



Surrey leaders review spending review

Government Spending Review Falls Short for Surrey Councils and Epsom Hospital, Say Local Leaders

The UK Government's latest Spending Review has drawn a mixed reaction from Surrey leaders, with concerns mounting over local council finances and delays to urgently needed hospital upgrades in the Epsom area.

Surrey County Council: Welcome Commitments, Ongoing Pressures

Responding to the Chancellor's announcements, Surrey County Council Leader Cllr Tim Oliver acknowledged "important announcements," including increases in core funding for local government, funding pledges for children's services, and a renewed commitment to reforming Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision.

However, Cllr Oliver warned that the headline increase in "core spending power" rests on councils raising council tax by the full 5%—a move that may place strain on households during a cost-of-living crisis. Even with that assumption, county and unitary authorities across England are projected to face a £2.2 billion funding gap next year.

"Whilst our finances have been transformed to a point where we have delivered stable, balanced budgets year after year," Oliver said, "we are not exempt from the financial challenges faced by councils."

Oliver stressed the urgency of the upcoming *Fair Funding Review*, calling for a "fair and proportionate" outcome to ensure long-term stability for local authorities like Surrey.

Locally, the council has invested an additional £15 million into a three-year SEND recovery plan, begun in September 2023, which is reportedly beginning to bear fruit. But Oliver added that the government's announcements stop short of tackling deeper issues. "Provision and support for children with SEND is a systemic issue... and the current system does not work for families, schools or councils," he said.

SEND Deficits and Budget Certainty

Perhaps the sharpest criticism came over the government's silence on the spiralling SEND deficits many councils face. Without intervention, these deficits—currently kept off balance sheet—will be formally accounted for from next April.

"Many local authorities, including Surrey, are facing a continuing increase in demand in comparison with levels of funding received," Oliver said. "Councils will soon start planning their budgets for next year and cannot afford to have this can kicked down the road any longer."

Future of Local Government in Surrey

The Spending Review did include a continued commitment to *Local Government Reorganisation* (LGR)—a development welcomed by Surrey County Council. Surrey recently submitted a proposal to transition to two unitary authorities, a move that could reshape local government in the county.

"We have worked hard to form that proposal," said Oliver, "to deliver the best possible outcome for Surrey residents."

Local MPs Condemn "Missed Opportunity" for Epsom & St Helier Hospitals

Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrat MPs for Epsom & Ewell, Carshalton & Wallington, and Sutton & Cheam expressed deep disappointment over the absence of additional investment in the long-delayed redevelopment of Epsom & St Helier Hospitals.

Despite a known £150 million repair backlog, the government has only committed £12 million to date, with the timeline for a new specialist emergency hospital now postponed until 2033 under the Labour government. Local MPs Bobby Dean, Helen Maguire, and Luke Taylor said this continued delay threatens the "very future of our hospitals."

"The Government has missed a massive opportunity to deliver real change for Epsom & St Helier Hospitals," they said in a joint statement. "£12 million is simply a drop in the ocean."

The trio highlighted years of cross-party pressure in Westminster, including Prime Minister's Questions and debates, aimed at securing vital upgrades for the "crumbling" estate. "After 14 years of broken promises, the Government has an opportunity to do better," they added.

Rising Council Tax on the Horizon

Further national analysis has added to concerns around the financial implications of the Spending Review for local authorities. Paul Johnson, Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), noted that while English local government fared "perhaps a little bit better than it might have expected," there is a "sting in the tail": council tax bills are now set to rise at their fastest rate of any



parliament since 2001–2005.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves confirmed that councils' *core spending power* will rise by 2.6% annually from next year. However, this figure is based on the assumption that councils will impose the full 5% annual increase in council tax—an option many local authorities may feel compelled to take. "We won't be going above that," Reeves said. "That is the council tax policy that we inherited from the previous Government, and that we will be continuing."

Liberal Democrat deputy leader Daisy Cooper described the overall package as a "missed opportunity," warning that council budgets—especially in areas such as social care—remain "very, very stretched." She added: "The Government is now looking to local councils to put up council tax to plug the gap in these particular areas... We cannot wait. This can't be kicked down the road any longer. The Government has got to act now."

For residents of Epsom and Ewell, the message is clear: whether through delays to vital infrastructure or increasing local taxation, the burden of national decisions may be felt most acutely at the community level.

9 year process finalised for 1200 Surrey homes

The final planning application of the 1,200-home Deepcut regeneration project has been approved. The massive housing project was given the initial green light back in 2014 when Surrey Heath Borough Council agreed the site was suitable for the major residential development. Now, nine years later, the final reserved matter has been signed off, with members at the Thursday, June 5, planning committee bursting into spontaneous applause in celebration of the milestone.

The former Princess Royal Barracks covers 114 hectares. What was once a military site has been slowly transformed into 1,200 homes, public open spaces, community buildings, a primary school and new retail and commercial opportunities. The decade-long project was divided into three housing phases, and three non-residential ones. All had been agreed with the exception of last Thursday's.

Councillors unanimously approved Weston Homes' bid to transform the redundant security hut and Sergeants, together with car parking, into 37 new homes, of which five will be marketed as affordable. Planning officer Sarita Bishop told the meeting, in between the cheers: "Members, I am delighted to bring this application to you this evening. It is the last reserved matter on Deepcut. We have finally got there. This is phase 4H, and unlike the rest of the scenes that we've looked at, this is actually quite separate to the main Deepcut site."

The process has moved slowly but surely towards the finish line as the different stages got approved. In August last year, the council signed off on a new sports pavilion as part of the final application for infrastructure, to sit alongside the sports hub and play area. More recently, in November 2024, a care home that will act as a gateway to the development was granted permission.

Image: Final reserved matters approved for Deepcut (Surrey Heath)

Oxshott High Street redeveloping?

Plans to redevelop part of a Surrey high street have been put forward.

Oxshott village store and post office and a former takeaway spot could be knocked down and transformed into a whole new high street development. The proposal features two large commercial spaces on the ground floor for residents, and nine apartments spread over the first and second floors.

"This is a significant opportunity to improve the character and appearance of this part of the High Street," planning documents state. Details reveal the new building design will be traditional and reference the neo-classical/Georgian style houses which match the surrounding character of Oxshott.

For market sale, the property could consist of 6 one-bed and 3 two-bed flats in the heart of the high street. This reflects the most critical type of housing needed in Elmbridge borough and will help fill the gap between the existing shortfall, according to the planning statement.

Planning permission was previously granted on the site in October 2023 for a similar scheme to create five apartments. The new



proposal seeks four extra homes to be added, as well as including additional land from The Victoria pub to the back of the site for an extra eight parking spaces.

Oxshott village store and post office, (No. 50 on the high street) is currently a two-story building at 8.52m. But under the proposed development plans the height would scale up to 12m tall rather than the 9.65m previously approved.

Only one person has objected to the scheme so far, claiming the new design is “overbearing and will adversely dominate the high street”. Concerns were also raised by residents in the comments’ section that the path would be obstructed during the demolition and development of the buildings and how construction would operate on the site.

Not the only part of the village’s high street to get a new look, the Heath buildings opposite to the village store and post office will also be redeveloped after planning permission was agreed in October 2024. The new Heath buildings will be 13.2m tall from the ridge.

Comments on the application are welcome on Elmbridge Borough Council’s website until July 4, with a target decision date for July 17.

Grafton Stables to Remain Green Space

Grafton Stables in Cuddington, a 13.5-acre green space bordered by residential properties, is set to remain open to the public after Surrey County Council (SCC) confirmed it will be managed by the council’s Countryside Team.

Earlier this year, the council placed the land on the market with the potential for housing development—sparking local concerns that up to 40 homes could be built on the site. The move led to significant opposition from residents, local groups and councillors, who argued that the site’s mature trees—some protected by Tree Preservation Orders—and its value as a community green space made it unsuitable for development.

Local County Councillor **Eber Kingston** (RA Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington) met with SCC officials to highlight planning restrictions and the importance of the site to the community. “I felt there was a strong case against the sale,” he said. “The site is a vital part of our local green space network.”

Cuddington Residents’ Association, the local sports community at Wandgas Sports and Social Club and other campaigners also put forward an alternative bid to retain much of the green space, alongside limited development to fund its upkeep. Meanwhile, Cuddington Borough Councillors Kim Spickett and Phil Neale launched petitions that attracted more than 1,000 signatures.

In March, a motion was passed at County Hall, calling for SCC to adopt a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy—a process that allows local authorities to transfer land to community groups at less than market value if it promotes social and environmental well-being. With no existing CAT policy at SCC, Councillor Kingston’s motion cleared the way for Grafton Stables to be considered under such a scheme.

Following discussions, SCC has now confirmed that the site has been withdrawn from sale and will instead be managed as a public green space. Resident Julie Willis, who has lived next to Grafton Stables since childhood, welcomed the decision. “It’s an incredible outcome for the community and for the trees and wildlife that call this space home,” she said.

No details have yet been released on how the new countryside management arrangements will operate, but residents and community groups are expected to be invited to help shape the future of Grafton Stables.

Related report:

[Shock as Surrey Council Puts Protected Woodland Up for Auction](#)

Surrey examines a plea for a 20mph road

A campaigner says a Surrey council is “missing the point” about safety as hopes for a 20mph speed limit on a rural road have been scuppered.

Surrey County Council (SCC) claim the traffic measures on Ford Road in Bisley would be too costly.



Dr Ayres started a petition for a 20mph speed limit, arguing residents should be able to get to the shops without “such fear and intimidation that they experienced when confronted by coaches and HGVs at 30mph”.

He presented his campaign at a SCC Highways, Transport and Economic Growth meeting on June 3.

Over 120 people signed the petition calling for the current 30mph speed limit to be lowered to protect pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and other road users from the increase in traffic, particularly HGVs.

Several large commercial premises are located on Lucas Green Road. Often HGVs will come off the A322 Guildford Road, drive through Ford Road to get to their destination.

Matt Furniss, cabinet member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth Decisions, said he recognises the concerns raised but said that drivers generally comply with the 30mph speed limit on the narrow rural road and that it has a relatively good safety record.

But Dr Ayres slammed the council’s response for “missing the fundamental point of this petition” by focusing on the HGVs and drivers on the road. He said it was about “the safety and wellbeing of the vulnerable road users who frequent Ford Road”.

He said: “I do not accept commercial interests in Lucas Green Road should dictate what happens in Ford Road.”

The road has a “relatively good safety record”, according to a report, with only one personal injury collision in 2021 in the 10 year period between November 2014- October 2024.

As the current speed limit is 30mph, and the existing average speed is over 28mph, council documents state the road would need more than just a sign to reduce the speed successfully.

These measures could consist of road humps, raised road tables, road narrowing, chicanes and priority give way pinch points.

The report read: “The cost of introducing traffic calming measures over such a length of road (approximately 2km) would be substantial, especially since significant improvements to the existing street lighting are likely to be required to comply with the appropriate design standards for the installation of traffic calming measures.”

Council officers also warned the additional features could have negative effects; for instance, traffic tables could cause noise and vibration from the HGVs or that speed cushions could even lead to road damage.

Concerns were also raised that if the speed limit changed to 20mph on Ford Road, residents on Lucas Green Road would also want a reduced speed limit.

The report said, given the roads are interlinking and are similar in character and measures introduced in one road are likely to have impacts on the other road, introducing traffic measurements would likely create “significant concern” for those residents on the other road.

A traffic engineer said: “We’re aware of the issues and hopefully we can in the future change the speed limit.” She added the council will include the road on a list for schemes that need funding in the future.

Surrey schools shorter Summers?

Summer holidays could be shortened in Surrey in favour of a longer October half-term break, after a county council decision. The change by Surrey County Council (SCC) means the October half term will now be two weeks long instead of the normal one week, with five days taken off the usual summer holiday period in July 2027 instead.

A public opinion survey carried out from December 2024 received 3,775 responses. Approximately 56 per cent of people agreed with having a two week autumn half term, while 36 per cent opposed the idea. Clare Curran, SCC Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, said the results from recent public consultations with schools and residents show “there is a clear appetite for change”. She said 60 per cent of schools that responded were in favour of a two week autumn half term, 30 per cent were against, and a further 10 per cent were undecided.

The two week autumn half-term break for community and voluntary controlled schools will begin in the 2026/27 academic year. Cllr Curran added: “This work is in response to the national conversation regarding school term times, and the feedback received by the council from schools, school staff, and families regarding the challenges of differing term dates. It is our intent to facilitate the council, schools and multi academy trusts working in partnership to set term dates that are consistent across the county.” The school year will still have 195 days, including five INSET days, the council said.



Related reports:

Surrey schools not out for so long in summer?

Interview with the New Mayor of Epsom and Ewell - Cllr Robert Leach

Cllr **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch) was elected Mayor of the Borough of Epsom and Ewell at the Council meeting on 13th May 2025. The *Epsom and Ewell Times* put some questions to the new Mayor about his plans, priorities, and personal reflections as he embarks on his year of office.

EET: You are championing three charities during your Mayoral year. Could you tell us why you chose these particular charities?

Mayor Robert Leach: As my role relates solely to the borough of Epsom and Ewell, I focused on charities that primarily operate here. I was looking for organisations with the capacity to actively participate in fundraising, and which support those less fortunate in our community.

I've chosen:

- **Good Company**, which runs the foodbank, Epsom Pantry and other services that provide basic food provisions.
- **Citizens Advice Bureau**, which offers vital help with financial, legal, family and administrative issues—often stepping in when people have no one else to turn to.
- **PHAB**, which promotes physical and mental activity for all ages and abilities.

I believe three is the maximum I can support properly, though I recognise that there are many other excellent charities locally. I hope to support them in other ways, such as by attending their fundraising events.

EET: What are your priorities for the year ahead?

Mayor Robert Leach: My main priority is to build a stronger sense of cohesion across the borough and foster a feeling of self-worth among its residents. I'm the Mayor for all—regardless of politics, religion or beliefs.

I'm also launching a "*Friend of the Mayor*" scheme, aimed primarily at children (though adults are welcome too). The idea is simple: a Friend of the Mayor promises not to hate anyone—or at least to try not to. Disagreement is fine, disapproval too, but hatred fuels everything from petty disputes to international conflict. This is just a small, local step to push back against that.

EET: What do you think could be improved about the Borough?

Mayor Robert Leach: Overall, I believe the borough is well run and well-resourced. There are, of course, a few minor housekeeping matters that could be improved. And I do miss the old Rolls-Royce mayoral car with the crest!

EET: What are you most looking forward to in your new role?

Mayor Robert Leach: Meeting people. I hope I can encourage and thank the vast army of volunteers who work so hard for their neighbours. I'm especially keen to spend time with children and young people. Encouraging and engaging with the next generation will be a special part of this year.

EET: What hobbies might have to take a back seat during your Mayoral year?

Mayor Robert Leach: Music is my main hobby. I play in a 15-piece dance band and often deputise in another. I've already had to excuse myself from at least one gig, but I've promised the bandleaders it's only for a year!

As a pensioner with diabetes, I've also been working to get match fit for the job. I've lost over three stone and am trying to reduce my intake of cake and wine!

EET: Any final message for our readers?

Mayor Robert Leach: I want to be a residents' Mayor. I encourage all local organisations to consider inviting me to their



events—there is no charge. You might even like to host a “*Meet the Mayor*” evening.

Becoming Mayor is a great honour, and I look forward to carrying out my duties with enthusiasm and commitment.

Image credit: Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

Today is World No Smoking Day - Surrey steps up

Surrey unveils inspiring stop smoking stories: boosts free support and offers exclusive app access

This Saturday 31st May is World No Smoking Day and Surrey County Council is stepping up its mission to help residents quit smoking with the launch of a compelling new series of video case studies, a significant funding boost, and free access to the popular Smoke Free App.

The video case studies, produced in partnership with One You Surrey, feature Tara and Tobias who have successfully quit smoking. These powerful testimonials aim to inspire others to take the first step toward a healthier, smoke-free life. Watch the videos below:

This initiative is backed by new government funding, part of a national drive to create a Smokefree Generation. The additional resources will allow residents to have even more choice when finding the right free, personalised support to quit smoking.

One You Surrey is the healthy lifestyle service for Surrey residents including a comprehensive stop smoking programme, which includes FREE:

One-to-one support with trained mentors

Nicotine replacement therapies and e-cigarettes delivered to your door

The choice of telephone or face-to-face weekly appointments. See where your nearest location is via: [How can I quit smoking? | Healthy Surrey](#)

New Digital Support: Free Access to the Smoke Free App

Surrey residents can now access six months of free premium features on the highly rated Smoke Free App, offering residents 24/7 support to help you when your cravings hit. Plus, you will receive up to 12 weeks supply of free first choice stop smoking aids, including patches, chewing gum, e-cigarettes and more. The app offers:

Daily missions and motivational messages

Progress tracking (money saved, health improvements)

Craving management tools

Access to expert advice and community support

To activate your free subscription, visit: [smoke free app](#)

Whether it's your first time trying to quit, or you've tried before, it's never too late to ditch the cigarettes.

Mark Nuti, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing and Public Health said: “As an ex-smoker, I know it's not easy to quit on your own, so I am proud that Surrey County Council is offering even more tools to help people quit smoking. With inspiring local stories, expert support, and now a free app, there's never been a better time to go smoke-free.”

To start your journey, visit [oneyoursurrey.org.uk](#).

Epsom and Ewell Summer Festival at Bourne Hall

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is pleased to announce that Bourne Hall will host a Summer Festival on Saturday, 14 June 2025 from 11am until 6pm.

The free event promises fun for all the family, with live music, children's entertainment, food and craft stalls and games.

Throughout the day, the main stage will host a variety of live music performances, featuring talented local artists and bands. Enjoy a diverse range of musical genres that will keep you entertained and dancing all day long with a DJ host.



Browse the market to discover a range of unique treasures from local craft and artisan sellers, as well as delicious food and drink. The Flying Saucer Café will also be open from 9am until 6pm, offering a range of tasty treats and refreshments.

In addition to this, local community sports group, NEAT, will be hosting a variety of children's games and activities. Their fun and interactive setups are sure to be a hit with kids of all ages!

Anyone bringing children to the event might be interested in the Ultimate Fun Party -a pre-bookable event from 11am until 12.30pm. Children will be amazed by the tricks of a talented entertainer, while the large disco will have everyone moving and grooving plus there'll be crazy bubbles and foam! The Ultimate Fun Party is aimed at children aged 5 to 11 and costs £10. It can be booked on the Bourne Hall website.

Cllr Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the council's Community and Wellbeing Committee, said,

"Bourne Hall provides such a valuable community space, and I'm pleased to see their festival return for another year.

"This year there is a huge focus on opportunities for children to play and have fun, and for families to spend quality time together. The Ultimate Fun Party, along with games by NEAT, live music and a variety of food vendors are sure to be a hit - I can't wait to see all of this in action!"

The Bourne Hall festival is annual event with a different theme each year. Previous iterations have included Sustainability, The Herald of Spring and New Beginnings. This year's festival will run from 11am to 6pm.

Bourne Hall's address is Spring Street, Ewell, Surrey, KT17 1UF.

www.bournehall.org

Live Music: 13:00 - 18:00

Enjoy a diverse range of musical genres that will keep you entertained and dancing all day long with a DJ host.

Ultimate Fun Party: 11:00 - 12:30

A fun party aimed at children aged 5 - 11 years.

Tickets cost £10 each and include admission for one child and one adult.

Adult supervision is not required throughout the party; however, adults must stay on the premises for the duration of the event. Book via Bourne's Hall website: www.bournehall.org

Children's Games and Activities: 12:00 - 18:00

Local community sports group, NEAT, will be hosting a variety of children's games and activities. Their fun and interactive setups are sure to be a hit with kids of all ages.

The seeds of NEAT (New Era Academy Training) were planted when Ben and Grant met as youth coaches at Chelsea FC. Both shared a love for football and a dream of passing on their skills to the next generation. You can learn more about NEAT here: <https://weareneat.co.uk/>

Market Stalls: 12:00 - 18:00

Explore a vibrant array of market stalls showcasing local crafts, products, and more. It's the perfect opportunity to support local businesses and find unique treasures.

Food Stalls: The Flying Saucer Café 09:00 - 18:00, Food stalls 12:00 - 18:00

A selection of food stalls will be available, offering a range of tasty treats and refreshments.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council out - Community Council's in?

Earlier this month, at a meeting of the full Council, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) agreed new strategic priorities for 2025-2027, with the number one priority being to explore future local governance in Epsom & Ewell. This week, Councillors will attend a briefing on Community Governance Review (CGR) and will, with the Mayor's agreement, schedule an extraordinary full Council meeting on Thursday 26 June 2025. At the extraordinary Council meeting, Councillors would agree whether to commence with a CGR in Epsom & Ewell, that could eventually lead to the creation of new community councils.



Community councils provide a vital link between residents and larger unitary authorities, which will be critical as a result of imminent local government reorganisation in Surrey. They aim to enhance local representation by providing a direct route for the essential voices of residents and local communities, ensuring that residents are aware of local issues, and are involved in decision-making they are affected by.

Councillor Hannah Dalton, Leader of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, said “We are navigating the biggest change in local democracy for more than 50 years. As a priority we are working to ensure that, whatever the outcome of local government reorganisation, the voices of our residents and local communities continue to be heard in years to come – this is a vital element of local democracy. We will keep residents informed and updated throughout this process.”

In the coming days, Councillors will be briefed on the CGR process and possible geographies for establishing community councils in Epsom & Ewell:

Should full Council decide to commence with the CGR, the process will include a public consultation which would take place summer 2025, with any final proposal being consulted on in early 2026.

EEBC council meetings, including extraordinary full Council meetings, are open to the public to observe and are also live streamed: details on how to watch meetings can be found on the council’s website: [Epsom and Ewell Democracy](#)

In light of the plans for local government reorganisation, which will see the formation of new unitary councils and the dissolution of all current district, borough and county councils in Surrey; EEBC approved an amendment to the Council’s Four-Year Plan earlier this month, replacing it with strategic priorities for 2025-2027. Prior to the 9 May final submission deadline, Epsom & Ewell with nine of the eleven Surrey district and borough councils submitted a proposal to government to create three unitary councils in north, east and west Surrey. The county council and two other district and borough councils favour a two unitary model. Council leaders ruled out the creation of one unitary council for Surrey in February this year.