last day to Stand for Surrey’s Unitary Councils

Two unitary proposal confirmed

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council agrees to submit proposal recommending three unitary councils for Surrey County council set to propose two unitary councils for Surrey

Kirby Fans Pack the Kerb in Epsom

13 April 2026



Children's author Katie Kirby drew crowds to Waterstones Epsom today Friday 10th, as families queued more than 100 metres along the High Street for a book signing on the final day of the Easter school holidays.

In bright spring sunshine, parents and excited children waited patiently for their chance to meet the bestselling writer, whose hugely popular *Lottie Brooks* series has become a staple for young readers across the UK. Staff at the store reported a steady flow throughout the day, with the queue stretching well beyond the shop frontage at its peak.

Kirby, a former primary school teacher turned full-time author and illustrator, has built a devoted following with her humorous and relatable books aimed at middle-grade readers. Her breakout success, *The Extremely Embarrassing Life of Lottie Brooks*, was shortlisted for major children's book awards and has sold in significant numbers, with subsequent titles cementing her reputation as one of the UK's leading voices in children's fiction.



Epsom school student Ellie with her mother and the author



Epsom school student Rosie Gordon with the author

Her stories, told in diary format, capture the awkwardness and comedy of growing up, striking a chord particularly with readers aged 8 to 12. The blend of cartoon-style illustrations and accessible writing has helped drive strong sales both in bookshops and through school reading programmes.

Today's event reflected that popularity. Children clutching copies of Kirby's books chatted animatedly in the queue, while parents described the visit as a highlight of the holidays. Inside, Kirby signed books and spoke briefly with readers, creating what one attendee described as "a really special moment" for young fans.

Booksellers say such events have become increasingly important in encouraging children to read for pleasure. The turnout in Epsom suggests that, despite digital distractions, the appeal of meeting a favourite author—and taking home a signed copy—remains as strong as ever.

Lionel Blackman

Friends of Horton Cemetery influence law reform

13 April 2026



A local Epsom charity's campaign to protect a forgotten cemetery appears to have helped shape national thinking on burial law reform.

The Friends of Horton Cemetery (FoHC), based in Epsom, made a detailed submission to the Law Commission in January 2025 calling for stronger legal protections for neglected burial grounds—particularly those in private ownership.

Now, with the publication of the Law Commission's report on Burial and Cremation in March 2026, several of the group's core concerns appear to have been recognised at the highest level of policy.

Horton Cemetery, the resting place of around 9000 former psychiatric patients from the Epsom hospital cluster, has long been at the centre of FoHC's work. Since its sale into private ownership in 1983, the site has suffered decades of neglect, with no public access and minimal maintenance.

In its **submission**, FoHC argued that the law currently leaves such sites in a regulatory vacuum, with no enforceable duty on owners to maintain them and limited powers for authorities to intervene.

That argument now appears to have gained traction.

The Law Commission’s report identifies private burial grounds as an area of “real gaps in protection” and, for the first time, proposes a legal duty requiring all burial grounds—including privately owned ones—to be kept in “good order”. The report also envisages inspection and enforcement powers at national level.

These proposals closely mirror FoHC’s central recommendation that cemetery owners should be subject to a clear, enforceable maintenance obligation reflecting the historical and emotional significance of such sites.

However, other proposals put forward by the Epsom group have not yet been taken up in full.

FoHC had called for a statutory right of access for relatives, stronger powers for local authorities to intervene, and safeguards against speculative ownership and redevelopment. While the Commission acknowledges many of these issues—particularly the importance of access to graves—it stops short of recommending firm legal rights or stronger local enforcement mechanisms.

Speaking after the report’s publication, Lionel Blackman, solicitor and secretary of the Friends of Horton Cemetery and author of the legal submission said “The recognition of the problem is an important step, even if the solutions remain incomplete.”

The charity’s work has also fed into ongoing discussions with the Ministry of Justice. At a recent meeting, organised by Patron of the Charity and local MP Helen Maguire with trustees of the charity, Theresa Keneflick and Kevin McDonnell and junior Minister Alex Davies-Jones MP, Horton Cemetery was cited as a real-world example of the kind of site falling through gaps in the current legal framework.

The Law Commission’s reforms are expected to take several years to translate into legislation, with an initial Government response anticipated within six months.

For campaigners in Epsom, the message is clear: what began as a local effort to restore dignity to a neglected burial ground is now influencing the national conversation.

And while the law may not yet have caught up fully, Horton Cemetery is no longer being overlooked.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Image: Horton Cemetery 1971

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[Epsom and Ewell’s MP champion’s Friends of Horton Cemetery mission on “Time to Talk Day”](#)

[Epsom’s Horton Cemetery gets attention of two kinds](#)

[Portraits of pauper patients in Epsom’s Horton Cemetery, inspires artist](#)

[Petition to reclaim Horton Cemetery from property speculator](#)

[Local community gathered at Horton Cemetery](#)

Information on Epsom and Ewell Council’s perished parishes plan blocked on cost

13 April 2026



A dispute between a resident and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council over the conduct of its Community Governance Review (CGR) has escalated, despite the Council’s decision to abandon plans for new parish-style community councils.

In March, the Council dropped proposals to create Epsom and Ewell Community Councils after its second-stage consultation produced a decisive result, with around 82% of over 2200 respondents opposing the plans.

However, correspondence seen by the Epsom & Ewell Times shows that concerns about how the consultation was conducted — and how the Council has responded to those concerns — remain unresolved.

Resident raises formal concerns over consultation process

Local government elector Nathan Elvery and a former Council CEO submitted a detailed pre-action protocol letter in early March raising potential legal concerns about the CGR process, including:

- the design of the initial consultation survey and whether a clear “No” option was available
- the adequacy and transparency of financial information
- whether alternative governance models were considered
- compliance with consultation law principles
- whether equality duties had been properly addressed

He also submitted a series of Freedom of Information requests seeking disclosure of internal documents and analysis.

In a follow-up email to the Council’s Chief Executive dated 3rd April, Mr Elvery expressed concern that his correspondence had not been substantively addressed, stating that the Council had treated his pre-action protocol letter as “a routine information request” rather than engaging with the legal issues raised.

He wrote that more than four weeks had passed without acknowledgement from senior officers and that “none of this has happened” in terms of the Council’s own commitments to timely responses.

FOI request refused on cost grounds

On 1 April, the Council responded to Mr Elvery’s FOI requests by confirming that it holds the information sought but declining to provide it on the basis that complying would exceed the statutory cost limit under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Council stated that responding would take more than 18 hours of officer time and was therefore not required under Section 12 of the Act.

In his 3rd April email, Mr Elvery challenges this position, arguing that the Council has improperly aggregated multiple requests to exceed the cost threshold and has failed to meet its duty to provide advice and assistance to narrow the request.

He also argues that some elements of the request — such as whether an Equality Impact Assessment exists or whether legal advice was obtained — could be answered quickly and should not have been refused.

Internal review and possible ICO referral

Mr Elvery has now requested a formal internal review of the Council’s FOI decision and indicated that he will refer the matter to the Information Commissioner’s Office if the refusal is upheld.

He has also renewed his request for a substantive response to the issues raised in his original pre-action letter, including confirmation of what steps the Council intends to take to ensure that future consultations comply with legal requirements.

Although he confirms that he will not pursue judicial review following the Council’s decision to abandon the CGR proposals, he states that the procedural issues identified remain relevant to how the Council conducts future consultations under local government reorganisation.

Consultation outcome settles policy but not process

The Council’s decision not to proceed with creating community councils has resolved the immediate policy question. However, the issues raised in the FOI correspondence highlight continuing debate about the consultation process itself.

One recurring point is that the CGR consultation did not include Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs) — currently being piloted elsewhere in Surrey — as an option for residents to consider.

Epsom and Ewell Times (EET) survey suggests alternative preference

Alongside the Council’s consultation, the Epsom & Ewell Times conducted an independent reader survey.

Although based on a smaller sample of only 112 respondents, the survey found:

- around 75% support for NAC-style local engagement structures
- a similarly high level of opposition to community councils as reflected in the Council’s consultation

Unlike the official consultation, the EET survey invited respondents to compare different models of local representation.

Transparency and future implications

The Council’s use of the cost exemption under the Freedom of Information Act is a lawful mechanism where a request requires disproportionate time and expense. However, the refusal has left a number of substantive questions unanswered in the public domain.

These include how consultation options were framed, what alternatives were considered, and how financial information was developed and presented to residents.

With Surrey’s local government reorganisation continuing, and new governance structures still to be defined, the issues raised in this case may have implications beyond the now-abandoned community council proposals.

The outcome of the internal review — and any subsequent decision by the Information Commissioner — may determine

whether further information is disclosed.

For now, while the policy proposal has been withdrawn, the debate about process, transparency and future local representation in Epsom and Ewell remains ongoing.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Related reports:

Sun sets on Residents' Associations' cherished Parishes for Epsom and Ewell

Epsom and Ewell to ditch Parish Councils plan

Many more search "parish council"

Getting to the bottom of Epsom's Ashley Centre seating

13 April 2026



Shoppers in Epsom have voiced concern after seating in the Ashley Centre was removed and replaced as part of what management describes as an ongoing improvement programme.

One resident contacted the Epsom and Ewell Times to highlight the impact of the changes, particularly on older visitors and those with mobility difficulties who rely on regular rest points while shopping.

The resident said the removal of existing seating was "totally unexpected" and had caused "great concern", adding that the centre is not only a retail space but also a social hub for many: "It is especially important for the older generation who visit the centre both to shop and to meet friends."

Concerns were also raised about the suitability of the replacement seating. The resident described the new arrangements as inadequate in number and design, claiming that current provision allows seating for "only twelve people", which they said was "totally unacceptable for such a busy shopping mall", particularly following the arrival of a major new store increasing footfall.

The complaint further suggested that the materials used in the new seating may present practical issues: "The upholstery is unhygienic and it will easily get dirty in very little time," the resident said.

In response, a spokesperson for the Ashley Centre said the changes were part of a planned upgrade and sought to reassure visitors that further improvements are imminent.

The spokesperson said: "We remain committed to providing a welcoming and accessible environment for all visitors and appreciate feedback from the local community. Recent seating changes form part of a planned improvement programme, with additional new seating due to be installed later this month to enhance comfort and accessibility for shoppers."

The issue is likely to resonate with many regular users of the town centre, particularly those who depend on accessible facilities. Whether the promised additional seating will address residents' concerns remains to be seen.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Lung disease death widens investigation of Epsom and St Helier Trust service

13 April 2026



Widow still seeking accountability two years on.

A widow whose husband died aged just 48 after treatment at Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust has spoken of her continuing search for answers, as investigations continue into the care of more than 200 lung disease patients.

Laura Noakes, from Sutton, says she still does not know why her husband Daniel died from interstitial lung disease (ILD) in February 2024, despite concerns raised about his treatment before his death. Speaking on the second anniversary of his passing, she said the lack of clear information has left her feeling isolated and unable to move forward.

Her case forms part of a wider investigation involving patients treated under respiratory consultant Dr Veronica Varney, whose practice is under scrutiny. The investigation includes a review by the General Medical Council, though no outcome has yet been made public.

According to reporting by the Daily Telegraph (29th March), a letter from the Trust acknowledged that Mr Noakes had been prescribed Roflumilast for several years — a drug licensed for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease but not for ILD — and that he could have lived longer had he received treatment in line with guidelines.

Mrs Noakes said: “While nothing will bring Daniel back, finding answers is really important. It feels like I’ve been treated in a silo. I haven’t been able to understand the wider picture, and answers have only come after I complained.”

Concerns over treatment and oversight

Mr Noakes, who had never smoked, was first referred to respiratory services in 2018 after developing a persistent cough. The Trust later accepted that earlier scans suggesting ILD were not properly followed up, and that there was insufficient senior medical oversight during his care.

His condition deteriorated significantly from late 2023. While still alive, he was contacted by the Trust raising concerns about his treatment — something his wife describes as a “double trauma”, learning both that he was dying and that aspects of his care may have been avoidable.

She said: “We trusted we were getting top-level care. Instead, we later found there had been serious failings. We could have had many more years together.”

The Trust has apologised to the family and acknowledged that Mr Noakes’ care “fell far below” expected standards. It has also commissioned an external review by the Royal College of Physicians into more than 200 cases.

Wider investigation and cultural concerns

Findings reported by the Telegraph indicate that internal reviews identified a culture at St Helier Hospital that discouraged junior staff from challenging senior clinicians. The Trust has since said it has strengthened safeguards and systems to prevent similar failures.

Dr Varney left the Trust in 2023. The GMC has confirmed she remains registered with conditions while its investigation continues.

An inquest into Mr Noakes’ death has yet to reach a final conclusion.

Legal action and calls for others to come forward

Mrs Noakes is now being supported by clinical negligence specialists at Slater and Gordon.

Senior associate Nadia Saber said: “Daniel’s death was avoidable and premature, and Laura understandably has many questions. The number of cases under investigation gives cause for serious concern, and we would urge anyone worried about their care to come forward.”

Mrs Noakes added that accountability is essential not only for her family, but to ensure lessons are learned: “We need to know what happened and why — so this doesn’t happen to anyone else.”

Sam Jones - Reporter



Epsom March crime and safety round-up

13 April 2026



Policing activity across Epsom and Ewell in March 2026 saw a mix of enforcement successes, court outcomes and continued concern around acquisitive crime, drugs and community safety.

30th March an unexploded ordnance was handed in to the police counter in the Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom. The area was cordoned off until experts gave the all-clear.

Drug crime crackdown sees cash seizures in Epsom

A significant policing outcome during March was the seizure of more than £12,000 linked to criminal activity following a proactive stop by officers in Epsom. The funds, recovered under the Proceeds of Crime Act, are set to be reinvested into policing.

Local police social media updates suggest this forms part of wider activity targeting drug-related offending and organised crime in the borough, with officers using stop-and-search powers and intelligence-led patrols to disrupt offenders.

Targeted operations lead to arrests across offence types

Neighbourhood policing teams reported intensive enforcement weeks during which more than 20 arrests were made across a range of offences including burglary, theft, drugs and weapons possession. (Facebook)

These operations reflect a continued emphasis on “visible policing” and proactive interventions in hotspot areas.

Burglary and vehicle crime remain priorities

Across Surrey, two burglars were jailed in March after targeting homes to steal car keys and vehicles in early-morning break-ins.

While not limited to Epsom and Ewell, such offences remain a key policing priority locally, with residents repeatedly advised to secure vehicles and keys.

Domestic abuse and sexual offences prosecutions

March also saw several significant court outcomes across the county, including custodial sentences for domestic abuse, coercive behaviour and serious sexual offences.

Police continue to highlight safeguarding and victim support as central to their work, alongside encouraging reporting and use of protective measures such as Clare’s Law disclosures.

Community engagement and policing visibility

Residents are being invited to participate in upcoming “Policing Your Community” roadshows, aimed at gathering local concerns and shaping neighbourhood priorities.

This follows ongoing efforts in Epsom and Ewell to strengthen engagement between officers and the public.

Ongoing concerns around public safety incidents

Although outside the March reporting window, earlier incidents such as the January report of a teenage girl being approached by two men in Court Recreation Ground continue to frame community concerns about safety in public spaces. (The Sun)

Police have maintained increased visibility patrols in such areas in response.

Overall picture

Data and operational updates suggest that policing in Epsom and Ewell during March has been characterised by: targeted

enforcement against drugs and organised crime; continued focus on burglary and vehicle theft; strong emphasis on safeguarding in domestic abuse and sexual offence cases; ongoing community engagement initiatives.

While Surrey remains a relatively low-crime area overall, the persistence of acquisitive crime and anti-social behaviour continues to shape local policing priorities.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Surrey tech pioneers get £25k boost in start-up drive

13 April 2026



Surrey's emerging tech entrepreneurs have been given a significant boost after more than 30 early-stage innovators completed the first cohort of a new county-wide startup programme.

Surrey Venture Studios (SVS), a business growth initiative backed by the University of Surrey and partners, has supported participants through workshops, mentoring and pitching opportunities aimed at turning early ideas into viable technology businesses. The programme offers selected founders £25,000 in funding alongside six months of expert support to help launch and scale their ventures.

First cohort builds momentum

Organisers say the inaugural cohort brought together a diverse range of innovators working across multiple sectors, all benefiting from access to experienced mentors and investors. Participants attended intensive workshops designed to refine ideas and prepare them for pitching to expert panels.

Ody Bassioukas, manager of Surrey Venture Studios, said the programme had already demonstrated how quickly ideas could develop with the right support: "It's been incredibly energising to see just how much progress can happen in a matter of days... ideas gaining clarity, confidence building, and new pathways starting to take shape."

Among those taking part was Elizabeth Baldwin, founder of Puzzle Proof, a digital system aimed at supporting survivors of domestic abuse. She said the programme had helped validate her idea and encouraged her to take it forward.

Industry figures have also backed the initiative. Iain Jamieson, chairman of the S100 Angel Investment Club, described the programme as "exactly the kind of support that is needed" to help new entrepreneurs succeed.

Applications open for next round

Following the success of the first cohort, applications are now open for a second intake, with a deadline of 8 May and workshops scheduled for June.

The programme is open to people living, working or studying in Surrey and includes an initial two-day workshop and pitching process, with successful applicants progressing to the funded accelerator stage.

Caroline Fleming, director of the Surrey Innovation District ecosystem at the University of Surrey, encouraged prospective applicants to come forward: "This is your opportunity to realise your tech entrepreneur ambition, supported by our world-class innovation ecosystem."

Addressing a gap in startup support

Surrey Venture Studios has been developed in collaboration with Royal Holloway and the University for the Creative Arts, alongside Surrey County Council, to address what organisers describe as a longstanding gap in support for very early-stage innovators.

By combining funding, mentoring and structured development, the programme aims to help bridge the gap between concept and commercial readiness for new technology businesses.

A webinar for prospective applicants is scheduled for 21 April, offering further information on how the scheme works and

how to apply.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Climate emergency comes to Epsom

13 April 2026



A community screening of a national climate film is set to take place in Epsom next month, bringing together residents, councillors and community groups to explore what the climate and nature crisis means locally.

The event, hosted by St Martin's Church and Sustainable Epsom and Ewell, will feature *The People's Emergency Briefing*, a 45-minute film based on a high-level national briefing delivered in Westminster last year.

Organisers say the screening forms part of a UK-wide programme designed to make complex information about climate and environmental risks more accessible at a local level, with community discussions encouraged after each showing.

Local screening details

The Epsom event will take place on Saturday 11 April at St Martin's Church, Church Street, starting at 3pm (doors open 2.30pm). Entry is free, although attendees are asked to register in advance so organisers can plan capacity.

Invitations have been extended to local councillors, community leaders and Epsom and Ewell's MP, alongside residents interested in environmental issues.

From Westminster briefing to community film

The film is based on a landmark briefing held in November 2025 at Westminster Central Hall, attended by more than 1,200 MPs, peers and leaders from across business, culture, faith and media.

Experts at the event examined the implications of climate and nature breakdown across areas such as food security, health, infrastructure and the economy, alongside practical evidence on how risks might be reduced.

That material has now been adapted into a public-facing film, launching nationally in April 2026, with screenings planned in venues ranging from churches and village halls to libraries and schools.

A “civic event” as well as a film

Organisers emphasise that the screenings are intended not just as film showings but as civic events, encouraging discussion about local impacts and responses.

Each event is expected to include a facilitated discussion, allowing residents to reflect on how national risks relate to their own communities.

The wider programme has backing from organisations including WWF, the National Trust, CPRE and the Royal Meteorological Society, with hundreds of screenings anticipated across the country.

Broadcaster Chris Packham, who opened the original Westminster briefing, said: “I’d encourage people everywhere to attend a screening... It creates exactly the kind of honest local conversation we now urgently need.”

Local focus

For Epsom and Ewell, the event offers a chance to connect global environmental challenges with local concerns, from green space and biodiversity to resilience and community preparedness.

Organisers say they hope the screening will help spark informed, constructive discussion about how the borough can respond to the issues raised.

Sam Jones - Reporter



[Event Listing Details Here](#)

£200 sports bursary launched for Epsom & Ewell teenagers

13 April 2026



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has launched a new bursary scheme aimed at helping young people overcome financial barriers to taking part in sport.

The “Access to Activity” bursary offers up to £200 to help cover the cost of sports club memberships, subscriptions and match fees for 12-15-year-olds living in the borough. It is open to families where children receive free school meals, or where parents or guardians receive Universal Credit, as well as those with care experience.

Applications will open on Monday 30 March 2026 and run until 31 December 2026, or until the available funding has been allocated.

The council says the scheme forms part of its Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which aims to increase physical activity and reduce health inequalities locally. A range of local sports clubs are expected to take part, with more invited to join throughout the year.

Councillor Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee, said: “We know that for many families, the cost of taking part in sport can be a real obstacle. By helping to ease financial pressures, the Access to Activity bursary can help ensure 12-15-year-olds can take part in a sport they enjoy, feel included and thrive.”

He added that the scheme builds on the council’s earlier “Young Legends” programme, extending support to older children while continuing efforts to boost confidence, skills and social connections through sport.

How the scheme works

Eligible applicants must first arrange a taster session with a participating sports club. If they wish to continue, they then complete a council application form, after which the council will confirm next steps.

The grant is a one-off payment, with priority given to residents who have not received similar council funding for physical activity in the past five years. Successful applicants will then enrol directly with their chosen club.

The council notes that awards are discretionary, with no right of appeal for unsuccessful applications, and may be closed early if demand exceeds available funding.

Local sports clubs and community organisations are also encouraged to signpost eligible families to the scheme as part of a wider effort to increase participation in sport among young people in Epsom & Ewell.

Sam Jones - Reporter



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