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

Current
ISSN 2753-2771

Epsom racecourse caught short of loos on family day

27 August 2025

The foreground of the image is AI generated and is not intended to be an accurate reflection of events. The background of the image is Epsom Downs © Peter Trimming cc-by-sa/2.0 :: Geograph Britain and Ireland

---

Epsom rail commuters brace for fare increases

27 August 2025

Commuters travelling from Epsom to London terminals are set to pay significantly more for their journeys next year if government policy on rail fares continues unchanged. The current cost of an annual season ticket from Epsom is **£2,676**, but under the projected **5.8% rise in regulated fares for 2026–27**, that figure would climb by around **£155** to reach approximately **£2,831**.

The increase is tied to the government's formula of linking fares to July's Retail Price Index plus one percent. This comes at a time when services from Epsom to Waterloo remain reduced, with only two trains an hour since the Covid pandemic, despite a growing local population.

Epsom & Ewell's MP, **Helen Maguire**, has condemned the proposed rise. She said: *"It is incomprehensible that once again ordinary people in Epsom & Ewell are facing yet another eye-watering rail fare hike, whilst South Western Railway are struggling to go a day without major disruption. Rail passengers should not be paying more for a service that is not delivering."*

Maguire has launched a **petition** calling for the restoration of train frequency to pre-Covid levels, arguing that local commuters should not face higher costs for fewer services.

Her party colleague, **Paul Kohler MP**, the Liberal Democrat transport spokesperson, added that rising fares were "nothing short of ludicrous" and described the policy as "a slap in the face to ordinary people" at a time when punctuality is at its lowest level in years.

Critics point out that fare hikes of this scale risk pushing more people off the railway at a time when the government is urging a shift to more sustainable modes of transport. Meanwhile, passengers are grappling with frequent cancellations, driver shortages, and the delayed rollout of South Western Railway's Arterio fleet.

The Department for Transport has not yet confirmed the final figures or the exact implementation date, but increases are typically introduced in March. Unless ministers intervene, Epsom's commuters face paying hundreds more pounds next year for a service many feel has been in steady decline.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council debt update

27 August 2025

© 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

Councils across the UK have added a further £7.8bn to their collective borrowing in the last year, leaving local authorities with debts of £122.2bn – the equivalent of £1,791 for every resident. The figures, released by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government show that council debt rose seven per cent in a single year from £114.5bn in 2024.

For Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC), debt at the end of the 2024/25 financial year stood at £64.4m – or £785.80 per head of population. Surrey County Council's position is much larger in absolute terms, with borrowing of £1.07bn, equating to £873.69 per resident. EEBC's debt level is exactly the same as the previous year. "This is because the council has not taken on any additional borrowing, and no debt was paid between the two financial years", said Cllr **Neil Dallen** (RA Town Ward), Chair of EEBC's Strategy and Resources Committee.

Both figures sit below the UK-wide average of £1,791 per head but illustrate how deeply embedded borrowing now is in local government finance.

Why councils borrow

Local authorities are permitted to borrow to fund projects such as schools, leisure centres, theatres and housing. Many also borrowed heavily over the past decade to acquire commercial property – from office parks to shopping centres – intended to generate rental income to offset cuts to central government funding.

But short-term borrowing from central government has almost tripled in recent years, in some cases used to plug day-to-day budget gaps rather than pay for long-term investments. Jonathan Carr-West of the Local Government Information Unit warned the approach was "extremely worrying", likening it to "payday loans for local governments".

Surrey's position

Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, said that while the council had "a stable budget position", it was not immune to national financial pressures. He added: "All our key services – including social care, children's services, and highways maintenance – are facing higher demand, higher costs, and reduced funding. We must find ways to continue to support those residents who need us most, and to deliver the services that people rely on every day.

"As part of our budget setting process, the levels of balances and reserves have been determined to ensure that the level is justifiable and manageable in the context of local circumstances and risk."

Surrey's capital spending ambitions include new school places, highways upgrades, green initiatives, social care accommodation and library improvements, but the council has been forced to hold more expensive short-term debt while waiting for interest rates to fall.

National concerns

Warnings about the sustainability of council borrowing are not new. Six authorities – Croydon, Slough, Thurrock, Birmingham, Woking and Nottingham – have effectively declared bankruptcy in recent years, in some cases due to failed investment schemes. Thurrock alone faces a £469m funding black hole from collapsed solar farm projects.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has calculated that local authority "core spending power" remains 18% lower per resident than in 2010 despite some increases since the pandemic.

In June, Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer pledged an overhaul of the council grant system to simplify the funding formula and shift resources towards the most deprived areas. While welcomed by urban councils, rural authorities have raised concerns that redistribution could "overcompensate" and leave them exposed.

Cost of servicing debt

Separate analysis by the *Times* found that councils across Great Britain now spend the equivalent of a fifth of council tax revenues on servicing their debts. Annual interest costs are estimated at over £4bn – more than the combined national spend on emergency housing and libraries, culture and tourism.

The Local Government Association's finance spokesperson, Cllr Pete Marland, said council finances "remain in a fragile position", adding: "A sustainable, long-term financial model for local government must lead to all councils having adequate resources to meet growing cost and demand pressures."

The local picture

Epsom and Ewell's £64.4m debt may appear modest compared with Surrey County Council's £1.07bn, but both authorities

© 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

– like councils nationwide – must balance their budgets each year while contending with higher borrowing costs, reduced grant funding and rising demand for services.

With 30 more councils seeking exceptional financial support from government this year, including permission to use loans or asset sales to cover day-to-day spending, the pressure on local finances is set to remain intense.

The table below lists all of Surrey's districts highest debt first for 2024/2025:

Surrey's Districts	Total debt	Per person
Woking	£2,155,641,000	£20,601.33
Spelthorne	£1,065,761,000	£10,252.24
Runnymede	£597,712,000	£6,608.79
Guildford	£311,532,000	£2,088.35
Surrey Heath	£183,436,000	£1,990.24
Waverley	£140,286,000	£1,061.60
Tandridge	£92,816,000	£1,038.11
Mole Valley	£73,850,000	£836.68
Epsom & Ewell	£64,427,000	£785.80
Elmbridge	£48,624,000	£346.08
Reigate & Banstead	£5,000,000	£32.05

RNIB blind to the interests of its Epsom residents?

27 August 2025

The future of Swail House in Epsom, a landmark housing estate for visually impaired people, has become the subject of debate as residents and the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) present differing perspectives on redevelopment plans.

Swail House, opened in 1952 and named after Martha Swail, was one of the first estates in the UK designed specifically for blind people. With flats laid out to aid navigation, landscaped grounds, and facilities for social activities, it was hailed as a flagship initiative. Over time it has included social rooms, a restaurant, and a Chelsea Flower Show award-winning garden.

Residents' Concerns

Some residents and supporters have voiced fears that redevelopment will diminish the estate's original character and reduce the number of flats for visually impaired tenants. They argue that facilities such as communal spaces, gardens, and the on-site Epsom & Ewell Talking Newspaper (EETN) studio, which has operated from Swail House for over 40 years, are at risk.

Complaints have also been made about the consultation process, with claims that residents' questions have gone unanswered and that accessible formats, such as tactile scale models of proposed buildings, have not been provided.

Russell Bailey, Chair of the Swail House Association for the Visually Impaired, told the *Epsom and Ewell Times*:

"We are very keen for the development to go through. We are not so keen about the way it's being done – i.e. selling off land to pay for the new development – and we are certainly not keen with the fact that there's going to be fewer flats for visually impaired people. If the RNIB were more financially secure, they could have lent money against the value of the property, kept the land, and built more flats.

I don't think residents feel they have had the opportunity to input into how it's going to develop. One real concern is that there will be no communal lounge and no facilities for recording the Epsom newspaper which has been going for many years."

© 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

RNIB's Position

The RNIB, however, says it has engaged with tenants and will continue to do so. Kathryn Sherratt, RNIB's Chief Financial Officer, said:

"In March 2025, RNIB submitted an outline planning application to redevelop land at the back of Swail House to build 48 units, and we're currently waiting for a decision on the planning proposal.

RNIB has consulted with tenants on the planning proposal and will continue to share information and consult as the proposals develop, subject to the outcome of the planning decision."

Wider Concerns

Supporters of the estate point out that Swail House is more than just a residential complex. Its natural grounds provide quiet areas for guide dogs and for residents to experience sounds of nature in place of visual cues. Campaigners say this unique environment is at risk if large sections of the site are sold.

Local residents outside Swail House have also raised objections to the design and scale of the proposed development, citing environmental and aesthetic impacts.

Next Steps

The future of Swail House now rests with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's planning process. Whatever the outcome, the debate highlights tensions between the need to modernise housing stock and preserve the historic vision and facilities that made Swail House a pioneering model for visually impaired people more than 70 years ago.

Image: Swail House aerial – Google Maps.

Epsom schools celebrate GCSE results

27 August 2025

Epsom schools have been celebrating another strong year of GCSE results, with both Glyn School and Rosebery School reporting exceptional performances from the Class of 2025.

At **Glyn School**, 86% of students achieved grade 4 or above in English and Maths, with 66% reaching grade 5 or above. Disadvantaged pupils also excelled, with 84% attaining grade 4 or better in the core subjects. Among the top performers were Joshua Ellis (eight grade 9s and three grade 8s), William Unsworth (eight grade 9s), and Frederick Browning (eight grade 9s). Twins Hamish and Oscar Donald also secured a string of solid passes, while Chelsea Football Club player Reggie Walsh managed to complete seven GCSEs alongside making his debut for the club's first team.

Students reflected on the hard work behind their achievements, with Nicholas Cooper noting: *"It was hard work but worth it,"* and Joshua Ellis adding: *"I'm really happy with my results, and I want to thank my teachers for helping me achieve them."*

Headteacher Jo Garrod praised the determination of staff and pupils, while James Nicholson, CEO of GLF Schools, described the outcomes across the trust as "a fantastic set of GCSE results."

Meanwhile, at **Rosebery School**, the celebrations were equally jubilant. One in three exam entries was awarded a top grade 9 or 8, and half of all results fell between grades 9 and 7. Ninety-one per cent of students achieved grade 4 or higher in both English and Maths, and more than 80% reached grade 5 or above. In Maths and Science alone, Rosebery girls achieved 128 grade 9s.

Individual highlights included Iris Aryeetey and Eilidh McFarlane, who each achieved ten grade 9s, while twins Grace and Hannah Black amassed a remarkable 15 grade 9s and five grade 8s between them.

The school's overall performance set new records, with an average grade of 6.4 and an Attainment 8 score of 64. Headteacher David Lach said the results placed the cohort among the top 5% of schools nationally and praised both staff and pupils for their resilience during what he described as a "tragic and difficult academic year."

With both schools celebrating record results following last week's strong A Level outcomes, Epsom students appear to be ending the summer term on a high.

© 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

Related reports:

Epsom’s boys’ and girls’ schools celebrate A level results

Photo: Rosebery girls celebrate. Credit: GLF Schools

Local MP speaks out on Epsom Hospital’s bed-blocking

27 August 2025

Epsom & Ewell’s MP, Helen Maguire, has called for urgent action on social care after visiting Epsom Hospital’s accident and emergency department this week.

The Liberal Democrat MP met hospital staff and health professionals to discuss the forthcoming NHS 10 Year Plan. She said her visit underlined the “unimaginable pressures” faced by staff and patients as a result of overcrowding and long waits.

According to figures from Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust, the average stay in A&E at Epsom during 2024/25 was 5 hours and 41 minutes. For patients admitted, the average length of stay rises to nearly 10 days. Some patients with mental health needs remain in the emergency department for extended periods due to difficulties securing appropriate care.

Maguire said she was concerned at the sight of patients being treated in corridor beds — something NHS staff acknowledged as a consequence of space shortages and wider pressures across the system.

Welcoming the government’s forthcoming NHS 10 Year Plan, Maguire argued that improvements in social care were essential to tackle the problem of so-called “bed-blocking” — where patients who are medically fit to be discharged remain in hospital because no suitable care arrangements are available.

“Hospitals like Epsom, in my constituency, face unimaginable pressures as a result of years of mismanagement under the previous Conservative government,” she said. “If this Labour government are serious about ending the bed-blocking crisis and improving patient outcomes, they should listen to the Liberal Democrats and put social care front and centre of the NHS 10 Year Plan. We cannot fix our NHS unless we fix the crisis in social care.”

She also praised the efforts of Epsom and St Helier staff: “I want to pay tribute to all of the wonderful staff at Epsom Hospital, and across the Trust, who work tirelessly to deliver the best possible outcomes for patients under incredibly testing circumstances.”

Local pressures in national context

Epsom and St Helier hospitals have faced longstanding challenges with ageing estates, high demand, and difficulties in discharging patients into community or residential care. The Trust has been working on plans to modernise services, including proposals for a new specialist emergency care hospital in Sutton, while maintaining district services in Epsom and St Helier.

Nationally, the issue of delayed discharges has been identified by successive governments as a major factor behind hospital overcrowding. NHS England data for 2024 showed that more than 12,000 hospital beds across the country were occupied each day by patients who no longer needed acute care, but who could not be discharged safely.

Health experts say shortages of social care staff, funding pressures on local councils, and a rising elderly population have combined to make the problem worse. The government has promised its NHS 10 Year Plan will set out reforms aimed at shifting more care into the community and improving integration between health and social care.

Epsom’s boys’ and girls’ schools celebrate A level results

27 August 2025

© 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

Epsom's two prominent secondary schools, Rosebery and Glyn, are celebrating outstanding A-level and vocational qualification results, with this year's achievements marking new highs in performance and student destinations.

At Rosebery School, staff and students are celebrating the school's best-ever Key Stage 5 results. A-level attainment, vocational outcomes and overall achievement surpassed last year's record figures, with 36% of entries graded A* or A, 70% awarded between A* and B, and 88% graded A* to C. Vocational entries averaged a Distinction.

Among the highest achievers were Sadie Smith (A* in Maths, Further Maths, Physics and Chemistry – now heading to Durham University to study Mathematics), Bethany Hatton (A* in Biology, Chemistry and Maths – Biochemistry at Warwick University), and Raadhika Wenham (A* in Biology, Chemistry and Psychology – Zoology at the University of Nottingham). Other top performers included Jessica Sheehy, Dasha Botha, Lily Browning, Stacey Boamah, Kate Blackall and Esther Scott, each with two A*s, and Issy Carter, who achieved a Distinction* in both vocational qualifications.

Headteacher David Lach praised the "remarkable resilience, determination, and talent" of the Class of 2025, noting that students leave as "empowered, confident young women ready to make their mark on the world".

Glyn School also reported a strong year, with nearly half of all grades at A*–B. Standout results included Faris Al-Ugaily (A* in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics – Chemical Engineering at Imperial College London), Brody Skinner and Lewis Ashworth (both achieving A* in Physics, Further Maths, Maths and the EPQ, with Ashworth progressing to Automotive Engineering at Loughborough University), and Eleanor Weston (A* in Biology, A in Chemistry and Maths – Biomedical Science at Newcastle University). Olivia Buchanan (A* in Geography, A* in Psychology, A in Politics and A* in EPQ) will study Law at the University of Exeter, while Head Boy Donovan Livesey (A* in English Literature, A* in Sociology, A in Media Studies, A* in EPQ) will study Journalism at the University of Sheffield.

Glyn Headteacher Jo Garrod described the results as "a testament to hard work, determination, and the support of our exceptional staff" and said she was delighted to see so many students securing places at their chosen universities, apprenticeships and career pathways.

Both schools are part of the GLF Schools Multi-Academy Trust. Chief Executive James Nicholson congratulated staff, students and families, saying he was "delighted" with the impressive achievements across the board.

Garage Gives Ewell a Heart-Start

27 August 2025

A busy garage in Ewell that supports a prominent local charity now offers a rather special – and potentially life-saving – service.

Autotest MOT in Ruxley Lane recently celebrated its new car-servicing facility with an open day hosted by directors Stephen Hardie-East and Shelley Hofman, inviting customers, friends and neighbours. Guests enjoyed music, refreshments and a raffle, including a light-hearted competition to guess how many balloons were packed into a car. The event raised funds for the Epsom Medical Equipment Fund, a charity that since its launch in 1979 by Bess Harding has raised over £6 million to buy equipment for Epsom General Hospital that would not normally be funded by the National Health Service. Purchases have ranged from small items to major diagnostic machines.

As Autotest approaches its thirty-fifth year of trading, the charity has returned the gesture of support. It has donated a ZOLL brand defibrillator worth £2,300 to the garage. A defibrillator is a device that can deliver an electric shock to restart a person's heart in cardiac arrest. This model is designed for public use and gives clear spoken instructions, guiding an untrained person step-by-step through pad placement and giving real-time feedback on the quality of chest compressions. Bess Harding explained that it "verbally walks a rescuer through placing the pads and gives essential feedback on the quality of their compressions to give the best chance of surviving."

© 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

Stephen and Shelley, with Shelley being a qualified first-aider, said they were delighted to have the device on site and thanked the Epsom Medical Equipment Fund for providing it. The charity has also just purchased twenty-nine defibrillators for Epsom General Hospital.

Public access to defibrillators is seen nationally as a key factor in saving lives from cardiac arrest outside hospital. There are around 30,000 such incidents in the United Kingdom each year and fewer than ten per cent of people survive. Medical experts say the chances of survival more than double if a defibrillator is used quickly, ideally within five minutes, together with cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Each minute of delay can cut survival chances by up to ten per cent. Despite this, studies show that even when a defibrillator is located within 500 metres, it is only used in about one in ten cases, often because bystanders do not know where to find one or are uncertain how to operate it.

The UK's national database, known as The Circuit, maps the location of defibrillators so ambulance services can direct people to them during emergencies. There are now more than 70,000 devices registered, with a target of 100,000. Health charities estimate that if public awareness, training and willingness to use defibrillators were more widespread, an extra 1,000 lives could be saved in England each year.

In Epsom and Ewell, the borough council has worked with the Community Heartbeat Trust to install twelve public access defibrillators at locations including Ewell's Market Place, Horton Pharmacy and Ruxley Lane. The new unit at Autotest adds another publicly accessible location, well-placed in a busy part of the borough, and comes with the reassurance of staff familiar with first aid.

More information about EMEF on its website: emef.org.uk

Image: Bess Harding of EMEG gives defibrillator to Stephen Hardie-East of Autotest

---

Banned fan cheers on Epsom and Ewell FC from tree

27 August 2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

© 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

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

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

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

---

Epsom Mother and Daughter join British Army together

27 August 2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Army Foundation College takes two cohorts of Junior Soldiers each year, offering either a 49-week course or a shorter 23-week course.

For more information, resources and how to join junior training at AFC Harrogate click here.

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

© 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

Ewell?

27 August 2025

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

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

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

What CGRs Do

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

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

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

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

Why Epsom & Ewell Is Doing a CGR Now

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

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

The LGR Position – Three Unitary Councils Proposed

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

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

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

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

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

The Link Between LGR and CGR

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

© 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

strengthened.

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

Have Your Say

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

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

---

What has kept us well in Surrey through the ages?

27 August 2025

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

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

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

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

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

Together, they will develop:

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

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

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

How to Get Involved

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

© 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

autumn

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

About INYBB

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

See HERE more news from the Surrey History Centre

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

Carers respite at the Crossroads in Surrey?

27 August 2025

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

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

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

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

> *"This abrupt U-turn not only breaks the promise made to unpaid carers, it also places already exhausted individuals in an impossible position," said **Terry Hawkins**, CEO of Crossroads Care Surrey. "We know just how vital these respite breaks are for carers' mental and physical health… the loss of this service will undoubtedly place an even greater burden on the already stretched GPs and hospitals across the county."*

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

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

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

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

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

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

© 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

said Cllr Mooney.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For further details, visit: crossroadscaresurrey.org.uk

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

Surrey MPs slam SEND profiteers

27 August 2025

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

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

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

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

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

Surrey's six Liberal Democrat MPs – Al Pinkerton, Chris Coghlan, Helen Maguire, Monica Harding, Will Forster, and Zöe Franklin – have now called for **a legal cap on profits** made by private SEND providers. They propose a maximum margin

© 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

of **8%**, aligning with figures cited by the Office for National Statistics for average business profitability. The same threshold has also been suggested by the Education Secretary in the context of children's social care reform.

In a joint statement, the MPs said:

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

"We are deeply concerned to see this greedy profiteering from private equity firms, especially when parents across Surrey are raising serious concerns about standards and support at some schools, including Bramley Hill."

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

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

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

Image: cc Bruce Matsunaga. Licence details

Leatherhead railway station gets access upgrade

27 August 2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

© 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

in these areas has also been upgraded.

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

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

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

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

Image: MP Helen Maguire opens Leatherhead upgraded railway station

---

Epsom charity backs Ukrainian wheelchair athletes in world championship

27 August 2025

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

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

Founded in early 2022 by Ukrainian and British friends, Surrey Stands with Ukraine has grown to become one of the UK's most active grassroots support groups for Ukraine. To date, the charity has delivered more than **£4 million** in humanitarian aid, including over **10,000 mobility aids**, **40+ tonnes of medical supplies**, and **140 aid vehicles** to those in need across the country. It also funds Ukrainian NGOs and institutions, with a strong focus over the past 18 months on **rehabilitation from physical and psychological trauma**.

Now, that mission expands to the world of sport.

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

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

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

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

Event Details

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

© 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

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

Contact
Email: surreystandswithukraine@gmail.com
Website: surreystandswithukraine.org.uk
Phone: +44 7920 008048

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

Meet Two of the Athletes: Stories of Courage

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

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

© 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