

Surrey to have a new political colour 4th July?

24 June 2024



Jeremy Hunt “faces a tight race” to be re-elected according to new polls that show Surrey could have as many as 12 new MPs after the July 4 general election.

Only East Surrey’s Conservative MP and Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Claire Coutinho, are predicted to be safe.

Data published by Ipsos suggests the combination of big beast Conservative resignations and huge swings in voting intentions could drastically alter the political map.

The projections are based on Ipsos’ first MRP poll that uses a large-scale online survey of nearly 20,000 participants together with population data at a constituency level, to project which party will win individual seats at the upcoming General Election.

Currently every single seat in the county is held by a Conservative but Ipsos polling has the Liberal Democrats poised to win in Esher and Walton, Dorking and Horley, Guildford, and Epsom and Ewell leaning that way too.

The scale of the swings needed are huge with the Conservatives holding majorities as high as 29 per cent in constituencies predicted to go to the Lib Dems.

Three seats, with what would normally be considered safe Tory strongholds with majorities greater than 30 per cent, are also said to be in play.

Runnymede and Weybridge, Woking, Spelthorne, Windsor, and Godalming and Ash are all toss ups, according to Ipsos.

Even among the seats Ipsos has staying blue, Ipsos says that Surrey Heath, Farnham and Bordon, and Reigate are only “leaning” Conservative with just East Surrey – which was last won by Claire Coutinho in 2019 with a 40 per cent majority “likely” to stay Tory.

Nationally the polls show:

Labour winning 453 – with ‘certainty’ range of 439 to 462 seats

Conservatives 115 – with a range of 99 to 123 seats

Liberal Democrats 38 – with a range of 35 to 48 seats

SNP 15 – with a range of 13 to 23 seats

Plaid Cymru four – with a range of two to five seats

Reform UK three – with range of three to 10 seats

Green Party three with a range of zero to four seats

According to Ipsos data the voting intentions in Surrey are:

Liberal Democrat gains

Esher and Walton (Strong Liberal Democrat) overturning conservative majority of 5 per cent

Con 28%, Lib Dem 50%, Lab 11%, Ref 8%, Green 3%

Dorking (Likely Liberal Democrat) overturning Conservative majority of 19 per cent

Con 30%, Lab 17%, Lib Dem 41%, Ref 8%, Green 4%

Guildford (Likely Liberal Democrat – overturning Conservative majority of 6 per cent

Con 25%, Lab 16%, Lib Dem 39%, Ref 15%, Green 4%

Epsom and Ewell (Lean Liberal Democrat – overturning Conservative majority of 29 per cent

Con 30%, Lab 23%, Lib Dem 35%, Ref 7%, Green 4%

Conservative holds:

Surrey Heath (Lean Conservative) majority 30 per cent

Con 36%, Lab 18%, Lib Dem 30%, Ref 12%, Green 4%

Farnham and Bordon (Lean Conservative) majority 27%

Con 37%, Lab 17%, Lib Dem 31%, Ref 11%, Green 4%

Reigate (Lean Conservative) majority 36%

Con 34%, Lab 29%, Lib Dem 18%, Ref 9%, Green 10%

East Surrey (Likely Conservative) majority 40%

Con 38%, Lab 26%, Lib Dem 16%, Ref 15%, Green 5%

Toss ups

Runnymede and Weybridge (Toss up) Conservative majority 31 per cent

Con 35%, Lab 31%, Lib Dem 18%, Ref 10%, Green 5%

Woking (Toss up) Conservative majority 17 per cent

Con 35%, Lab 30%, Lib Dem 25%, Ref 9%, Green 5%

Godalming and Ash (Toss up) Conservative majority 19 per cent

Con 34%, Lab 17%, Lib Dem 33%, Ref 11%, Green 5%

Spelthorne (Toss up) Conservative majority 37 per cent

Con 31%, Lab 31%, Lib Dem 17%, Ref 16%, Green 5%

Jeremy Hunt and Paul Follows were contacted for this story.

Related reports:

6 out of 11 Conservative MPs leaving Surrey

Taxing question for Surrey's private schools

24 June 2024



Labour's proposal to add VAT to private school fees has ignited a fierce debate in Surrey, home to numerous prestigious independent schools. The policy, aimed at generating £1.5 billion to improve state education, has drawn both sharp criticism and staunch support from local residents, educators, and politicians

One Surrey grandmother explained that her grandchildren go to private school and says she thought it is a "ridiculous" policy on "hard-working people".

Labour has said that if it wins the general election it plans to remove tax exemptions that private schools enjoy, generating around £1.5 billion. The most significant of these is scrapping VAT exemptions on private school fees.

Critics say taxing private schools does not hit the super rich but hurts middle-income parents. Cllr Kate Fairhurst (Conservative/ Reigate) said: "I am very concerned that Labour's plans will punish families striving and investing for a better future for their children."

Private schools could make cuts to absorb the added VAT cost, Labour Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves has said, so it is not passed on to parents.

Profoundly objecting, Roger Jones, a previous Conservative candidate for Dorking. said: "Private schools would have to axe a third of its [departments]", causing the most affluent of pupils to move to other fee paying schools" or in the public sector. He added the suggestion of cuts as an option is rooted in the Labour's envy of the privately educated.

With the money raised, Labour said it will improve standards in state schools by employing 6,500 teachers, improving schools and careers advice, as well as helping pay for mental health support staff in every secondary school.

Surrey has around 140 private schools: including primary, secondary and special schools. Fees vary between schools, but the cost of independent education in Surrey is above the national average.

They range from £18,975-£38,367 per year for day pupils and from £25,290-£47,535 per year for boarding. With an

addition of 20% tax, this would hike the figures to £22,770- £46,040 annually for day pupils and £30,348- £57,042 for students at boarding schools. To those who can just about squeeze £18k for a year of schooling, the added VAT may make the private sector unaffordable.

“It would be a huge backward step for the county,” added Roger Jones He said: “Should Labour find themselves in government, then this policy will disadvantage every single child of school age and those yet to come.” He argued that taxing private schools would cost the state more than it is projected to generate as more children would move to the public school system.

One woman, who wished to remain anonymous, expressed concerns that the influx of previously private schooled children in the state sector could put strain on already struggling public schools. “Walloping private schools isn’t going to make the state schools better and the money raised will be a drop in the ocean compared to the financial needs of the sector,” she added.

Concerns were raised about the tax not affecting prestigious schools, like Eton, where the woman claimed the pupils are from very wealthy families. She said: “The imposition of 20% VAT won’t even begin to affect the attitude of [those] who are brought up by such schools to believe that they are superior to everyone else.”

Twenty-three-year-old Grace, who went to a comprehensive school in leafy Esher, said raising fees could increase elitism in private schools, making bullying and student dynamics worse. She said: “It’s no secret that private schools have a self-proclaimed elitist culture, and increasing VAT will mean the super rich will be more prolific in these schools.”

The vast majority of independent schools are classed as charities or non-profit making trusts. For-profit schools are not allowed in the UK so funds go towards running and improving schools.

Speaking to people on the doorstep, Guildford’s Lib Dem candidate Zoe Franklin told the LDRS how a woman in Stoughton made “very careful and conscious spending decisions” to pay for a private school. She said the woman did not have foreign holidays and lived in a modest house to afford private schooling as they were unable to get into the local school of their choice that they felt would best support their child with special needs.

Labour’s policy would exempt private SEND schools Ms Franklin said: “It’s especially hard to hear people who say they feel they have to pay for private education for a child with SEND, because the right support just isn’t there in the state sector.”

Labour first announced this policy in its 2019 manifesto, under Jeremy Corbyn, but was brought back into the news limelight in 2023 by Keir Starmer. Worried parents started a Change.org petition against plans, attracting 145,446 signatures at the time of writing.

Starting in Berkshire, the petition argues parents who currently pay school fees on top of taxes used for school funding will be “adding to the state’s burden rather than opting to relieve it” by choosing an independent school. Critics have argued it is “reasonable” for a service provided by a business, like private schools, to be taxed in the same way as other goods and services. One person commented: “Both are voluntary choices when the state provides a free alternative.”

IPSOS polling, published November 2023, showed the majority of the public (57 per cent) support the Labour party’s proposal., with just under one in five (18 per cent) opposing the policy. Research found that even among 2019 Conservative voters, nearly half (47 per cent) support it, compared to a third (32 per cent) who oppose it.

Speaking on behalf of the party, Labour candidate for Reigate Stuart Brady said: “Introducing VAT on school fees is a tough choice being made against the backdrop of a very difficult economic and fiscal position Labour would inherit from the Tories. Labour wants to drive high and rising standards in all our schools, so that we can break down barriers to opportunity across our country.

“I’ve listened to stories from Reigate Constituents and am aware of the variety of economic and educational positions of those paying privately for education, including parents of children with additional needs. I know that most are not the super-rich. [But] Labour in government will spread opportunity to all parts of the country at every age and every stage.”

Non-political and all-political

24 June 2024



Dear Editor,

It is good to see that, despite stepping down as a Borough Councillor, Vince Romagnuolo has lost none of his enthusiasm for historically partisan approach to local politics. Labelling Resident Association councillors closet Conservatives is nothing new. Vince and the Labour Party have never understood the concept of local volunteers whose national voting

patterns are often diverse, but who come together in a non-ideological commitment to promote a shared view of localism, civic duty and what is right for all residents in Epsom and Ewell.

If only Vince knew the real national preferences of RA councillors, he might be surprised. Although I never discussed national political allegiances with my RA colleagues, it is sometimes not difficult to know them. There were and are councillors who nationally support the Labour Party, and at least one RA Councillor who was a Labour Party Councillor in another local authority.

So come on Vince, by all means criticise Residents Association councillors if you disapprove of their policies, but please don't use labels and unfounded accusations of national party-political bias to explain the clear voting preferences of residents, the long absence of Conservative councillors, and the actions of Epsom and Ewell MPs over the last 87 years.

With all good wishes

County Councillor Eber Kington

Residents Association Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington

[Ed: A right of reply was warranted but we now draw this particular debate to a close on our pages.]

Redrawing Surrey's political map - literally

24 June 2024



Major boundary changes could see some Surrey residents change wards for the next local elections in a redrawing of the political map of the county.

Council wards in Surrey are to increase by over 1,000 residents per councillor by 2029 in new county boundaries which have been drawn up.

Around 70% of ward boundaries will change as the Local Government Boundary Commission estimates an increase of nearly 90,000 people who are registered to vote.

The commission says the new layout - which would retain the 81 elected councillors we have today - would help the council to carry out its functions more effectively as it would even out the populations within each division.

The commission is the independent body which draws these boundaries based on community ties, similar electorate numbers and which facilities (e.g parks, leisure centres) it makes sense for people to share.

Varying levels of public consultation on draft proposals took place between February 2023 and March 2024.

Professor Colin Mellors, Chair of the Commission, said: "We are very grateful to people in Surrey. We looked at all the views they gave us. They helped us improve our earlier proposals. We believe the new arrangements will deliver electoral fairness while maintaining local ties."

Recommendations from the Commission cannot affect the Surrey county's external boundaries, or result in changes to postcodes. It does not have an effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. However, it may affect which ward someone is in.

The Commission is required by law to consider not the number of households, but the number of electors within each division. For instance, residents suggested East and West Molesey should be combined in a single council ward division. However, such a division covering the two borough wards of Molesey West and Molesey East would have 36% more electors than average. It was therefore not accepted because it would have a disproportionate number of eligible voters compared to other wards.

County councils elect its members once every four years. Surrey's next election is taking place in 2025. Currently, the Conservatives are the largest group with 49 councillors out of a total 81 seats. There are also 16 Liberal Democrats, two Green Party, two Labour (and Co-operative) councillors, four Independents, and 13 from different resident associations and groups.

Changes to ward boundaries will be made so each councillor represents roughly the same number of electors. Recommendations are based on how many electors (ie people registered to vote) there are "likely" to be in five years after the publication of the Committee's proposal.

Approximately 876,454 eligible voters lived in the county in 2022, averaging at 10,820 electors per councillor. The Commission estimates this number will increase by nearly 90,000 by 2029: Around 964,825 Surrey electors will be divided up to roughly 11,911 residents for each councillor. Just 24 ward boundaries out of 81 will stay the same.

Over 900 comments were made by people and organisations to help decide the new divisions. Changes in response to what local people said include altering the divisions in rural areas of Guildford, in response to fresh evidence on the 'community identity'.

For example, the village and civil parish of Ash was seen as more urban than rural, consequently moving out of the Worplesdon division and into Shalford. Additionally, Jacobs Well village was reviewed as having stronger community identity and rural connections with Worplesdon parish rather than neighbouring areas of Guildford."

The Commission opted against having two councillors representing one ward in the Elmbridge borough as SCC argued that larger divisions had the potential to "dilute democratic accountability". The Molesey Residents' Association said locals would find a two-member division confusing and that councillors might have difficulty representing a division on this scale."

The changes become law once Parliament has approved them. Staff at the council will ensure that the arrangements are in place for the 2025 elections.

Review and report: <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/surrey>

Image: Proposed Surrey County boundaries (Credit contains Ordnance Survey data Crown copyright and database rights 2024)

Up to 2003 MPs happy no Conservatives on Epsom and Ewell Council

24 June 2024



Dear Editor,

I note with interest the letter from Mr Kington "*Epsom and Ewell was the first Conservative free Council*" outlining the dire electoral fortunes of the Conservative Party in Epsom & Ewell. But he doesn't tell the full story.

With the odd exception, despite sporadic efforts by eccentric Tory candidates, it is true that it is only since 2003 that the Tories have made a concerted effort to gain seats on the council. The truth is that successive Tory MPs for the area seemed quite happy with the composition of the council due to the fact that, on the whole, the ruling group was made up of small 'C' conservatives and in some cases, card carrying Conservative and UKIP members.

It was during the Labour government, with local government being property funded, that they embarked on a spending spree with taxpayers money. But they gleefully reverted to type when the austerity obsessed Tory/Lib Dem coalition government came to power in 2010 that budgets were slashed following Tory edicts.

Yours faithfully,

Vince Romagnuolo

Former Epsom & Ewell Borough Councillor, 1999-2007, 2015-2019

Green view of Mole Valley elections

24 June 2024



Dear Editor,

In Mole Valley national issues probably mostly impacted the main parties who lost support. However these local election

results will be of little significance in the forthcoming General Election in Epsom and Ewell constituency for several reasons.

Firstly only a small area of Mole Valley falls within the parliamentary constituency of Epsom and Ewell, namely Ashted and Leatherhead. While these two areas will be very important to our campaign in the General Election there did appear to be some tactical or protest voting in the local elections in Mole Valley as there was no great change in turnout. In Leatherhead Liberal Democrats were elected with a similar vote compared with 2023 despite their record of supporting development in the Green Belt.

The Green Party targeted resources in the Dorking area of Mole Valley in order to maintain a previous strong showing there. Secondly, as local elections did not take place for the Epsom Borough Council area the bulk of voters in the Epsom and Ewell constituency were not able to express their choices at the ballot box.

Nevertheless the threat to the Green Belt will be one of the key issues in the General Election in Epsom and Ewell as a whole so voters will have a genuine opportunity to test candidates about this particular matter, which is of great priority for the Green Party, including in Ashted and Leatherhead where we will be actively campaigning to galvanise our support there.

Finally, whilst votes were quite well dispersed across different parties in the local elections in Mole Valley there will be even more parties standing in the General Election in Epsom and Ewell including the Green Party. The share of the vote will also probably be quite dispersed as a result in the General Election and in this scenario tactical voting will be of limited benefit. In such circumstances voters will be well advised to vote for policies they believe in, as a surprise result is quite likely.

Stephen McKenna

Prospective Parliamentary Candidate Green Party Epsom and Ewell

Epsom and Ewell was the first Conservative free Council

24 June 2024



Dear Editor,

I refer to your article on the May local elections headed “***First Surrey Borough with no Conservative Councillors***” and which includes the comment that “***The result makes it [Woking] the first council in Surrey not to have a single Conservative councillor.***” However, that is certainly not the case.

From 1937, when the Borough of Epsom and Ewell was created, and until 2003 (66 years), the Conservative Party was only represented on the Borough Council twice (and by a very small number of councillors). Since 2003 the Conservative Party has maintained a constant presence, but never larger than four in number and it is currently languishing at two.

Whilst I don’t wish to diminish the historical importance of the Conservative Party’s demise in Woking, they have had to face regular failures at the ballot box in Epsom and Ewell ever since George VI became King.

Yours faithfully,

Eber Kington

Residents Association County Councillor Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington

[Mr Kington is an Honorary Alderman of the Borough of Epsom and Ewell and served as Borough Councillor for many years.]

Two horse race coming to Epsom?

24 June 2024



The Liberal Democrats continue to tighten their grip on Epsom & Ewell's southern flank in Mole Valley, as the Party cements its position in Leatherhead. With two out of three seats in Leatherhead South now in the hands of the Lib Dems, the Conservatives are now down to just two seats in the whole of the Mole Valley district.

According to the Lib Dem PPC the general election stage in the wider Epsom & Ewell constituency is now set for a two horse race between the Liberal Democrat's **Helen Maguire** and the Conservative **Mhairi Fraser**.

Commenting on the recent Mole Valley Council elections results Helen Maguire said, "Each month we are knocking on 1000s of doors and hearing from residents who are understandably upset with the way this government is running this country. They are looking for a change. With the boundary changes, Labour declaring the seat a non-battleground seat and the Liberal Democrats now having more councillors than the Conservatives across the country, we know there is a good chance of change here in Epsom, Ewell, Ashted & Leatherhead."

Mhairi Fraser, the Conservative Prospective Parliamentary Candidate responded: "Although the results were not what we had hoped or worked hard for, I am incredibly proud of the integrity our local Conservative candidates showed. We ran an honest campaign focusing on what the Conservatives will continue to fight for on behalf of local residents, without resorting to attacking our individual opponents on the doorsteps or in our literature. I wish the new and re-elected councillors well in the term ahead, but the Conservatives will continue to be the loudest voice against the Liberal Democrats' plans to forever destroy our Green Belt, and to plaster tower blocks over the green spaces in our towns."

Mark Todd, Chair of the Epsom and Ewell Labour Party said: "'As a rule of thumb, Epsom town centre and the north of Epsom and Ewell are strong for Labour, as you move South the areas become more Conservative. We were very heartened therefore by the results in Leatherhead at the local elections. It was the first year Leatherhead has been part of the Epsom and Ewell Constituency and we fielded fantastic local candidates who live and work in the area. We got really good feedback on the doorstep and the Labour vote across Leatherhead increased by 73%. A similar swing will see us win the Epsom and Ewell constituency in the upcoming General Election."

The Labour Party is yet to select a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for the constituency. Epsom and Ewell Times has been informed that National Labour Party managers are conducting due diligence on all prospective MPs. Once they have completed this, they will give the Epsom and Ewell Labour Party a shortlist for local member's consideration.

Local Council elections in Mole Valley in Leatherhead, which will be within the recently changed boundaries of the Parliamentary Constituency of Epsom and Ewell, produced two Liberal Democrat victories on 2nd May. In Leatherhead North **Benjamin Wear** secured 671 votes with the Conservative candidate **Alan Gibbs** trailing with 327 votes. In Leatherhead South **Gareth Parsons** gained 970 votes against Conservative **Tim Hall** getting 714 votes.

Wards in Ashted also went to the polls and returned independent candidates with healthy majorities.

2019 General Election result:

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
 Conservative	Chris Grayling	31,819	53.5
 Liberal Democrats	Stephen Gee	13,946	23.5
 Labour	Ed Mayne	10,226	17.2
 Green	Janice Baker	2,047	3.4
 Independent	Clive Woodbridge	1,413	2.4
Majority		17,873	30.0
Turnout		59,451	73.3

Related reports:

Conservatives adopt new contender for Parliament

LibDem PPC awarded Medal by the King

Grayling not to contest a seventh election

Opposition unite against division of opposition

First Surrey Borough with no Conservative Councillors

Background to Image: Gordon Ednie License details. Heads added by Epsom and Ewell Times.

First Surrey Borough with no Conservative Councillors

24 June 2024



The Conservatives have been wiped out in Woking after voters handed the Liberal Democrats a huge mandate. The final tally tightened the Lib Dems grip on power giving them 24 seats, up four from last year's election – and left the Tories with none and Labour with just one seat on the bankrupt local authority. The remaining five seats are held by independents.

The Conservatives came into the day holding just four of the council's 30 seats but they failed to hold on to any as ward after ward continued to punish the party – which as recently as 2021 had been the borough's largest group.

The result makes it the first council in Surrey not to have a single Conservative councillor and serves as a major warning to the party of a difficult road ahead in the upcoming general election.

Josh Brown, the former Conservative councillor who lost his seat in the Byfleet and Byfleet West ward said: "The Woking Conservatives will continue to hold the Liberal Democrats, Independent and Labour on the council to account with regards to increases in council tax and increased borrowing."

He would later add: "People of Woking have clearly had their say and we respect that, but the process going forward is who is going to hold this super majority to account? "I think there will be a muted scrutiny function and that Woking and all of our residents will be worse off."

The biggest swing of the day came in Canalside with the Liberal Democrats overturning a Labour majority of 570 to take the seat.

Leader of the Council Councillor Ann-Marie Barker, who held on to her Goldsworth Park seat said: "It's a huge result for the Liberal Democrats, given the year we've had (referencing the Section 114 bankruptcy notice).

"To get such an overwhelming majority, resulting in existing councillors with increased majorities and gaining four seats. It's a massive responsibility and we've got a huge mandate to take it forward and we've showed that we can do that over the last couple of years. Scrutiny is very important. We still have independent and Labour councillors, but the importance for scrutiny is critical friends and constructive criticism – and that should come from both within and beyond the group.

"First priority is to get the new councillors trained inducted and working on their roles to deliver for residents and clearly finances are in our mind all the time and our work to deliver on our budget and next year's budget."

Related reports:

[PM confident of success in Woking](#)

[Woking's whopping bail out and tax rise](#)

[The knives are out in Woking](#)

[Woking's debt crisis explained](#)

Epsom and Ewell was the first Conservative free Council

Police post taken down before election

24 June 2024



The Surrey Police and Crime Commission social media team were made to remove a graphic from Twitter, now X and Facebook after a complaint it could influence the May 2 elections.

The post was made during the run up to the election when public bodies are supposed to remain completely impartial to avoid favouring any one candidate or using taxpayer money to look to influence voters.

The message said it had re-opened funding for local services that promote community safety, support children and young people and help reduce reoffending in Surrey. It was accompanied by an image that showed more than £2m had been provided to support local services in the last financial year.

The complainant, the Liberal Democrat Councillor for Bagshot and North Windlesham Richard Wilson, felt this was a breach of pre-election publicity rules.

Writing to the Monitoring Officer, he said: “Any reasonable person would conclude that the post, in particular its use of the graphics, is likely to improve the electorate’s opinion of the incumbent PCC (Police and Crime Commissioner). This constitutes a breach of the guidance and, therefore, of the rules laid out in the Acts.

“It would be possible to direct readers to the funding website without publicising the £2m which has already been provided. This piece of information is wholly unnecessary and its purpose is clearly to promote the PCC. This is a use of public resources to influence an election.”

After receiving the complaint, Alison Bolton, chief executive and monitoring officer of the Police and Crime Commission, told the communication team to delete the images but felt the text was fine to be republished – and did not merit an apology.

Media policies had been reviewed ahead of the pre-election period and the use of social media and their website has been “significantly” limited, she added.

The posts were scheduled, she said, as the funding process opened on April 1 and they wanted to give organisations the greatest amount of time possible to apply. She said: “Your view that the posts are “likely to improve the electorate’s opinion of the incumbent PCC” is arguably a subjective one. I can assure you that the posts were made in good faith by comms colleagues with the intention of promoting a funding opportunity and not, as you suggest, to “promote the PCC. “We had purposefully not made reference to the incumbent PCC or included any images of her.

“That said, I recognise that the aim of promoting the funds could have been achieved with a simpler post and as such, I have asked my colleagues to remove the posts that include the ‘graphic’. We will re-issue the link, but I don’t believe that issuing an apology is necessary.”

A spokesperson for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner said it restricted its output to some “business-as-usual work” in line with pre-election guidelines.

They said: “On April 3, the Communications Team posted a message on social media highlighting the process for which organisations and services can apply to our funding streams which opened for the new financial year two days earlier on April 1.

“These streams provide vital support for some of the most vulnerable people in our communities including victims of crime, young people and domestic abuse survivors as well as funding important projects that enhance community safety across Surrey.

“Allocating these funds and commissioning these important services is a significant role that the OPCC undertakes and we wanted to give local organisations the greatest amount of time possible to apply. The message posted did not name or reference the current PCC or contain any image of her. However the message did have an accompanying graphic which highlighted the amount of funding the office had provided to support local services during the last financial year.

“The post was created in good faith with the intention of promoting the funding opportunity and was not designed to promote the current Commissioner. However upon review by the OPCC Monitoring Officer, the decision was taken to remove the graphic and replace it with one that had removed the reference to the amount of funding given last year to avoid any inference during the pre-election period.

“The current commissioner was not aware and did not have any involvement in the creation of the original message.”

The elections for the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner take place countywide on Thursday May 2. Counting takes place the following day with the results expected around 2pm.

The vote takes place across Surrey with the count taking place the following day with the result expected to be announced between 3pm and 4pm.

Related reports:

Surrey’s next Police and Crime Commissioner will be?

Epsom and Ewell candidates dominate Police Commissioner election

Surrey Police funding: not a fair cop

The Cost of Surrey's Crime Commissioner: "It's criminal"?

County divisions - have your say on changes

24 June 2024



New boundaries are being proposed for council divisions in Surrey County Council including in **Epsom and Ewell**.

The **Local Government Boundary Commission** wants to hear what residents and local organisations think about the proposals. A ten-week consultation on the proposals will run until 16 October 2023.

The Commission is the independent body that draws these boundaries. It is reviewing Surrey to make sure councillors will represent about the same number of electors, and that division arrangements will help the council work effectively.

The Commission has published proposals for changes to Surrey. It is proposing that there should be 81 single-councillor divisions.

In respect of Epsom and Ewell the Commission reports:

"Epsom & Ewell has been allocated five councillors, each councillor representing on average 6% more electors than the county average.

We received two proposals for this borough, from the Council, who proposed a minimal level of change from the existing division arrangements, and from the **Epsom & Ewell Constituency Labour Party**. The proposal from the local Labour Party, while offering helpful information about deprivation levels throughout the borough, and proposing 100% coterminosity, offered poor levels of electoral equality for several divisions, including 12% fewer electors than average in Town division, and 21% more electors than average in Epsom Common & Downs.

Epsom Town & Downs, Epsom West and West Ewell

We have adopted the Council's proposals for these divisions. The Labour proposal, which kept entire wards within single divisions throughout the borough, placed Stamford ward within a southern division, proposed to be called Epsom Common & Downs, resulting in very poor electoral inequality for this ward. In contrast, the Council's proposal, while splitting wards, offered good electoral equality, and used the strong boundary of the railway line through the centre of Epsom Town.

The only proposed change from the existing divisions we are making is to unify Horton ward within Epsom West division, placing electors on Oakwood Avenue, McKenzie Way and neighbouring streets in Epsom West division. This was proposed by the Council, and both improves coterminosity, and ensures that these electors are not isolated within West Ewell division as they are at present, and we have adopted it as part of our draft recommendations. The remaining boundaries of West Ewell division, including the borough wards of Ruxley, West Ewell and the northern section of Court ward, are unchanged from the existing arrangements.

Ewell and Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington

Both proposals received suggested identical boundaries for these divisions, which we have adopted as part of our draft recommendations. There was a disagreement over the name of Ewell division, with the Labour proposal suggesting retaining the existing name, while the Council proposal suggested replicating the names of the constituent borough wards, and naming this division as Stoneleigh, Ewell Village & Nonsuch.

We considered this proposed name change carefully but, while retaining an open mind, have not included it as part of our draft recommendations. While we note that the northernmost division (Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington) has a name comprising the three wards constituting the division, we note that we are proposing to retain the existing boundaries for Ewell division, and that it may cause confusion for electors if the name of the division is changed but the boundaries remain unchanged. The Council did not provide significant evidence in favour of its proposed name, and we would welcome further evidence from residents and other interested parties as to whether a different name might better reflect the communities in this area.

Launching the consultation Professor **Colin Mellors**, Chair of the Commission, said: *"We want people in Surrey to help us.*

"We have drawn up proposals for new divisions in Surrey. We want to make sure these new electoral arrangements reflect communities. We also want them to be easy to understand and convenient for local people. Residents and local organisations can help us do that. We would like them to let us know whether they agree with our proposals before we take final decisions.

"It's easy to get involved. Go to our website. Or you can e-mail or write to us. Just tell us what you think and give us some details why you think that. It's really simple, so do get involved."

The Commission has a dedicated section on its website where people can see the detail of the proposals and comment on the names of divisions and their boundaries: <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/surrey>.

People can also give their views by e-mail at reviews@lgbce.org.uk, and by post:

Review Officer (Surrey) LGBCE, PO Box 133 Blyth NE24 9FE

This consultation relates to arrangements for local government elections. It is separate from the review of parliamentary constituencies that has recently concluded.

An interactive map is available at <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/surrey>

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body accountable to Parliament. It recommends fair electoral and boundary arrangements for local authorities in England. In doing so, it aims to:

- Make sure that, within an authority, each councillor represents a similar number of electors
- Create boundaries that are appropriate, and reflect community ties and identities
- Deliver reviews informed by local needs, views and circumstances
- Reflect the request for single-member divisions

Epsom & Ewell local election results

24 June 2024



All the results are in and the Residents' Associations, as expected, retain control of the Borough Council. The Liberal Democrats gained two seats by winning all three seats in College Ward. With the retirement of LibDem **David Gulland** the Party's group leader **Julie Morris** is joined by new LibDem Councillors **James Lawrence** and **Julian Freeman**. The third slot gained at the expense of the sitting Councillor **Nigel Collin** of the RA. The other LibDem gain was top of the poll in Stamford, **Alison Kelly**.

Bernie Muir of the Conservatives had represented Stamford Ward but chanced her arm in the newly created ward of Horton and topped the poll. She and her Conservative colleague **Kieran Persand** beat long-serving and senior RA Councillor and former Mayor **Eber Kington** and new RA arrival **Henal Ladwa**.

Mr Kington had surrendered a safe seat in Ewell Court Ward to contest the new Horton Ward, where he lives. This defeat was despite Mr Kington recently leading a popular motion to pause the progress of the Draft Local Plan, to see what the Government is up to exactly with central housing targets.

The Residents' Associations won 26 seats. Liberal Democrats 4. Labour 3 and Conservatives 2.

However, the share of the total Borough vote shows the Conservatives (20%) having a greater share than the Liberal Democrats (17%) and Labour (15%). The Greens, who fought a few wards, failed to cross the line and have no Councillors.

The turnout of 19867 votes compares favourably with the 2019 turnout of 19051 and perhaps shows that fears of a downturn in turnout because of the new requirement for photo ID being presented at polling stations has not been made out.

Related Reports:

[Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Election Results 2023](#)

[Why vote Liberal Democrat in Epsom and Ewell?](#)

[Why vote Conservative in Epsom and Ewell?](#)

[Turn up to turn downturn in turnout!](#)

[Worrying about voter ID law](#)

No photo - no vote!

Cautious candidates cause College and Court cancellations

Why vote Green in Epsom and Ewell?

Horton hustings heat up election

Beginning to line up for local elections

Register to vote deadline for elections

4th May Surrey goes to the polls

We are very very sorry for hustings hosting hash

Why vote Labour in Epsom and Ewell?

Why vote for the Residents' Associations in Epsom and Ewell?

Horton hustings heat up election

24 June 2024



Conservatives, Labour and Residents Associations battled out their political differences at the hustings Tuesday. Held at local Southfield Park Primary School. Candidates for the new ward of Horton each presented themselves for 3 minutes and then opened to questions. The audience may or may not have contained any genuine floating voters. It was difficult to tell.

Mark Todd and Ros Gordon opened proceedings for Labour, followed by Henal Ladwa and Eber Kington for the Residents' Associations. Kieran Persand and Bernie Muir rounded off for the Conservatives.

The Liberal Democrat candidates did not attend.

The candidates were united in their opposition to the development of Green Belt in Epsom and Ewell, especially on Horton Farm. However, there were differences as to who should get credit for initiating the pause to the progress of the draft Local Plan. Bernie Muir (Conservative) claimed to have written to every other Councillor advising a pause was necessary. Eber Kington (RA) disclosed that he had been pressing for this earlier in emails to fellow RA Councillors and Council officers. It was Cllr Kington who tabled an emergency motion to pause the Local Plan.

A member of the audience highlighted the recent announcement of Sir Keir Starmer Leader of the Labour Party that Labour would reinstate targets and fight nimbyism. Albeit, giving the housing targets to local government to determine.

Mr Kington attacked Labour's expansion of the ULEZ zone to the London borders of Epsom and Ewell but Mark Todd made no apology for this and maintained it was necessary to protect the health of children.

There were some moments of tension and friction but all the candidates were warmly applauded for the courage of their standing for election and for allowing the public an opportunity to scrutinise them.

The hustings was organised by Epsom and Ewell Times and we thank all the candidates for participating.

Photo credit: Steven McCormick Photography

Left to right: Ros Gordon, Mark Todd, Bernie Muir, Kieran Persand, (Lionel Blackman - Chair), Henal Ladwa and Eber Kington.

Don't forget your ID when you vote

24 June 2024



Thursday, May 4th, is election day in all of Surrey's 11 boroughs and districts. This means voters in Elmbridge, **Epsom and Ewell**, Guildford, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Tandridge, Waverley, and Woking will be going to the polls.

These are the councils that decide planning matters, housing, and bin collections. With a year to go until the next general election this could serve as an indication of the national mood towards the current government.

As ever, voters will have plenty of questions about the rules and what needs to be taken to polling stations - even more so in the light of recent changes to voter ID requirements.

The Local Democracy Reporting Service answers some of the most common questions so voters can be armed with everything they need to know as they head to their polling stations between 7am and 10pm.

Changes to voter ID rules - Bring ID

These local elections will be the first where all voters need photo ID in order to cast their ballot. Forms of ID accepted at polling stations will include a driving licence, passport, Blue Badge, Oyster 60+ Card, Older Person's Bus Pass and more. Equivalent travel cards for young people, such as the Oyster 18+ card, will not be accepted forms of ID.

Expired ID, for example an out-of-date passport, is allowed so long as the photograph still bears a strong resemblance.

The full list is [HERE](#)

Where do I go to vote?

Vote at the polling station listed on your polling card. Your poll card is for information only, you do not need to bring it with you to vote. If you do not know where your card is, you can always check your polling station location by entering your postcode [here](#).

Ballot papers

Your ballot paper will list out all the candidates and parties you can vote for. You may be given more than one ballot paper, particularly if there is a parish council election happening in your area on the same day. Take your ballot into a polling booth, so no one can see how you vote. Read it carefully as it will tell you how to cast your vote. Mark your paper according to your own wishes, fold it in half and put it in the ballot box.

What time do polling stations shut?

Polling stations always open at 7am and close at 10pm. If you want to avoid a queue it's best to head down during the workday or in the evening as it tends to be the busiest first thing in the morning, before school run, and around 5pm-6pm after work. People who are in the queue before closing time are still allowed to vote, regardless of whether you are inside or outside the building.

Can I take my own pen to vote in the 2023 Local Elections?

There is nothing in the legislation that says ballot papers must be marked with a pencil. Pencils are provided in polling stations but you can choose to take a pen with you. There is a risk ink may transfer onto the other side of the ballot paper when folded, and if it looks like the voter has chosen more than one candidate, it could potentially lead to their vote being rejected. Some people prefer to use a pen in case someone erases their cross and adds one elsewhere.

Can I take a selfie when I vote?

Although not against the law to take a selfie at a polling station, it is strongly discouraged in or near a voting booth. Anyone who reveals how someone else voted, even without meaning to, could be fined £5,000 or get sent to prison for six months. Voting is supposed to be secret and it's illegal to share a photo of a ballot paper - including your own - under Section 66 of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

Can I bring my dog?

Please do! Pictures of dogs at polling stations are one of the highlights of any election.

Why vote for the Residents' Associations in Epsom

and Ewell?

24 June 2024



Exclusive to the Epsom and Ewell Times we have brought you statements from each Party standing for election to the local council this Thursday 4th May. We conclude today with the ruling Residents Associations.

The Residents' Association (RA) is independent and not a political party. Rather it is a group of individuals who live in the Borough and are passionate about keeping party politics and rhetoric out of local government decision making. At a time when national politics is in disarray, it is more important than ever that our residents have independent representation.

Photo: RA candidates clockwise from top-left: McCormick, Frost and Froud - Woodcote and Langley Vale; Beckett and Talbot - Auriol; Kington and Ladwa - Horton; Dalton - Stoneleigh; Day, Brooks and Collin - College. "Say Her Name" is from the "Reclaim These Streets" march that Cllr Dalton organised following the rape of a female jogger in Nonsuch Park.

Why RA?

RA candidates stand out from their national political party counterparts; manifestos are written by the candidate using their understanding and insight of the issues which are important to residents. Manifestos are factual, demonstrating a track record of delivery, the commitment to continue to work hard and do our best for our residents. This is in sharp contrast to some of the disappointing negative and baseless campaign messages we see elsewhere.

The Local Plan

As a local authority council, we face many challenges because of central government planning policy to build houses and the data used to set housing numbers. We have listened to our residents and their concerns in response to the recent draft Local Plan consultation (Regulation 18), and we will continue to consult with you and listen, as well as lobby Westminster on new national planning policy and legislation.

Government funding

The outcome of central government's Fairer Funding Review from 2016 remains outstanding as does the outcome of their National Waste Strategy. These combined with the continued one-year government funding arrangements creates uncertainty around our longer-term funding. At a time when many local authorities are facing significant financial pressures, Epsom and Ewell BC under an RA led administration continues to have strong financial management and deliver best value for our residents. This is in sharp comparison to other politically led councils in Surrey and further afield.

The Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ)

The London Mayor's decision to expand ULEZ is going to impact many of our residents and businesses negatively. RA councillors will continue to work with other effected Councils to oppose these plans.

RA track record of delivery

As an RA led council, Epsom and Ewell BC has a long track record of working for you. In the last four years we have delivered:

- o A wide range of Council services across the Borough, despite retaining only 10% of council tax.
- o Support to the community during COVID, including the timely distribution of grants to local businesses.
- o A Youth Skills hub that has helped hundreds of young people find work, training and education.
- o Electric vehicle charging points in Council run car parks as part of our Climate Change Action Plan.
- o A reduction in our homelessness numbers.
- o Safer Streets and CCTV in Epsom Town Centre.

The next 4 years

We will:

- o Continue to listen to you and represent you.
- o Keep our Borough safe and secure.
- o Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities with a focus on those who are more vulnerable.
- o Work with partners so that the Borough is a place where people want to live, work and visit.
- o Enhance the borough's natural assets, preserving and increasing biodiversity.
- o Work to meet our ambitious target of becoming Carbon Neutral by 2035.
- o Promote our rich history and heritage with further events and activities.
- o Keep national party politics out of local decision making.

I hope that you will vote for your RA candidates on May 4th and continue to see the benefits that an independently led council has on delivering for you through keeping national party politics out of the decisions which impact you.

Cllr Hannah Dalton

Chair, Residents' Association Majority Group

Ed: The Residents' Associations are fielding candidates in all 14 wards in the Borough

Related reports:

[Why vote Green in Epsom and Ewell?](#)

[Why vote Labour in Epsom and Ewell?](#)

[Why vote Liberal Democrat in Epsom and Ewell?](#)

[Why vote Conservative in Epsom and Ewell?](#)

[Epsom and Ewell Times 4th May Local Election coverage](#)

Why vote Conservative in Epsom and Ewell?

24 June 2024



Exclusive to the Epsom and Ewell Times we are bringing you statements from each Party standing for election to the local council this Thursday 4th May. We continue today with the Conservative Party.

This set of local elections in Epsom & Ewell are the most important for a generation. On Thursday 8th May your vote will shape the future landscape of our town for years to come. Never has your decision at the ballot box for a council election needed to be so carefully considered, it's a big responsibility and that is why you must vote for the candidates with professional experience, vote for the candidates who have already proved themselves in your neighbourhood, vote for your Conservative candidates.

Top image: Conservative Candidates Bernie Muir and Kieran Persand (Horton) and Michael Ware (College)

The Resident's Association has controlled the Borough Council for an astonishing 87 years! Democracy dictates that good governance needs robust opposition to scrutinise and hold to account, unfettered power invariably leads to poor outcomes. Sadly, for our town, this flaw in our council has been dramatically demonstrated in the disastrous local plan put forward by the RA this year.

The stuttering and stumbling journey the RA controlled council took to arrive at the decision to tear up 137 acres of green belt and disregard all our brownfield sites is almost more shocking than the plan itself. A consultation that reeked of laziness and narrowmindedness. Town planning consultants employed who freely admitted they had no local knowledge and offered to do the work on the cheap. A process that neglected to even review Epsom's historic conservation areas rules. A professionally designed alternative plan commissioned by Conservative MP, Chris Grayling, to redevelop brownfield disregarded with a 'can't be bothered' attitude. Stark warnings not to build on areas vulnerable to flooding ignored. The complacency of 87 years means our town is being put at risk by a plan for our future that 10,000 people of Epsom have already rejected.

The plan has been paused but be in no doubt this has been done because as RA Councillor Alex Coley admitted when asked why the local plan had taken so long at a public meeting in March, "we are terrified of you lot!" In other words, terrified of losing their cosy seats! The danger is that, if when the election is over, the status quo is restored, the RA's fiefdom is re-established the catastrophic plan will be ploughed ahead with.

The only way to stop this is if there is a strong and effective opposition and the only opposition that is strong and effective is a Conservative opposition. Your Conservative borough Councillor, Bernie Muir has done more alone to hold the RA to account and speak up for residents than all other opposition Councillors put together. She has worked across the whole borough, not just in her own ward. Bernie has also built a team of volunteers and activists to help her fight the decisions the RA council have been making in your name. Those volunteers and activists are now your Conservatives candidates.

Michael Ware in College who worked tirelessly on the shambles of the Chalk Pit expansion while Lib Dem College Councillor Julie Morris said nothing and did nothing as thick dust was falling on our cars and washing. Stephen Pontin in Stamford an experienced councillor who campaigned alongside Bernie to successfully save the Wells Community Centre while the Lib Dems ignored the issue. Kieran Persand who ran surveys and petitions in Horton to inform locals about

flooding worries and anti-social driving in Horton Lane while Labour and the Lib Dems ignored Horton until it became a ward on the electoral map. And never forget Labour and the Lib Dems will not oppose ULEZ while the Conservatives are leading the fight against Sadiq Khan and his tax on Surrey's drivers.

Our team are professional people, lawyers, engineers, accountants, schoolteachers, who all bring their expertise from their lives to bear on council issues. They will be councillors of calibre, councillors who will scrutinise, councillors who will get things done.



Emma Ware, Woodcote & Langley Vale Conservative Candidate

We understand that for some of you this will be the first time you don't vote for the RA in a local election, your patience has finally run out, but when moving your pencil tentatively across the ballot paper, ask yourself why you are changing your vote? Is it because you want a more professional council? Is it because you want councillors who have a proven track record of delivering for your neighbourhood? Is it because you want a councillor who will speak up and hold the RA to account? If your answer is yes, then let your stubby election pencil land on the box for the Conservative candidate and you will be choosing a brighter future for Epsom & Ewell. Written by **Emma Ware**

Ed: The Conservatives are fielding candidates in all 14 wards in the Borough

Related reports:

[Why vote Green in Epsom and Ewell?](#)

[Why vote Labour in Epsom and Ewell?](#)

[Why vote Liberal Democrat in Epsom and Ewell?](#)

[Epsom and Ewell Times 4th May Local Election coverage](#)