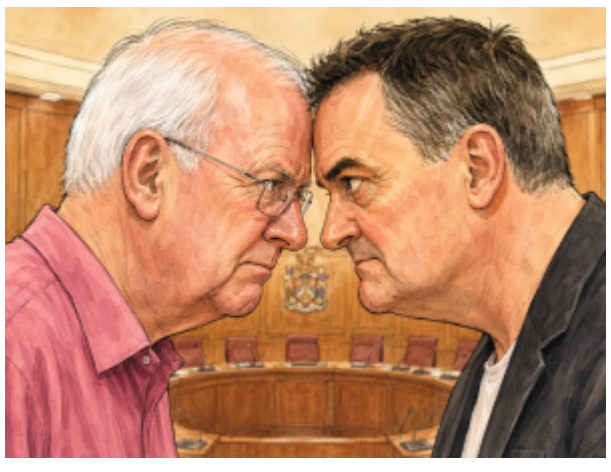
EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

29th October 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

The cost so far to the Epsom taxpayer of Cllr Neil Dallen’s “arrogance”.

28 October 2026



£8,567 complaint bill prompts calls for Dallen to withdraw

External fees arising from Cllr **Neil Dallen**’s standards complaint against Cllr Chris Ames have reached £8,567.64, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has disclosed. The figure excludes the uncalculated cost of council officers’ time and comes as two councillors call for the complaint to be withdrawn.

Cllr **Alex Coley** (Independent Ruxley) and Cllr **Steven McCormick** (Conservative Woodcote and Langley) were the only councillors to respond by publication to an Epsom and Ewell Times enquiry asking other members whether Cllr Dallen should withdraw. Both said he should.

Cllr **Dallen** (Residents’ Association Town), responding separately through the Council’s communications team, said the standards process should be allowed to run its course without external pressure.

What the Council has disclosed

In a Freedom of Information response dated 22 October, the Council identified two invoices, for £5,568.14 and £2,999.50, relating to the complaint. Understood to be the fees of an “independent” investigator and a legal expert. Together they total £8,567.64.

The request covered costs incurred from receipt of the complaint to 27 September, including the standards hearing on 22 September and its adjournment. The disclosed figure is therefore a snapshot of invoiced costs within that period, rather than a final bill for the proceedings. The Council said both invoices remained unpaid at the time of the request.

It withheld supplier names, descriptions of the work, billing periods and itemised fees, citing the Freedom of Information Act’s commercial-interests exemption. It argued that disclosure could prejudice suppliers’ competitive positions and the Council’s ability to negotiate for similar services. Its response did not clarify the VAT treatment of the disclosed totals.

The Council holds no separately calculated figure for officers’ time spent handling the complaint, including the Monitoring Officer’s involvement. Nor does it hold separately recorded expenditure for the September hearing. It also said it held no approved budget, purchase order or current estimate for further work beyond the invoices already received.

The £8,567.64 therefore does not capture the full resources devoted to the case.

Putting the bill in perspective

Against the Council’s approved 2026/27 net budget requirement of £12.038 million, the external invoices represent approximately 0.071 per cent — about £1 in every £1,405 of that budget.

The borough council’s own annual Council Tax charge for a Band D home is £239.85. The invoices are equivalent to almost 36 households’ annual payments of that borough share.

The complete Band D bill, including Surrey County Council and Surrey Police, is £2,530.84. Measured against that figure, the invoices equal approximately 3.4 households’ entire annual bills. The distinction matters because most of the Council Tax collected locally funds the county council and police, rather than EEBC.

Spread across the borough’s Council Tax base of 34,083.2 Band D equivalent properties, the disclosed external fees amount to approximately 25p per Band D equivalent property. These comparisons put the scale of the spending in context; they do not establish whether pursuing the complaint represents good value.

The Rainbow exchange behind the complaint

The complaint arose from the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting on 27 January 2026. Cllr **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) questioned the confidentiality surrounding an urgent decision making up to £500,000 available for repairs at the Rainbow Leisure Centre.

Cllr Dallen had supported the urgent decision and was chairing the meeting at which it was questioned. Ames wanted to know who had decided that the public interest justified withholding the decision document.

During the confrontation, Dallen asserted: “It does say in the Constitution that this is the chairman’s meeting”. He subsequently declared: “It is my meeting”. Ames called him “arrogant” and alleged a “cover-up”.

© 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

Ames later told EET that he regretted calling Dallen arrogant and should instead have raised a formal point of order about Dallen continuing to chair the item.

EET questions the constitutional basis for describing a committee meeting as belonging to its chairman. A chair has powers to control debate, but that does not resolve whether those powers were properly exercised to stop questions about a decision in which the chair himself had participated.

The procedural issue was allowed to become a personal confrontation. Ames did not formally raise the point of order; Dallen did not hand the chair to his vice-chair while his own involvement was considered; and the Monitoring Officer did not guide the meeting towards resolving that issue. No other member intervened to secure that procedural clarification.

An external investigator subsequently recommended a finding that Ames had failed to show respect. That recommendation is not a determination by the hearing panel. The September hearing adjourned after challenges concerning the Council's complaints arrangements, without deciding whether Ames had breached the Code of Conduct.

Two councillors call for withdrawal

Cllr McCormick told EET: "Yes, I believe Cllr Dallen should immediately withdraw his complaint."

He said Ames's questions were legitimate and that robust questioning and open debate were essential to democratic accountability.

"As Chair of Strategy and Resources, one should have thick enough skin to take challenging scrutiny and forthright remarks from fellow councillors on the chin," he said.

"At a time when public finances are under pressure, continuing to waste taxpayers' money on this matter is completely unjustified."

Cllr Coley was similarly critical: "Yes, Cllr Dallen should give up the continued waste of tax payers money, pursuing a fruitless endeavour to seek satisfaction over hurty words. Cut and thrust is nothing new in democracy."

Coley also reported an earlier conversation with Dallen: "I exchanged words with Cllr Dallen last month asking why he would not withdraw from this damaging process and he claimed that it was Cllr Ames that was keeping the matter going."

He added: "I put it to you that if the complaint were withdrawn there would be nothing to keep going."

EET asked both Dallen and Ames to comment on the suggestion that Ames was keeping the matter going. Cllr Ames responded to this suggestion:

"To suggest that I am keeping this farce going is ludicrous. It is Neil Dallen who launched this vendetta and has the power to stop it, to prevent any further waste of residents' money. But Dallen and indeed the administration as a whole are determined to punish me for calling out how he tried to cover up his own cover-up of the Rainbow Centre scandal."

Cllr Dallen has responded "I refer you to the response received earlier" (the statement reported below received from the Council's communications team). He did not deny the comment attributed to him by Coley.

Dallen says process should run its course

Asked separately whether the disclosed costs made withdrawal appropriate, Dallen supplied the following statement through the Council administration communications team rather than from his own email account:

"Complaints made under the Member Code of Conduct should be considered fairly, impartially and in accordance with the Council's adopted arrangements.

"The matters to which your questions relate form part of an ongoing Standards process that has not yet concluded. It would not be appropriate to comment on matters that may fall to be considered by the Standards Hearing Sub-Committee, as this carries a risk of undermining the integrity and perceived fairness of the process.

"The process should be allowed to run its course without external pressure being placed on any of those involved. The appropriate forum for considering these matters is the Standards process itself, not the media. Until that process has concluded, I do not intend to comment further."

That response does not offer to withdraw the complaint. With external invoices already exceeding £8,500, internal costs uncalculated and no estimate disclosed for further work, the question remains whether continuing these proceedings is a proportionate use of public money.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council will be no more in less than six months time. Neither Ames nor Dallen have any local government elected mandate thereafter. Some may think the head of steam at the January meeting was precipitated by Cllr Dallen's own ineptitude in the chair or the silencing by him of dissent or both.

Despite persistent efforts the Epsom and Ewell Times still has received no satisfactory answers from the Council as to whether its own officers' negligence allowed the dilapidations bill for the Rainbow Centre to accumulate unaddressed for 20 years. And maybe that is really at the heart of this matter.

Sam Jones – Reporter



© 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

- Time for Cllr Dallen to drop his taxpayer funded complaint? — 23 September 2026
- Epsom & Ewell Council refuses to explain complaints disparity — 21 August 2026
- “It’s my meeting”: Cllr Dallen stops questions about his role in alleged Rainbow “cover-up” — 23 February 2026

See editorial Dallen’s Dilemma

Mayor’s casting vote sends Epsom and Ewell Local Plan changes to consultation

28 October 2026



Epsom and Ewell councillors have agreed by the narrowest possible margin to consult residents on proposed changes to the borough’s Local Plan, after a contentious extraordinary council meeting yesterday evening.

The vote was tied at 13–13 before Mayor Cllr **Lucie McIntyre** (RA West Ewell and daughter of Cllr Dallen) used her casting vote in favour. The decision allows consultation on the Planning Inspector’s proposed main modifications; it does not adopt the Local Plan or grant planning permission for individual developments.

The changes include additional Green Belt sites at Downs Farm and Priest Hill. An amendment seeking a formal council objection to Green Belt development was ruled out of order by the Mayor and was not put to a vote, although councillors were shown its wording and later referred to it during the discussion.

Why was the amendment ruled out?

Cllr **Kieran Persand** (Conservative Horton) submitted the amendment, seconded by Cllr **Shanice Goldman** (Conservative Nonsuch).

An earlier version supplied to Epsom and Ewell Times would have retained the recommendation to hold the consultation, while asking the council to oppose the proposed release of Green Belt land at Priest Hill, Downs Farm and Horton Farm. It also called for further scrutiny of brownfield alternatives and for the council’s objections to be communicated to the Inspector.

After the version before the meeting had been displayed, the Mayor ruled it out of order. She described her decision as procedural, rather than a judgement on the merits of the proposed changes.

Her stated reason was that the item before councillors was concerned with whether to consult on the proposed modifications. She said that, under that item, the council could not determine whether the evidence base was adequate because that went beyond the scope of the recommendation being considered. She said individual councillors and residents could object to allocations through the proposed consultation and ask the Inspector to consider whether they were justified.

The distinction appears to have been between allowing the Inspector’s proposed changes to go out to consultation and adopting a formal council position on whether particular sites were justified. The Mayor did not give a detailed explanation at the meeting of why the latter could not be added to the former as an amendment.

Persand challenged the ruling and asked for an opportunity to revise his amendment. The Mayor said her ruling was final and declined to adjourn the meeting. She indicated that another amendment could be considered if it was ready in writing; later, when Cllr **Alex Coley** (Independent Ruxley) asked whether he could put one forward verbally, she said it had to be written.

Persand said he had followed the procedure suggested to him and had corresponded with officers before the meeting. The Mayor later said there had been exchanges about suggested changes but that she had not had time to respond to the final version, which she said arrived at about 3pm that day. Persand disputed that account.

Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Horton) argued that the constitution allowed amendments to be amended. “I do not understand how you could preside over a matter of such import” and allow available procedures to be blocked, she told the Mayor.

© 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

Housing and the Green Belt

Persand said residents wanted councillors to protect the Green Belt, but insisted he recognised the need for housing.

“I was born and raised in this borough. I’ve lived here my entire life. I work in London alongside my council responsibilities. Yet I still can’t afford to buy a home in the very place I grew up,” he said.

He added: “Our green spaces provide amazing opportunities for biodiversity and carbon storage. And once they are developed, they are gone for generations.”

He said he could not support consultation on the plan in its current form.

Muir said the Conservative amendment would not have stopped consultation. “Our residents have a democratic right to be heard,” she said, but the council should also submit a corporate objection to the Inspector. She argued that opportunities in the town centre and commercial areas should be maximised “before a single blade of grass is cut”.

Goldman questioned why Downs Farm had previously been considered unsustainable but was now included. “As far as I’m aware, nothing has changed. No infrastructure has changed,” she said.

“An impossible dilemma”

Cllr **Steven McCormick** (Conservative Woodcote and Langley Vale), a former chair of the planning policy committee, said he had expected the amendment to be debated and was disappointed that Persand had not been able to revise it.

He challenged the position that councillors could not alter the schedule before consultation and argued that presenting it as an unchangeable document reduced Full Council to “an administrative rubber stamp”.

McCormick also criticised the choice he believed councillors faced if they rejected consultation:

“The choice presented to this chamber is accept the Green Belt releases inside the plan, or developers will take them outside the plan on appeal. That is an impossible dilemma, not a genuine democratic choice.”

He said elected members had been bypassed while additional sites were evaluated and argued that urban alternatives had not been properly considered. He added that the final decision on adoption belonged to Full Council: if the Green Belt releases remained when the plan returned, he would vote against adoption.

His legal interpretation was disputed by the position set out to councillors: that the Inspector’s proposed main modifications had to be consulted on as presented.

A voice for residents

Cllr **Peter O’Donovan** (RA Ewell Court), chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee, proposed the consultation. He said councillors were being asked neither to add sites to nor remove them from the plan.

“We’re not asking you to comment on the local plan, what you like, what you don’t like. Are you happy to approve a public consultation?” he said. Responses would go to the Inspector, who would produce a final report before a subsequent council decision on adoption.

Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) urged residents to make their arguments through the consultation. He said many emails received from residents contained well-reasoned points about sites, but the Inspector would consider whether the modifications should change.

“What we can do tonight is we can start this consultation and give our residents a voice, give ourselves a voice.”

Woodbridge said he did not think the council should formally object while also acting as facilitator of the consultation. “I don’t think we should simultaneously say, but we’ve already made our mind up,” he said.

Cllr **Neil Dallen** (RA Town) rejected the suggestion that RA councillors had asked for Downs Farm and Priest Hill to be added. “We put forward a plan without it in,” he said. The Inspector had decided to include the sites in the proposed modifications, and residents and councillors could respond.

Divisions over procedure

Cllr **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch) said he would support consultation “through gritted teeth and under protest”, despite opposing the additional sites. “I hate the local plan with a passion,” he said, but feared that voting against consultation would leave the borough in a worse position.

Cllr **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) said he supported housing, including on Green Belt land if necessary, and would have opposed Persand’s amendment. Nevertheless, he could not support the recommendation because the amendment had not been debated and voted on. He described the handling of the meeting as “completely undemocratic”.

Cllr **James Lawrence** (Independent College) said he supported building at Priest Hill and Downs Farm because housing was needed. But he criticised the opportunities councillors had been given to influence site selection and said he would not support the recommendation.

Coley said councillors had not received all the information they needed, referring to correspondence and material exchanged during the examination. The Mayor said the information required to be published had been included.

O’Donovan said that, if consultation were refused, the matter would return to the Inspector for a decision. He urged councillors to let residents have their say and said consultation was expected to start on 3 November.

Following the Inspector’s consideration of responses, councillors are expected to be asked whether to adopt the plan.

© 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

O'Donovan said that decision would probably come in March, shortly before Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is replaced by East Surrey Council.

Sam Jones – Reporter



.

Related reports

East Surrey seeks planning head start as Epsom faces two Local Plans at once

Epsom and Ewell's New Local Plan sites advance amid clash over scrutiny and cost

Bitter exchanges in Epsom and Ewell Council Chamber on Local Plan oversight

Whose Local Plan is it anyway?

Fresh Local Plan row as residents challenge legality of latest Epsom and Ewell consultation

Did Epsom and Ewell councillors approve more Green Belt release?

Image: McCormick speaks, Coley to his right and Goldman to his left. Woodbridge in foreground. EEBC YouTube

---

Surrey Police to crack down on illegal e-scooters

28 October 2026



Surrey Police has launched a county-wide crackdown on illegal e-bikes and e-scooters, with seized machines set to be destroyed under a tougher enforcement policy from next month.

The new operation, called Operation Scramble, will see roads policing officers working alongside local Safer Neighbourhood Teams to stop riders suspected of using illegal or dangerously modified machines, or riding in an antisocial or reckless manner.

Police say they have already seized 136 e-bikes and e-scooters in Surrey during 2026, compared with 127 during the whole of last year.

Where the age of riders has been established, Surrey Police says 36 per cent have been children or teenagers.

Chief Superintendent Graham Barnett, head of Surrey and Sussex Police's operations and protective security command, said illegal use had become a growing problem.

"The illegal use of e-bikes and e-scooters is a growing problem in Surrey, and we will tirelessly pursue riders who are causing fear and nuisance in our county," he said.

"Many of the reports of illegal e-bikes relate to criminal activity."

He added that the force would combine enforcement with education, particularly because of the number of younger riders involved.

From next month Surrey Police says its policy will be for illegal e-bikes and e-scooters seized by officers to be sent for destruction.

The distinction between an ordinary legal e-bike and an illegal machine can sometimes be misunderstood.

A road-legal electrically assisted pedal cycle, or EAPC, must have pedals capable of propelling it, an electric motor with a maximum continuous rated output of no more than 250 watts and electrical assistance which cuts out once the bicycle reaches 15.5mph.

Riders must be at least 14 years old. A compliant EAPC can be used without a driving licence, vehicle registration, road tax or motor insurance and is generally treated in law in the same way as an ordinary bicycle.

However, a machine capable of being powered electrically beyond 15.5mph, or fitted with a motor exceeding the

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

ISSN 2753-2771

permitted continuous rating, does not qualify simply because it looks like a bicycle.

It is instead treated as a motor vehicle and, for lawful road use, would need the appropriate registration, insurance and driving licence requirements to be met. An approved motorcycle helmet may also be required.

The Government considered increasing the normal e-bike power limit from 250 watts to 500 watts in 2024, together with relaxing rules governing throttle-controlled “twist and go” bikes. The proposals were abandoned in January 2025 after most of the main stakeholder organisations responding to the consultation opposed them and the Department for Transport concluded there was insufficient evidence to justify the change. The 250-watt limit therefore remains.

The position for privately owned e-scooters is more restrictive.

They are legally classed as motor vehicles and cannot ordinarily be used on public roads, pavements or other public places. Special regulations allow e-scooters hired as part of authorised Government trials to be used in participating areas, but there is no such rental trial operating in Surrey.

Official casualty figures suggest the issue is not confined to nuisance complaints.

Department for Transport statistics published in July show there were 1,377 reported collisions involving e-scooters in Great Britain during 2025, resulting in 1,477 casualties. Ten people were killed, all of them e-scooter riders, while an estimated 484 people were seriously injured.

Thirteen casualties from e-scooter collisions were recorded within the Surrey Police area during 2025.

Surrey Police says that since October 2025 there have also been two collisions resulting in serious injury in the county involving e-scooters and three road traffic collisions involving e-bikes.

Concern about illegal powered bikes and scooters has already featured in local policing priorities elsewhere in Surrey. Earlier this month Surrey Police identified illegal use of e-scooters and bikes around Frimley Green Recreation Ground as an antisocial behaviour priority, saying officers could use powers including vehicle seizure as well as traffic offence reports.

There is a separate safety concern surrounding poorly manufactured or modified electric bikes.

In March 2025 Surrey County Council reported that an unsafe battery fitted to a converted e-bike had caused a fire at a Surrey home while being charged. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and Trading Standards subsequently secured the removal of the particular battery from sale on Amazon.

Government safety advice warns that counterfeit, damaged or badly modified batteries and incompatible chargers can increase the risk of lithium-ion battery fires.

Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend said complaints about e-bikes and e-scooters had repeatedly been raised during her office’s Policing Your Community roadshow over the summer.

“They told us loud and clear they have had enough and we have listened to those concerns,” she said.

“The result is this operation which aims to crackdown on illegal riding and take these often-dangerous machines off our streets for good. We know that their use can often be linked to wider criminal activity and the message is clear – we want to make Surrey an illegal e-bike and e-scooter free county.”

Chief Superintendent Barnett said: “From next month our policy is clear: all illegal e-bikes and e-scooters we seize will be sent for destruction.

“I hope this provides direct reassurance to Surrey residents that we are listening to your concerns around illegal and reckless riding and taking decisive action.”

Sam Jones – Reporter



.

Related Reports

- Back to Westminster with local priorities in focus – 18 September 2026. Helen Maguire MP said she would host a roundtable of police chiefs to press for clearer Government guidance on e-scooters. epsomandewelltimes.com
- January crime and safety round-up – 4 June 2026. Surrey Police identified antisocial use of motorbikes and e-bikes as a local policing priority in Epsom and Ewell. epsomandewelltimes.com
- The New Year view from Westminster – 2 February 2026. Helen Maguire highlighted constituents’ concerns about illegal and unsafe e-scooter use and called for a more coordinated response. epsomandewelltimes.com
- Surrey services get fire e-bike removed from Amazon – 13 March 2025. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and Trading Standards acted after an unsafe e-bike battery caused a house fire. epsomandewelltimes.com

Image: “idealised” e-bike and e-scooter in Epsom High Street (Google street view)

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

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

29th October 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Homelessness pressures remain a costly challenge for Epsom and Ewell

28 October 2026



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is expecting its spending on temporary accommodation to significantly exceed its 2026/27 budget as councillors heard that homelessness remains one of the authority's biggest financial pressures.

The Council's Community and Wellbeing Committee, meeting on 6th October, unanimously noted measures being taken to contain the costs and agreed that government homelessness funding, newly announced rough-sleeping funding and a 4% inflationary increase in the nightly-paid accommodation budget would be used to meet the additional expenditure.

The Council's report says it continues to incur "significant financial outlay" in meeting its duties under the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, with expenditure expected significantly to exceed the budget set for the current financial year.

Introducing the discussion, committee chairman Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (Residents' Association, Ewell Village) described homelessness as "one of the biggest problems facing the council at the present time".

Strategic Housing Manager Arjan de Jong told councillors that high living costs, rising rents and limited access to affordable housing continued to create "significant headwinds".

He said the Council was placing increasing emphasis on preventing homelessness before temporary accommodation became necessary, helping households into the private rented sector and moving people out of temporary accommodation more quickly.

The authority is also expanding its private-sector leasing arrangements and has delivered accommodation through the Government-backed Local Authority Housing Fund.

Mr de Jong said work was already under way with neighbouring councils on a joint homelessness action plan for the new East Surrey authority which takes over from Epsom and Ewell Borough Council next April.

Homeless approaches up sharply

Cllr Woodbridge told the meeting that approaches to the housing service had increased by around 80% over the previous two years, but argued that the increase had not translated into anything approaching the same rise in placements or expenditure because of the work undertaken by housing officers.

He said the financial pressure would have been "a lot worse" without the team's efforts.

That reflects figures reported earlier this summer showing that homelessness applications rose by 82.6% during 2025/26 to 623. Epsom & Ewell Times reported in July that the Council had recorded a £410,000 adverse budget variance for that year, driven principally by temporary accommodation costs.

The underlying difficulty is not new. In 2023/24 the Council spent £1.665 million on nightly-paid accommodation. At that time more than 90 households were being accommodated in expensive nightly-paid properties outside the borough because there was insufficient temporary housing locally.

Section 21 evictions falling

Cllr **Rob Geleit** (Labour, Court) asked whether the Renters' Rights Act was already affecting homelessness.

Mr de Jong said there had been an increase in approaches before the legislation took effect, which officers believed was partly caused by landlords leaving the market.

Since then, however, there had been "a significant, significant drop off" in approaches resulting from private landlords ending tenancies through no-fault or Section 21 evictions.

At this early stage, he said, "the intention of the Act looks like it's having the intended consequences".

The other main pressures were households being asked to leave accommodation provided by family or friends and people fleeing violence.

Preventing homelessness before placement

Cllr **Christine Howells** (Independent, Nonsuch) questioned what happened when somebody presented as homeless and whether accommodation was provided immediately.

Mr de Jong explained that an emergency out-of-hours placement could be made for one night, after which the person

© 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

would undergo a full assessment.

During office hours, officers would first seek to prevent homelessness — potentially by talking to landlords or relatives, looking at whether short-term accommodation could be maintained, or helping the applicant secure somewhere in the private rented sector through schemes such as the Council's rent deposit programme.

Only where those avenues failed would the case move towards a formal homelessness application and assessment of the statutory tests.

People placed while their case was investigated could remain accommodated while exercising rights of review against an adverse decision.

The Council also works with the East Surrey Outreach Service on rough sleeping, while members of the public concerned about somebody sleeping rough can report the case through StreetLink.

Extra staff seek cheaper alternatives

The Council has bolstered its relatively small housing team.

A rent-deposit role has been refocused as a rent-deposit and move-on post, tasked particularly with finding private landlords willing to house households currently in temporary accommodation.

Another officer is concentrating on hospital discharges, where relatively small numbers of cases can nevertheless consume significant resources because of the need to coordinate physical health, mental health, care and housing services.

An additional move-on post is specifically concentrating on households in nightly-paid accommodation — the most expensive form used by the Council.

Mr de Jong said affordable housing was so scarce that households could otherwise remain in temporary accommodation for "a considerable amount of time".

Prison releases and violence

Cllr **Phil Neale** (Residents' Association, Cuddington) asked whether the early release of prisoners was likely to add to homelessness pressures.

Mr de Jong said no effect had been identified at that stage. He added that probation and other statutory agencies have a "Duty to Refer" someone threatened with homelessness to the relevant council rather than simply leaving an individual to seek help after release.

Cllr **Rachel King** (Residents' Association, Town) also asked about people fleeing violence.

Mr de Jong stressed that this was not limited to violence against women and girls or domestic abuse and could include gang-related violence.

People fleeing violence may apply to a council outside the area in which they normally live. He said Epsom's proximity to London might consequently result in people approaching the borough from elsewhere.

Officers would take account of the location of alleged perpetrators or their associates when deciding where it was safe to accommodate someone.

East Surrey changes the map

The discussion also provided a glimpse of how homelessness administration could change when Epsom and Ewell Borough Council disappears next April.

Cllr Woodbridge asked what would happen to the concept of a local connection once East Surrey became the housing authority.

Mr de Jong said housing-allocation policies could continue separately for up to two years while the predecessor councils' systems were aligned.

Homelessness law would operate differently: from vesting day, the authority to which somebody applied would be East Surrey rather than Epsom and Ewell.

That could also produce savings. The larger authority might have temporary accommodation available elsewhere within East Surrey which Epsom and Ewell does not currently use and which could be cheaper than nightly-paid placements sourced outside the borough.

Mr de Jong cautioned that the details remained "a work in progress".

Government support

The financial pressures are not being met by council taxpayers alone.

For 2026/27 the Government has consolidated several previous funding streams into its Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant. Nationally, almost **£885 million** is being distributed under the scheme, with **£529,219 allocated specifically to Epsom and Ewell**.

The grant combines former homelessness prevention, rough sleeping and domestic abuse funding and also contains money associated with the homelessness consequences of the Renters' Rights Act.

Its purpose includes helping councils discharge their statutory homelessness duties, fund prevention work and staffing, and reduce rough sleeping. Government rules generally restrict its use for the direct ongoing cost of temporary accommodation, although transitional exceptions apply during 2026/27 to certain accommodation already being provided.

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

ISSN 2753-2771

The Government says the consolidated grant across England has been increased substantially as part of its multi-year local government settlement, with a wider package of approximately £2.4 billion planned over the spending-review period for homelessness, rough sleeping and domestic abuse activity.

At Epsom and Ewell, councillors unanimously noted the proposed use of the grant alongside recently announced Rough Sleeper Programme funding and the 4% uplift in the nightly-paid accommodation budget to address the current-year pressure.

Urgent housing decision

The committee also formally noted an urgent decision taken earlier in the year to appoint Turning Point to provide independent reviews of adverse homelessness decisions.

Cllr Woodbridge explained that applicants rejected for housing assistance have a statutory right to seek a review. Without a review service in place, the Council risked being unable properly to determine such challenges, with potentially costly consequences.

The appointment had therefore been made urgently rather than waiting several months for the next committee meeting.

Cllr Geleit welcomed the documentation, saying it was “nice to see a well-presented urgent decision in paperwork”.

The committee unanimously noted the decision.

Closing the meeting, Cllr Woodbridge observed that it was possible — although not certain — that this might prove to be the final meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Community and Wellbeing Committee before local government reorganisation.

With East Surrey taking responsibility for housing from 1st April 2027, he said it was difficult to predict how much meaningful business would remain for the committee in its final months.

Sam Jones – Reporter



.

Related Reports

- Epsom and Ewell Council admits homelessness pressure is “getting worse” despite action: 17 July 2026
- Micro-homes for a macro-problem?: on the Council’s proposed temporary homes for local families
- Epsom and Ewell appeal to owners of empty homes: 4 March 2025
- Epsom and Ewell Press Release on Homelessness: detailed background on temporary accommodation, housing shortages and Council costs

Image: Geograph Britain and Ireland | Licence details Creator: Evelyn Simak | Credit: Evelyn Simak Copyright: © Evelyn Simak and licenced for reuse under cc-by-sa/2.0

Epsom Hospital added to app helping visually impaired bus users

28 October 2026



Epsom Hospital has been added to a Surrey scheme using smartphone technology to help blind and partially sighted people travel more independently by public transport.

Surrey County Council has expanded free access to the Aira Explorer app to 13 hospitals and healthcare sites across the county, including Epsom Hospital.

The move follows earlier stages of the scheme reported by the Epsom & Ewell Times. Surrey became the first UK local

© 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

authority to introduce the service at bus stations in June 2025, before it was subsequently extended to Epsom Station and other rail and bus interchanges later that year.

A helping eye on the journey

Aira Explorer allows a visually impaired traveller to make a video call from their smartphone to a trained visual interpreter.

The interpreter can see through the phone's camera and give spoken guidance to the user. At the newly included healthcare locations, the service is intended to help people navigate between nearby bus stops and hospital entrances.

Use of the app at the designated Surrey locations is free, with the scheme funded by Surrey County Council from its allocation under the Government's Bus Service Improvement Fund.

Alongside Epsom Hospital, the healthcare locations covered are Royal Surrey County Hospital, Frimley Park Hospital, Ashford Hospital, St Peter's Hospital, East Surrey Hospital, Farnham Hospital, Woking Community Hospital, Molesey Hospital, Walton Community Hospital, Sunbury Health Centre, Leatherhead Community Hospital and Cranleigh Village Hospital.

The app also remains available at major bus stations and interchanges in Guildford, Redhill, Staines and Woking and at bus stops serving railway stations including Epsom, Caterham, Dorking, Oxted, Leatherhead, Reigate and Horley.

From Epsom Station to Epsom Hospital

EET reported in June 2025 on the introduction of Aira at Guildford, Redhill, Staines and Woking bus stations.

The scheme was expanded later in the year, with Epsom Station among the locations added. The latest development therefore extends the same type of assistance to another important destination for local residents.

Cllr Matt Furniss, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said the council was aware that using buses and navigating transport facilities could be difficult for people with visual impairments.

He said the hospital expansion was designed to assist passengers travelling by bus for important appointments and added: "We're keen to make bus travel accessible for everyone and hope this expansion will support people to travel confidently and independently."

The council says the initiative forms part of wider spending on bus services, including £6.3 million for additional ultra-low and zero-emission community transport minibuses, £9 million for bus priority measures and £1.4 million for improved passenger information at bus stops.

Disability groups welcome expansion

Nikki Roberts, chief executive of Surrey Coalition of Disabled People, welcomed the extension, saying free access to the service at key locations would be "hugely beneficial" to members with sight loss travelling around Surrey.

Dave Smith, Engagement Manager for South East England at sight-loss charity Thomas Pocklington Trust, said the app was particularly useful if a traveller became disorientated or encountered unexpected roadworks or obstructions.

Clare Burgess, chief executive of Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey, also welcomed the expansion, describing Aira as a useful tool for blind and partially sighted people travelling around the county.

Related reports

- Epsom Station joins app helping visually impaired bus users – 8 November 2025. Epsom & Ewell Times
- Bus station app for visually impaired a first in Surrey – 20 June 2025. Epsom & Ewell Times
- Support for independent travel – 14 May 2026. Epsom & Ewell Times

Image: Idealised representation of app user at a bus stop near Epsom Hospital

---

Latest news from Surrey County Council

28 October 2026

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

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

29th October 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Surrey County Council has issued a flurry of announcements covering school environmental projects, a major Government-backed reform of special educational needs provision and the future of Council Tax support when Surrey's new unitary authorities take over next April.

For Epsom and Ewell residents, the most immediately relevant development may be a consultation on how Council Tax Reduction will operate under the new East Surrey Council from 1 April 2027.

Council Tax support under the new East Surrey Council

Residents are being invited to comment on proposals for the Council Tax Reduction scheme which will apply when Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and the other existing councils in eastern Surrey disappear next year.

At present Surrey's 11 district and borough councils each operate their own Council Tax Reduction scheme. Eligibility and the amount of help available can therefore vary depending on where somebody lives.

From 1 April 2027 those councils, together with Surrey County Council, will be replaced by East Surrey Council and West Surrey Council. Each of the two new authorities will consequently require a single Council Tax Reduction scheme for its entire area.

Council Tax Reduction is intended to help people on low incomes or receiving certain benefits by reducing the amount of Council Tax they have to pay.

Draft schemes for both new authorities have now gone out to consultation. Surrey County Council says no final decisions have been made and existing support will continue while consultation takes place.

The East Surrey consultation runs from 7 October until 3 December 2026, with current recipients of Council Tax Reduction and organisations supporting them particularly encouraged to respond.

East Surrey Shadow Councillor Andy Burton, portfolio holder for finance and resources, said residents' responses would help decision-makers assess the effects of the proposals before a final scheme is agreed.

The exercise is one of the many pieces of administrative plumbing required before Surrey County Council and the borough and district councils cease to exist next April. Services which are currently administered differently across council boundaries will have to be combined into common systems for each of Surrey's two new authorities.

Government approves Surrey SEND reform plan

Meanwhile, the Department for Education has approved Surrey's three-year Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Reform Plan.

The Government told Surrey that its plan had met the required threshold and provided a basis for moving into implementation.

Of substantial financial significance is the Council's eligibility for an indicative £205.2 million High Needs Stability Grant. SCC says this represents 90 per cent of the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit accumulated up to the end of the 2025/26 financial year.

The scale of the problem is considerable. Surrey County Council's more recent budget monitoring has referred to a cumulative Dedicated Schools Grant deficit of around £238 million, against which approximately £205 million of Government stability funding was anticipated.

The reform programme is intended to place greater emphasis on earlier intervention and supporting more children with additional needs within mainstream education.

One element, called "Experts at Hand", is intended to bring specialists including educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and specialist teachers closer to mainstream schools and colleges. Surrey's Cabinet was told in July that £8.3 million would be available in 2026/27 for this part of the programme.

The wider plan includes increasing the SEND workforce, expanding provision, improving governance and seeking better transitions for young people entering adulthood.

Government approval was not, however, an unqualified endorsement. The Department for Education said further work was required on delivery capacity, partnership working and governance, together with clearer measures of success, post-16 pathways, co-production with families and assessment of future early-years and specialist provision requirements.

SCC Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning Cllr Helyn Clack said the Council would now move from planning into delivery.

The success of that delivery will matter more to families than approval of the plan itself, particularly against a

© 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

longstanding background of pressure on specialist places, Education Health and Care Plans and Surrey's high-needs education budget.

Surrey tops Eco-Schools table

On a rather different educational front, Surrey says it has retained the highest number of Eco-Schools Green Flag awards of any English local authority area for the fourth year running.

More than 200 Surrey schools are taking part in the Eco-Schools programme, with 105 achieving Green Flag status, its highest accreditation.

SCC says about 55,500 pupils are involved, including around 1,900 pupil eco-leaders. Projects range from wildlife-friendly areas and plastic-free lunches to sustainable food, monitoring energy use and encouraging active travel.

According to figures supplied by the Council, participating schools over the past year diverted 362,452kg of waste from landfill and saved 61,107kWh of electricity and 152,223kWh of gas.

The County Council has supported the Eco-Schools programme for 13 years and says it has also provided more than £120,000 in grants during the past 12 months to help schools become more resilient to the effects of climate change.

Marisa Heath, SCC Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, described the Green Flag results as evidence of the work being undertaken by Surrey school communities, while Cllr Clack said environmental projects also allowed children to develop knowledge and skills which could benefit their schools and wider communities.

Taken together, the three announcements illustrate the unusually broad range of responsibilities still resting with Surrey County Council during its final months – from children with complex educational needs and environmental education to preparations for the entirely new local government structure that will replace it on 1 April 2027.

Sam Jones – Reporter



.

Image credit SCC

From bikes to bytes: eeCAN puts climate action into practice

28 October 2026



An aubergine and tomatoes in Deirdre's Wisley allotment

Epsom and Ewell's local climate action network is stepping up a mixture of practical recycling, sustainable transport, food, gardening and community projects as the latest national figures underline both the progress made in cutting Britain's carbon emissions and the distance still to travel.

The Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Network – eeCAN – says its trustees applied to the Charity Commission for charitable status on 10 September, a move which, if successful, could help the volunteer organisation develop and fund its growing portfolio of local projects.

Founded in 2024, eeCAN describes its purpose as delivering practical community-led projects addressing climate change, restoring nature and strengthening local resilience. Its activities now range from a Library of Things at Bourne Hall and home energy surveys to community growing, environmental exhibitions, repair projects and the reuse of bicycles and electronic equipment.

Bikes and unwanted technology get a second life

A centrepiece of eeCAN's October programme is a combined **Bike and Tech Amnesty at Epsom Methodist Church Scout Hall, Ashley Road, on Saturday 24 October from 9am to 5pm**.

Residents are being invited to bring unwanted bicycles, mobile phones, tablets, laptops and other suitable small electronic devices for reuse or recycling.

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

ISSN 2753-2771

The scheme follows eeCAN's first Bike Amnesty in November 2025, when more than 65 bicycles were donated. The bikes were refurbished through Active Surrey and redistributed within the Surrey community. This year Active Surrey will again handle bikes, while Relove Technology is to deal with electronic devices, including secure removal of personal data before suitable equipment is refurbished and reused.

The emphasis on reuse rather than simply disposal comes against a stubborn national waste picture.

The latest Defra figures, published last month, show that England generated **21.9 million tonnes of household waste in 2024**, of which 9.6 million tonnes was recycled. England's household recycling rate stood at **43.8%**, compared with 44% the previous year. Across the UK the rate was 44.5%.

Electronic waste is separately regulated. Environment Agency statistics record electrical and electronic equipment placed on the market and waste electrical equipment collected, with the national dataset most recently updated in September with figures through the second quarter of 2026.

Schemes such as eeCAN's therefore sit at the smaller, local end of a much larger national attempt to keep usable products in circulation rather than turning them prematurely into waste.

Transport moves up the climate agenda

Transport is also the subject of eeCAN's next Climate Conversation, run in partnership with Epsom and Ewell U3A. A session on **"Transport and Integrated and Sustainable Travel"** is scheduled for Monday 12 October at Birchgrove Lower Mill Apartments.

The topic is particularly relevant because transport remains the largest single source of UK territorial greenhouse gas emissions.

Government provisional figures for 2025 put total UK net greenhouse gas emissions at **366.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent**, around 54% below their 1990 level. But domestic transport moved in the opposite direction during the year: its emissions rose by 2.3% to 112.9 million tonnes and represented approximately **31% of the UK total**.

Cars and vans also continue to dominate personal travel. The Department for Transport's newly published National Travel Survey for 2025 found that they accounted for **58% of all trips and 76% of the distance travelled** in England.

Walking accounted for 29% of journeys and cycling for 2%. Taken together with other active modes, active travel represented 31% of trips. The survey recorded an average 15 cycling trips and 57 cycling miles per person during the year.

The Department has cautioned against reading too much into some year-on-year changes, particularly walking figures, because the introduction of a digital travel diary appears to have affected the recording of shorter journeys.

A summer which broke the record

The unusually hot summer referred to by eeCAN's October newsletter was not simply a local impression.

The Met Office says **summer 2026 was provisionally the hottest UK summer since records began in 1884**, with a mean temperature of 16.5C. It estimated that human-induced climate change had made a summer mean temperature of that level around **130 times more likely**.

That gives a broader context to another strand of eeCAN's work.

Trustee and volunteer Deirdre has been taking part in allotment masterclasses at RHS Wisley, with lessons intended to contribute towards eeCAN's longer-term ambition for a community growing space in Epsom and Ewell.

The group's newsletter describes the practical effects of this summer's prolonged heat on the plots: seedlings wilting, greenhouse plants overheating and volunteers establishing watering rotas, while some heat-loving crops, including tomatoes and aubergines, flourished.

The project is as much about acquiring and sharing growing skills as producing food, with eeCAN hoping eventually to establish a community garden in the borough.

Food, students and the next generation

Food and its environmental impact were also prominent when eeCAN attended the Epsom Eco Fair at the Methodist Church on 26 September.

Chair Will and trustee Kristine gave talks on diets intended to be sustainable both for people and the planet. Among those attending the fair were Epsom and Ewell Mayor Cllr Lucie McIntyre and Epsom and Ewell MP Helen Maguire, according to eeCAN.

Earlier in September volunteers attended the University for the Creative Arts Freshers' Fair in Epsom, seeking student involvement, including contributions towards the group's planned **"Water is Life"** community art exhibition in 2027.

The exhibition will follow this year's "Living Rivers" project, which involved more than 500 exhibits from schools, colleges and community art groups.

Small projects against a very large target

Community projects cannot by themselves determine whether national carbon targets are achieved. The scale of the challenge is evident from the Government's figures: even after a 54% reduction since 1990, Britain emitted an estimated

© 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

367 million tonnes of greenhouse gases in 2025.

But eeCAN's programme concentrates largely on areas where households can exercise some direct influence – how people travel, what they buy and discard, how much energy homes consume and whether rarely used goods can be borrowed, repaired or passed on rather than replaced.

Its Bourne Hall Library of Things, for example, allows residents to borrow equipment such as carpet cleaners, pressure washers, hedge trimmers, wallpaper strippers and gazebos without charge rather than each household buying its own. The organisation also supports home energy surveys; its partner scheme says more than 2,000 such surveys have so far been carried out across Surrey.

The network is now seeking volunteers for the Library of Things, its weekly repair service, Eco Schools liaison, nature and community gardening and the 2027 art exhibition.

For a group only established in 2024, the October newsletter suggests eeCAN is moving from climate campaigning in the abstract towards a collection of practical projects in which residents can participate directly.

Whether charitable status follows will be a matter for the Charity Commission. In the meantime, the success of initiatives such as the 24 October Bike and Tech Amnesty will provide a more immediate measure of how far Epsom and Ewell residents are prepared to turn environmental concern into discarded laptops, unwanted bicycles – and practical action.

Sam Jones – Reporter



.

Related reports:

- Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Network launches with community events and initiatives – 20 November 2025 Epsom and Ewell Times
- Epsom "Library of Things" Delayed by Council Stand-Off – 11 May 2026 Epsom and Ewell Times
- Ewell's Library of Things finally to become a thing? – 1 July 2026 Epsom and Ewell Times
- Surrey praises Libraries of Things as Ewell scheme offers test borrowing Epsom and Ewell Times
- Epsom and Ewell lags Surrey's recycling front-runners, new tracker shows – 7 May 2026 Epsom and Ewell Times
- EEBC reports air quality milestone and revised carbon emissions figures – 23 January 2026 Epsom and Ewell Times
- Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Green Guide – 14 November 2025 Epsom and Ewell Times

---

Epsom Council declares transparency progress — but Rainbow questions remain unanswered

28 October 2026



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council says it has addressed an audit finding on transparency. Yet a straightforward question about one of its largest public assets remains unanswered: how did the Rainbow Leisure Centre come to face apparent dilapidations costs of up to £500,000?

At the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 29 September, Chief Executive Jackie King defended improvements to governance and communication with external auditors.

"This council does not have a governance issue," she told members.

But for residents, transparency can be measured more simply than through meetings with auditors, constitutional amendments or changes to committee reporting. Can the public find out what happened to a building they own, why substantial expenditure became necessary, and whether anyone is being held responsible?

© 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

On the Rainbow Centre, those questions remain unresolved.

A public building, an unexplained liability

Epsom and Ewell Times has repeatedly sought an explanation of the circumstances behind a confidential urgent decision authorising access to Council reserves of up to £500,000 in connection with the leisure centre's condition and disputed dilapidations.

That figure represents an authorised provision, rather than an established final bill. Nevertheless, the potential exposure is substantial.

The Council has previously acknowledged that it holds no records of routine landlord inspections over the former operator's lengthy tenure. It has withheld condition papers, relying on claims of legal professional privilege and commercial sensitivity.

Neither position explains how the apparent liability arose.

Were defects identified before the change of operator? Were they reported and left unresolved? Did the Council adequately monitor the condition of its building? What obligations rested with the operator, and what steps did the Council take to enforce them?

Former operator GLL has said it returned the building in the condition required by its agreement and was unaware of any legal claim. EET's recent requests for clarity on whether proceedings against the previous operator are contemplated have received no response.

The absence of an answer leaves residents unable to assess whether the Council is pursuing recovery, negotiating a settlement, or expecting public funds to meet the costs.

What the committee was told

The September meeting concerned an External Audit Transparency Report arising from Grant Thornton's earlier finding of a significant governance weakness.

Officers said the problem concerned a failure to inform the auditors promptly about changes to governance arrangements. The report stated that subsequent improvements had satisfied the auditors and that the previous recommendation had been closed.

Cllr **Chris Ames** (Labour, Court) challenged that account. He argued that the auditors' published findings covered wider concerns about openness, including changes to the constitution and scheme of delegation that had not been fully discussed publicly.

"This is a question of transparency, and we have a mismatch between what's being said publicly and what was said privately, and that should concern us all," he said.

Ms King rejected his interpretation and pointed to the more favourable subsequent audit assessment.

She also described improvements to urgent-decision reporting, including attaching decision forms to committee papers.

Cllr **Steven McCormick** (Conservative, Woodcote and Langley Vale), a former committee chair, said his written questions had been answered as fully as possible and that he had no supplementary questions.

The committee voted to note the report.

Publishing a decision is only the beginning

Better publication of urgent decisions is welcome. But publishing a form does not, by itself, explain the events that made the decision necessary.

The Rainbow controversy illustrates the difference.

On 16 July, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee concluded that the process followed for the Rainbow urgent decision had not complied with the Council's stated procedure and was not justified by the information presented to members.

That finding concerned how the decision was taken. It did not establish how the building's condition had been monitored, why the potential costs arose or who should bear them.

Those are questions about stewardship of a public asset, rather than simply the administration of committee business.

Claims of privilege or commercial sensitivity may protect particular documents or negotiating details. They do not give residents a substantive explanation of whether the Council fulfilled its responsibilities as landlord.

Who is protecting the public interest?

The unanswered questions also concern the role of elected councillors.

Their responsibility is to scrutinise the use of public money and the management of public property. Where possible failures of inspection or maintenance oversight arise, residents should be able to expect councillors to demand an explanation.

There is presently insufficient disclosed evidence to conclude that incompetence caused the Rainbow liability, or that officers are being deliberately protected from accountability. The continuing lack of information prevents those possibilities from being properly examined — and prevents the Council from demonstrating that they are unfounded.

That is why the unanswered requests matter.

A satisfactory audit assessment is relevant evidence of improved arrangements. It does not answer every outstanding question about a particular building or financial decision.

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

ISSN 2753-2771

The Council says lessons have been learned. On the Rainbow Centre, the public still needs to know what happened, what the Council is doing about it, and whether taxpayers will ultimately pay.

Until those answers are provided, declarations of transparency remain difficult to reconcile with residents' experience of trying to obtain information.

Sam Jones – Reporter



.

Related reports

- Epsom's scrutiny committee slams Dallen's urgent £500K Rainbow approval — 17 July 2026.
- Epsom Council Rainbow Centre secrecy row deepens over "pre-election silence" advice.
- Epsom and Ewell Council transparency row erupts as council backs publication of urgent decisions — 17 March 2026.
- "It's my meeting": Cllr Dallen stops questions about his role in alleged Rainbow "cover-up".
- Epsom and Ewell Council CEO contests 'culture of secrecy' claim and outlines fixes — 1 October 2025.
- Epsom & Ewell Council not much in the red but too much in the pink! — 11 February 2025.

East Surrey seeks planning head start as Epsom faces two Local Plans at once

28 October 2026





East Surrey's incoming council has urged ministers to let it begin preparing a Local Plan before it takes over next April, highlighting a problem already confronting Epsom and Ewell: being required to start another plan while still struggling to complete the current one.

In a letter to Housing and Planning Minister Matthew Pennycook MP, cllr Bradley Nelson (LibDem Dorking), the shadow council's executive member for strategic planning and growth, has asked for arrangements allowing the new authority to begin plan-making preparations before 1 April 2027.

East Surrey will replace Epsom and Ewell, Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, and Tandridge councils. Its press release warns that requiring those authorities to continue separate planning processes, while their successor cannot formally begin a plan for the whole new area, risks duplication and wasted resources.

For Epsom and Ewell, the request follows months of controversy over Green Belt development, councillor scrutiny and the cost of preparing a plan that will outlive the council responsible for it.

Five councils and competing timetables

The five authorities are at different stages. Mole Valley adopted its Local Plan in December 2024, while the others are progressing existing plans or beginning work under the new planning rules. Epsom and Ewell faces both processes simultaneously.

Cllr Nelson said: "The challenge is that the councils which currently hold planning responsibilities are being asked to continue, or in some cases start work on plans that they may not ultimately be able to complete, while East Surrey Council cannot formally begin the process until it becomes a vested authority."

He added: "We believe there is an opportunity to make better use of the period before April 2027 by allowing preparatory work to begin sooner. This could help avoid duplication, make the best use of public resources and enable the new council to progress plan-making at the earliest opportunity."

The shadow council says it wants a single Local Plan to guide housing, employment, infrastructure and environmental

© 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

protection across East Surrey. Nelson's letter also identifies rail capacity and sewage treatment as constraints on growth.

Epsom's long road to a plan

Epsom and Ewell's current examination follows an already protracted process. The council paused preparation in March 2023 before voting to resume it that October. Its 2022–2040 Local Plan was eventually submitted for examination on 10 March 2025, shortly before a national transitional deadline.

Submission did not end the disputes. EET has reported repeated challenges over additional evidence submitted during the examination and whether elected members had sufficient opportunity to scrutinise it.

At an extraordinary council meeting on 21 July 2026, a motion seeking greater committee oversight was defeated by 15 votes to 12, with three abstentions. Proposed amendments seeking an independent governance review were ruled out of order. The disagreement concerned the use of delegated powers and democratic oversight as well as the planning merits of development sites.

On 22 September, the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee recommended, by six votes to three, that Full Council approve consultation on the Inspector's proposed modifications. These include 12 additional urban sites and four additional Green Belt sites, with proposals for at least 530 homes at Downs Farm and 275 at Priest Hill.

As EET reported on 25 September, that recommendation was a further step towards consultation, rather than approval to adopt the plan. The Inspector must consider consultation responses before issuing a final report, and Full Council would still have to decide on adoption if the plan is found sound.

Why another plan is required

The requirement to begin a second plan stems from national reforms and higher assessments of housing need.

Government rules require certain authorities whose plans were submitted under transitional arrangements, but provided for less than 80 per cent of the newly calculated housing need, to start again under the new system while their existing plans continue.

Epsom and Ewell is explicitly listed among those authorities. Its deadlines were to publish a notice of intention by 30 June 2026 and a "Gateway 1" readiness assessment by 31 October. That assessment starts the new system's 30-month plan-making timetable.

In an August letter to the council, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government acknowledged the resource pressures involved in producing two plans simultaneously. It nevertheless rejected impending reorganisation as a reason to defer the new work and reiterated the deadlines.

The financial implications are substantial. EEBC's September committee report estimated that taking the new plan through to adoption would cost approximately £1 million, plus officer time. No budget had been allocated.

The report also recorded earlier allocations for the existing plan of £75,000 in 2019, £712,000 in 2021 and £629,000 in 2023. These are funding allocations, rather than a statement of final expenditure.

The committee voted seven to two for officers to seek discussions with East Surrey's chief executive and planning executive member about how to proceed, with the outcome to return to a future meeting.

National pause offers Surrey no reprieve

The Government's wider pause and review of local government reorganisation does not extend to Surrey.

Planning guidance updated on 24 September expressly confirms Surrey's exemption. It also says councils must continue plan-making even where they cannot complete adoption before their successor authority becomes operational.

The same guidance exposes the difficulty behind East Surrey's request. A plan for the new unitary area cannot begin until that authority is operational, although existing councils can collaborate on joint plans, shared evidence and cross-boundary issues beforehand.

Ministers intend to introduce transitional regulations covering unfinished plans, existing adopted plans and the timetable for new unitary-wide plans. However, the guidance describes itself as a statement of intention, rather than finalised policy.

East Surrey's press release says further details and timings remain unconfirmed. Nelson has requested a meeting with ministers and officials.

Housing need remains urgent

The argument over duplication comes against a stark local record. EET's latest report on the September committee meeting recorded just 37 homes completed in Epsom and Ewell during 2025–26, none affordable, and an inability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.

Cllr Julian Freeman (LibDem College) described the consequences for younger residents: "My own children can't even imagine owning their own home."

East Surrey's intervention therefore raises a practical question: how can councils meet urgent housing needs while spending money on overlapping plans during their final months?

The request does not itself remove EEBC's obligations or halt its current examination. It asks ministers to make the

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

ISSN 2753-2771

transition work more efficiently. For Epsom and Ewell residents, the test will be whether that produces a clearer, properly scrutinised route to homes and infrastructure—and a credible explanation of what the additional planning work will cost.

Sam Jones – Reporter



.

Related reports

- Epsom and Ewell’s New Local Plan sites advance amid clash over scrutiny and cost — 25 September 2026. epsomandewelltimes.com
- East Surrey is still going ahead – so what happens next? — 25 September 2026. so what happens next?
- Plans for East Surrey Council continue to progress — 14 September 2026. epsomandewelltimes.com
- The shake up of Epsom and Ewell’s local government: was it all a waste of time as Rayner puts pause on LGR elsewhere? — 7 September 2026. epsomandewelltimes.com
- Bitter exchanges in Epsom and Ewell Council Chamber on Local Plan oversight — 22 July 2026. epsomandewelltimes.com

---

Epsom and Ewell’s New Local Plan sites advance amid clash over scrutiny and cost

28 October 2026






Epsom and Ewell’s Local Plan moved closer to public consultation on Tuesday 22 September, but cllrs clashed over proposed Green Belt development, decisions taken without committee debate and a government requirement to begin another plan before the borough council is abolished.

The Licensing and Planning Policy Committee voted **six to three** to recommend that Full Council approve a consultation lasting at least six weeks on modifications proposed by the Planning Inspector. Full Council has yet to make that decision; the council expects it to meet next month.

The modifications include **12 additional urban sites and four additional Green Belt sites**. Proposals for the latter include at least **530 homes at Downs Farm** and **275 at Priest Hill**. Planning officers said land south of College Road at Downs Farm would remain in the Green Belt for open space, routes and playing pitches. They said the Sutton and Epsom Rugby Football Club playing fields were outside the proposed Priest Hill allocation.

Who chose the additional sites?

Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development Ian Mawer told the committee that many changes to the plan’s policies arose from examination hearings. Following a further hearing in July, he said, the Inspector’s programme officer asked the council to draft modifications for 12 urban sites and subsequently confirmed which Green Belt sites to include.

“The main modifications are those that the inspector considers are necessary to make the plan sound,” Mr Mawer said. “They must be consulted on as they are presented.”

Cllr **Christine Howells** (Independent Nonsuch) challenged the absence of a further decision by elected members on the sites. “At no time did elected councillors agree to these material changes, both to the evidence base and the proposals for the local plan,” she told the committee.

Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Horton) raised concerns about flooding assessments, school capacity and traffic. Cllr **Steven McCormick** (Conservative Woodcote and Langley Vale) criticised the opportunity members had been given to scrutinise the changes, calling them “an unprecedented sacrifice of our green belt”.

The dispute concerned both the proposed development and the process that brought it before the committee. Officers said

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

ISSN 2753-2771

the Inspector had requested the draft modifications as part of the examination. Members were told they could recommend whether the modifications went out to consultation, but could not rewrite the Inspector's proposals beforehand.

The committee voted **seven to two** to note the modifications and **six to three** to recommend consultation. It then voted **five to four** on each of two delegations: allowing Mr Mawer, in consultation with the committee chair, to make further amendments required by the Inspector after consultation and to update the Local Plan timetable.

The Inspector will consider responses before issuing a final report. If the plan is found sound, Full Council will still have to decide whether to adopt it.

No affordable homes completed in 2025–26

The committee also agreed, by **eight votes to one**, to publish its Authority Monitoring Report. It records **37 homes completed in the borough during 2025–26, none of them affordable**. The council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land.

Cllr McCormick described the report as "an annual health check on our borough's planning performance" that showed a serious shortfall. Cllr **Julian Freeman** (LibDem College) focused on younger residents priced out of housing. "My own children can't even imagine owning their own home," he said.

Cllr **Neil Dallen** (RA Town) agreed that delivery was a problem but said the council could not force developers to build homes for which they had permission. Mr Mawer also pointed to building costs, market conditions and the limited number of large sites ready for development.

Urgent decisions challenged

Earlier in the meeting, members examined EEBC's responses to Local Plan consultations by neighbouring Tandridge and Kingston. Both had already been submitted using urgent decision procedures. The committee was asked to note them afterwards and did so in each case by **five votes to three, with one abstention**.

Cllr McCormick called the Tandridge decision a "fait accompli". He said its consultation had been open for weeks and asked why members had not been convened to consider a response. Cllr Kieran Persand (Conservative Horton) repeatedly questioned why a special committee meeting had not been arranged.

Committee chair Cllr **Peter O'Donovan** (RA Ewell Court) said he had been advised that the response needed to be submitted and had agreed to it. Asked why a meeting had not been called, he said: "Can't give you an answer this evening." He undertook to seek an explanation.

Cllr **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington) acknowledged the frustration but argued that the summer holiday period and the unusual pressure created by reorganisation and the Local Plan made urgent decisions necessary in this instance.

The exchanges raised a question that extends beyond these two consultation responses: decisions made by councils shortly before they join East Surrey may affect the new authority, while members of the existing councils have limited time left to scrutinise them.

Government seeks work on another plan

The final item brought a further complication. Mr Mawer reported that new government rules placed EEBC among authorities expected to begin preparing another Local Plan, even though its **2022–2040 plan remains under examination** and the borough council is due to be replaced by East Surrey Unitary Council on **1 April 2027**.

He said the government recognised the resources involved in working on two plans at once but did not accept local government reorganisation as a reason to defer the new work. He estimated that taking a plan through to adoption under the new system could cost **about £1 million**, stressing that this was an estimate for a system no authority had yet completed.

Cllr McCormick criticised the absence of money in the budget for the work and called for a costed plan of action. Cllr Alex Coley (Independent Ruxley) asked why it had not been made a priority. Cllr O'Donovan said he would have to find out.

By **seven votes to two**, the committee agreed that officers should seek a meeting with the Shadow East Surrey authority's chief executive and executive member for strategic planning and growth, then report back.

Surrey's local government reorganisation is proceeding despite pauses announced elsewhere. That leaves EEBC facing the cost and staff demands of a new planning requirement during its final months, while East Surrey prepares to take over. The committee was given no assurance of additional government funding. How much work EEBC should commission before April, and who will pay for it, remain unanswered.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports

1. Plans for East Surrey Council continue to progress — 14 September 2026

© 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

2. Bitter exchanges in Epsom and Ewell Council Chamber on Local Plan oversight — 22 July 2026
3. Whose Local Plan is it anyway? — 2 July 2026
4. Fresh Local Plan row as residents challenge legality of latest Epsom and Ewell consultation — June 2026
5. Did Epsom and Ewell councillors approve more Green Belt release? — 22 May 2026

Time for Cllr Dallen to drop his taxpayer funded complaint?

28 October 2026



A few minutes of video from an Epsom and Ewell Borough Council meeting have now generated an external investigation, a legal adviser's attendance at the Town Hall and a standards hearing that could not get past a basic question: **which rules is the Council using?**

Councillor **Neil Dallen** (RA Town) complained that Councillor **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) had failed to treat him with respect during a heated exchange about the Rainbow Leisure Centre in January. An external investigator recommended a finding against Ames. But at a preliminary hearing on 22 September, the panel made no finding on his conduct. Instead, it heard a sustained challenge to the Council's handling of the complaint and paused proceedings to consider it.

The question for Cllr Dallen is whether he still wants taxpayers to fund the pursuit of his complaint. He is entitled to make one. He is also free to withdraw it.

The rules the Council used in 2019

The Council's own papers for its February 2019 standards hearing provide a striking point of comparison. This being the only other hearing of the committee on a complaint against a councillor since 2015. That hearing's officer report said the Council had **approved a process for investigating complaints in July 2012**. It attached a document headed *Arrangements for dealing with standards allegations under the Localism Act 2011* and identified it as the procedure for investigating and determining the complaint. The eventual decision recorded that the Independent Person's views had been sought and taken into account.

The 2012 document remains in that publicly available hearing pack. It says the Independent Person's views must be considered before a decision on whether a councillor breached the Code and on any action to follow. It also gives a councillor the right to require a further hearing sub-committee to **review a sanction**.

Yet the officer report prepared for the Ames hearing did not mention that document or explain whether it had ever been withdrawn or replaced. It instead pointed to provisions of the Constitution and guidance for people making complaints, while acknowledging that the arrangements it identified did not provide a standards hearing procedure. Officers asked the three-member panel to adopt a newly proposed procedure or amend it for fairness.

That omission is extraordinary. If the Council used the 2012 arrangements at its last publicly documented hearing in 2019, what changed, who approved the change and when? Those questions should have been answered in the report placed before the panel.

Safeguards missing from the proposed procedure

The differences matter. The proposed 2026 procedure does not expressly require the Independent Person's views to be sought **before** the panel decides whether the Code was breached. It says there is **no right of appeal**, without preserving the sanction review set out in the 2012 arrangements. It also offers a wider list of actions, ending with "any other sanction" considered appropriate in consultation with the Independent Person.

A hearing panel appointed to determine one councillor's complaint has not been shown to have power to replace the Council's standing complaints arrangements or expand the sanctions it may impose. The 2012 arrangements were approved by the Council. If different standing arrangements have since been made under a valid delegation, the Council should identify the decision. Adopting new rules in the middle of Ames's case cannot substitute for showing which rules lawfully applied when the complaint was handled.

At the hearing, Ames and his Labour Party legal representative, Matthew Burn, repeatedly asked for that answer. The external legal adviser to the panel argued that the Council's arrangements need not be contained in one document: in his view, they could be found across the Constitution, delegations and published guidance. But he could not identify when the complaints leaflet on which Ames said the Monitoring Officer had relied was adopted. He accepted that a clear,

© 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

consolidated document would help the Council. The adviser's position was that the Council nevertheless had sufficient arrangements and powers to investigate the complaint. The panel did not resolve that disagreement.

Nor was this a question sprung on officers at the Town Hall. Ames and Burn said they had been seeking an explanation for months. Monitoring Officer Piero Ionta and his deputy did not attend to give one. The panel's chair, Councillor Rachel King, eventually called a pause so members could consider what they had heard.

How much has this cost?

The Council's hearing report confirms that it commissioned an external investigation and instructed an external adviser for the panel. It says the bills will be met from corporate reserves but gives no amount, stating that final invoices had not arrived. EET has also sought cost information from the Council without obtaining a figure. Officer preparation and attendance have not been costed publicly either.

CH&I Associates director Alex Oram declined to tell Epsom and Ewell Times his firm's fees or hourly rate. He confirmed that the rate was **no more than £100 an hour**, but would not say whether it was below £50. A representative of the Norwich-based firm also travelled to attend the Epsom hearing in person.

Could the total already be as much as £5,000 once external fees, travel and officers' time are counted? That is a question, not an established estimate: without invoices and a record of staff time, we cannot calculate the total. The Council should publish what it has spent so far and the anticipated cost of any further hearing, including additional external advice.

A complaint born of unanswered Rainbow questions

The underlying incident is recorded on the Council's meeting video. Ames was asking who had decided to keep confidential an urgent decision concerning up to £500,000 of potential repairs at the Rainbow Leisure Centre. Dallen had supported that decision and was chairing the meeting when Ames questioned it. Dallen stopped further discussion, saying, "It is my meeting" and failed to stand aside for his vice-chair to rule on the matter. Ames called him "arrogant" and alleged a "cover-up".

Ames has since said he regrets using "arrogant" and should instead have raised a formal point of order about Dallen continuing to chair that item. The investigator recommended a finding that Ames had failed to show respect, while recognising that he was pursuing a genuinely held argument about transparency. The investigator did not decide whether his questions about the Rainbow decision were right. The hearing panel has not determined the complaint.

Speaking after the preliminary hearing, Ames said he was grateful that the panel did not press ahead without clarity about the applicable arrangements. He accused the administration of spending taxpayers' money pursuing a "low-level complaint" while his complaint about Dallen's conduct at the same meeting had been rejected. Those are Ames's criticisms, not findings by the panel.

The recorded exchange will still be there if a properly constituted panel is asked to judge it. First, the Council needs to explain why its 2019 hearing used arrangements absent from the 2026 report, what authority supports the proposed replacement and what this process has cost. Dallen, meanwhile, has a simpler decision: **is continuing this complaint a proportionate use of public money?**

Sam Jones – Reporter

Related reports

- Epsom's Rainbow questions persist as £4.7m revamp advances – 21 September 2026
- Epsom & Ewell Council refuses to explain complaints disparity – 25 August 2026
- Epsom's scrutiny committee slams Dallen's urgent £500K Rainbow approval – 17 July 2026
- The Man Who Signed It, Chaired It, and Wouldn't Explain It: Six Months of Silence Over Rainbow's £500,000 Bill – 11 July 2026
- "It's my meeting": Cllr Dallen stops questions about his role in alleged Rainbow "cover-up" – 23 February 2026

Epsom's Rainbow questions persist as £4.7m revamp advances

28 October 2026

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

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

29th October 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Places Leisure has detailed improvements at Epsom's Rainbow Leisure Centre but questions remain over the discovery of substantial dilapidations at the end of the previous operator's tenure – and who will ultimately meet the cost.

Places Leisure took over the Council-owned centre from Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), which trades as Better, on 1 October 2025.

Shortly afterwards, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council authorised potential expenditure of up to £500,000 on works allegedly arising from the condition in which the centre was handed back. The decision was taken under the Council's urgent-decision procedure and much of the supporting information, including a survey of the building, has remained confidential.

The controversy was intensified by confirmation that no formal condition surveys or inspection records could be found covering much of GLL's approximately 20-year operation of the centre.

The Council has relied upon "legal professional privilege" and "commercial confidentiality" in declining to disclose the survey and related advice. It has not yet even acknowledged the Epsom and Ewell Times' latest questions since 3rd September asking whether it has sent GLL a letter before action, begun legal proceedings or asserted any claim for failure to maintain the centre or breach of its contractual obligations.

GLL told the Times on 3 September that it had heard nothing further from the Council since its earlier correspondence and that its position had not changed: "*the Council undertook, via specialist contractors, a full survey of the building prior to GLL exiting. As is normal in all leisure transfers, items that were identified in that survey for GLL were all completed prior to handover and signed off by the specialist contractors on behalf of the Council. GLL handed the building over to the standard required by the Council and under the contract.*"

£4.7 million investment

Places Leisure has now told the Times that it is investing approximately £4.7 million in modernising the centre – £200,000 more than the approximately £4.5 million previously publicised.

Work completed so far includes a full refurbishment of the fitness suite, new equipment and EGYM technology, refurbished group-exercise studios and a new immersive spin studio.

A new health suite, with steam rooms and saunas, is expected to open by the end of November. Further plans include improvements to the café and teaching pool and a new Reformer Pilates studio due to open in the new year.

Places Leisure said the improvements would broaden community activities, encourage healthier lifestyles and generate more than £5 million of "social value" each year.

However, the operator did not provide a breakdown of expenditure on the different elements of the project. Nor did it answer questions about membership numbers, how the investment is being financed or whether any payments or other financial arrangements with the Council have been altered because of the centre's condition or the closure of facilities.

On the separate dilapidation works, Places Leisure said these fell outside its planned investment programme and were being instructed by the Council.

It said: "Places Leisure is supporting and working with the Council to complete any necessary works quickly and with minimal impact on our customers."

Membership changes

A centre member told the Times that his monthly payment had risen from £45.50 under GLL to £60 following the change of operator. He said another long-standing member, previously paying closer to £30, had experienced a similar increase.

Places Leisure said existing membership prices remained unchanged until February 2026, when members were transferred to the closest Places Leisure equivalent. For some customers, that change of membership category resulted in a price increase, of which they were informed beforehand.

The present headline monthly rates include:

- Premium membership, covering the gym, swimming and classes: £60.
- Swimming only: £29.
- Premium membership for 16 to 18-year-olds: £30.
- Premium membership for 19 to 25-year-olds: £40.

A £75 Premium+ option, which will include the health suite, is expected to be introduced when that facility reopens. Places Leisure said existing members would not be transferred automatically to the more expensive category.

The member who contacted the Times praised the refurbished gym and fitness studios, describing the work as fresh 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

modern. He said, however, that he was unaware of significant changes to the pool or sports halls and that the health suite had remained closed.

Complaint reaches standards process

The Rainbow controversy also forms part of the background to a pending preliminary hearing into a councillor conduct complaint made by Councillor **Neil Dallen** (RA Town Ward) against Councillor **Chris Ames** (Labour Court).

At a meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee in January, Cllr Ames pressed Cllr Dallen about the secret urgent decision which Dallen had signed off. From the chair Cllr Dallen stopped his questioning declaring “It’s my meeting”. During a heated exchange, Cllr Ames used the words “cover-up” and “arrogant”.

Cllr Dallen subsequently complained that Cllr Ames had breached the councillors’ Code of Conduct. Cllr Ames maintains that his language arose from a legitimate attempt, as an elected councillor, to establish what had happened and why councillors and the public were being denied the relevant information.

The preliminary hearing will address procedural issues surrounding the determination of the complaint before any final hearing. This follows an expensive external investigation being authorised by the Council into Ames conduct. The controversial January meeting is available for all to see on the Council’s YouTube channel. The preliminary hearing will be in Committee troom 1 at the Town Hall and the agenda includes a resolution as to whether the press and public should be excluded. Epsom and Ewell Times has been told that the committee room is not sufficient for any public presence anyway.

A complaint made by Ames against Dallen for his conduct of the meeting was dismissed by the Council’s Monitoring Officer, who advised at the heated meeting, and without an independent investigation.

Residents still do not know precisely what defects were discovered, when they arose, why routine inspection records appear not to exist, whether GLL is considered legally responsible for any of the work or how much of the authorised £500,000 will ultimately be borne by local taxpayers.

Sam Jones – Reporter



.

Image: Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication

Related reports

- Epsom & Ewell Council refuses to explain complaints disparity – 21 August 2026
- Epsom’s scrutiny committee slams Dallen’s urgent £500K Rainbow approval – 17 July 2026
- The Man Who Signed It, Chaired It, and Wouldn’t Explain It: Six Months of Silence Over Rainbow’s £500,000 Bill – 11 July 2026
- Epsom & Ewell Council blocks release of Rainbow Leisure Centre condition papers – 18 June 2026
- Epsom Council Rainbow Centre secrecy row deepens over “pre-election silence” advice – 19 May 2026
- No end to Epsom’s Rainbow Leisure Centre controversy – 18 May 2026

© 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