

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

15 August 2025



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Keep our Valley Green say Langley Vale campaigners

15 August 2025



Campaigners in an Epsom village have hit out at proposals to build on "pristine farmland", warning the plans will destroy a cherished stretch of countryside on the edge of the Surrey Hills. The outline application covers more than five hectares of agricultural farm land at Langley Bottom Farm, adjacent to Langley Vale village. Developer Fairfax Aspire Ltd has envisioned the 5.2 hectare field on Epsom Downs for 110 new homes. Although the exact height, design and layout will be determined later, planning documents suggest the new houses will be predominantly two-storey to eaves.

Dubbed 'the valley', locals are baffled that the agricultural field could ever be considered as a grey belt. The land has

been classed as 'low-quality land' that could be prioritised for development, but residents say the designation is nonsense. "[Grey belt should be] for scrappy old car parks, not pristine farmland," John Mumford of the Woodcote Epsom Residents Society and Save Langley Vale said. He pointed out the combine harvester in the field and explained it is still being used for agriculture. "We shouldn't be sacrificing the green belt for land for land-owning interests," he added. Fairfax Aspire Ltd stated in the application: "The site represents an opportunity for modest, sustainable development on the edge of the settlement boundary."

The proposed development site sits down the road from Epsom Derby race course and is part of a landscape known for its race horse culture and rich ecology. Matt Dunn, who grew up in Langley Vale, described how buses only visited hourly, and horse riding and jockey training were common pastimes in the close-knit community. He said: "This scheme is tacked on, not integrated into the village." Planning documents state most of the existing hedgerows and important trees will be retained and enhanced with native planting, with other features including new ecological improvements like wildlife corridors linking to the nearby woodland at The Warren. But campaigners say it is home to deer, badgers, and protected bird species like buzzards and skylarks, and that horse riders, dog walkers and ramblers make frequent use of the fields behind the village.

"It will completely destroy a much loved valley," Matt said. "Ecology mitigation doesn't mean anything if it doesn't change the wrongs and the impact on wildlife." The dispute comes amid national concerns over habitat loss — in England, the abundance of wildlife species has fallen by around 19 per cent since 1970. Matt accused the developer of trying to "whip up houses which don't meet local need," describing the affordable housing element as a "tick-boxing exercise". The 29-year-old explained that selling houses at 80 per cent of the average Epsom house price (£559k according to RightMove) does not make the homes remotely affordable.

Langley Vale currently has around 400 houses, and campaigners fear the development could swell its size by more than 20 per cent, straining the roads, utilities and services. A new access road would be created on Langley Vale Road to get into the site, but residents warn this could exacerbate traffic issues in their rural community. Campaigners have also launched a petition against the development which has gained more than 1,000 signatures already. Mr Mumford has also set up a fundraiser to help pay for the campaign, gathering £3,700.

Planning documents state: "The opportunity exists for the creation of a high quality landscape and ecology led residential scheme to be provided in this sustainable location. The illustrative material demonstrates how a residential scheme, including new affordable homes, can be delivered without having undue impact on the site's immediate neighbours, the wider area or key landscape and ecological features. The site is available, sustainable and importantly, deliverable, and will link to Langley Vale and the wider area." The developer has been approached for further comment.

Related report:

110-Home Scheme at Langley Vale Sparks Green Belt Fears

Campaigners, Matt Dunn (left) and John Mumford (right), in front of the proposed development site. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

New Business Start-Up Surrey Programme

15 August 2025



Budding entrepreneurs and early-stage businesses across Surrey are set to receive a major boost with the launch of the Start-Up Surrey Programme, a dynamic new initiative funded by Surrey County Council and delivered by leading business support provider The IncuHive Group.

This pilot programme will offer free, tailored guidance and practical support to residents who are preparing to launch their own ventures, as well as businesses in their first year of operation.

It will guide founders step by step, with expert-led workshops, one-to-one mentoring, practical advice, and support from others on the same journey.

The programme is expected to engage a diverse range of businesses across Surrey and will cover key areas such as funding, marketing, finance, digital presence, and scaling strategies. 120 businesses are set to receive support in the next six months.

It's the latest initiative from the Council under its Business Surrey offer, which provides free accessible support to help businesses of all sizes to start, grow and thrive.

Matt Furniss, the Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, welcomed the launch, adding:

“Surrey has a wealth of untapped entrepreneurial talent, and this programme provides a much-needed platform to turn ideas into action. It aligns strongly with wider efforts to boost inclusive economic growth, support innovation, and build resilience into our local economy – all of which provides benefits to our people and communities.”

George Scott-Welsh, CEO of The IncuHive Group, said:

“IncuHive is delighted to bring this initiative to life. We’ve seen first-hand how the right support, delivered at the right time, can completely change the trajectory of a business. We’re not just helping people start businesses, we’re helping them build viable, resilient ventures that can generate a real income and contribute to the local economy. We are thrilled to be working with Surrey County Council to bring hands-on support and real opportunities to Surrey’s start-ups.”

The Start-Up Surrey Programme is now open for registrations to all start-ups and businesses in their first year of trading across Surrey.

Participation in the Programme is free for businesses, as it is fully funded by Council via UK government Growth Hub funding.

Anyone interested is welcomed to register for the introductory webinar hosted by the IncuHive team on Wednesday August 27 from 11am to 12pm. Register via the Eventbrite event link.

For more information or to register for the programme, visit <https://incuhive.co.uk/acceleration-investment/business-surrey>.

Or you can contact the Business Surrey team via the website - <https://www.businesssurrey.co.uk/advice-and-support/business-support-form/>

IncuHive will deliver the new Startup Surrey programme for budding business founders

The IncuHive Group is a leading business support provider offering mentoring, funding guidance, flexible workspaces, and training across Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Surrey. Their hands-on, high-impact approach has helped hundreds of businesses grow, thrive, and succeed.

Business Surrey is a Surrey County Council initiative focused on economic growth, skills development, and entrepreneurial support to help businesses start, grow, and scale in the region. It’s offer includes a Growth Hub service, which is funded by UK Government.

LGR and CGR, what’s the difference for Epsom and Ewell?

15 August 2025



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

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

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

What CGRs Do

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

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

- Improve local accountability

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

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

Why Epsom & Ewell Is Doing a CGR Now

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

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

The LGR Position - Three Unitary Councils Proposed

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

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

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

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

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

The Link Between LGR and CGR

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

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

Have Your Say

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

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

Carers respite at the Crossroads in Surrey?

15 August 2025



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

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

The charity, which has delivered government-funded respite care for unpaid carers across Surrey for **over 14 years**, was

given six months' notice in February 2025 that its contract—due to run until **March 2027**—would end early on **4 August 2025**.

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

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

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

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

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

“We're Putting Choice Back in Carers' Hands”

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

“We're pleased that Crossroads Care Surrey has confirmed they will honour their agreements with carers by continuing to offer replacement care for those with remaining hours, following the end of the council's contract,” said Cllr Mooney.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For further details, visit: crossroadscaresurrey.org.uk

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

Surrey MPs slam SEND profiteers

15 August 2025



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

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

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

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

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

Surrey's six Liberal Democrat MPs - Al Pinkerton, Chris Coghlan, Helen Maguire, Monica Harding, Will Forster, and Zöe Franklin - have now called for a **legal cap on profits** made by private SEND providers. They propose a maximum margin of **8%**, aligning with figures cited by the Office for National Statistics for average business profitability. The same threshold has also been suggested by the Education Secretary in the context of children's social care reform.

In a joint statement, the MPs said:

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

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

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

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

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

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Guildford Council's CEO's salary touches the UK Prime Minister's

15 August 2025



Guildford and Waverley Borough Council’s chief executive’s new salary will be £169,950 after a three per cent pay rise was agreed – despite the likelihood the two councils will soon be dissolved as part of local government reorganisation.

[The annual salary for a UK Prime Minister is £172,153, which includes £80,807 for the role of Prime Minister and an additional £91,346 for being an MP.]

Pedro Wrobel was appointed as the new joint chief executive in 2024, having previously been Westminster City Council’s executive director for innovation and change. He replaced former boss Tom Horwood, who said he was standing down from the then £150,000 job due to health concerns.

Other options that had been on the table at the Thursday, July 31 Guildford and Waverley Joint Senior Staff Committee included a 3.2 per cent bump, welcomed by the Union for Local Authorities CEO’s and Senior Managers, as well as a bumper one-off £25,500 lump sum that would have ramped the position’s salary up to £185,000. The council said this would have brought the role in line with similar shared CEO roles such as Broadland District and South Norfolk, as well as Boston Borough, East Lindsey District, and South Holland District.

In the end, the committee took all of two minutes to agree on a three per cent rise – the equivalent of an extra £4,950 a year. The union UNISON has already agreed a three per cent award for Waverley Borough Council employees. No agreement for Guildford Borough Council employees has been agreed.

A spokesperson for Waverley Borough Council said: “This decision aligns with the pay award agreed with UNISON for Waverley Borough Council employees, and the councils’ Joint Leadership Team. Maintaining a competitive remuneration package is essential to attract and retain high-calibre leadership. The benchmarking data shows that many councils with similar or even smaller populations and fewer employees offer higher salaries. A modest increase helps to ensure the council remains competitive in a challenging recruitment market.”

Mr Wrobel’s new salary is among the highest received by council bosses in the Southeast and Surrey – although on a per head of population basis it is the lowest among similar councils with a joint role. This, the council argues, reflects the significant scale and complexity of the Guildford and Waverley job – with a combined population of more than 270,000 and responsibility for a workforce of more than 1,100 employees and 100 borough councillors.

The councils rejected the 3.2 per cent offer as it would have created inconsistency with the rest of the leadership team. While the one-off uplift to £185,000 would have represented a 12 per cent increase, significantly above local and national pay trends, it was therefore considered inappropriate and difficult to justify financially at this time.

Epsom and Ewell Times adds:

Chief Executive Salaries - Surrey Councils

Figures are the most recently published base salaries or salary bands. Some councils report ranges, others exact figures, and a few include allowances or car benefits.

Council	Chief Executive Salary (approx)
Surrey County Council	£234,600 (former CEO)
Guildford & Waverley	£169,950
Epsom & Ewell	£131,000 - £152,000 + 4% allowance
Mole Valley	£122,000 - £136,000
Elmbridge	Up to £140,000+ (approval required)
Reigate & Banstead	£137,500 - £144,500
Runnymede	£100,000+ (not specified)
Spelthorne	Up to £131,000
Surrey Heath	£136,800 + £2,000 car allowance
Tandridge	£122,000 - £138,000 (grade range)
Woking	Not disclosed

New CEO Pedro Wrobel (image GBC) and UK PM Starmer

A Surrey Council debates its bank's "support" for Gaza genocide

15 August 2025



Pro-Palestinian campaigners have urged a Surrey council to cut financial ties with Barclays Bank, accusing the firm, of funding what they called Israel's "genocide of the Palestinian people". But no formal decision on divestment was made at the meeting.

Simon Higgins, on behalf of West Surrey Palestine Solidarity Campaign, delivered a statement to Guildford Borough Council on July 30, calling for the authority to take an "ethical and moral stand" by divesting from Barclays.

He claimed research shows Barclays holds billions in shares and loans to arms companies whose weapons are being used in Israel in attacks on Palestinians.

"If Guildford Borough Council keeps investing in Barclays, it's helping fund this genocide," Mr Higgins said. "This cannot continue." He added the bank helps the Israeli government raise money by acting as a dealer for its bonds.

Mr Higgins said: "Data obtained by independent research organisation, Profundo has revealed that

- Barclays holds over £2 billion in shares and provides £6.1 billion in loans and underwriting to nine companies whose weapons are being used by Israel in its genocidal attacks on the Palestinian people.
- Investment and financial services to these arms companies facilitates the provision of weapons for Israel's attacks.
- Barclays acts as a 'primary dealer' for Israel's government bonds, enabling it to raise money to fund its genocidal policies. By investing in Barclays, GBC is aiding this genocide."
- He said over 700 local people have signed a petition calling for the council to divest, adding both the Mayor of Guildford and the council's finance lead have acknowledged the seriousness of the situation.

Responding to the claims, Cllr Richard Lucas, lead for finance and property said he shared Mr Higgins' horror at what is happening in Gaza, but did not believe the case against Barclays was clear-cut.

Cllr Lucas said: "[Guildford council] share Mr Higgins' revulsion of what is going on but we don't think he has made a clear case against Barclays and furthermore we are not in a position to make a detailed judgment on this.

"We're already moving away from Barclays as part of our wider investment strategy," he added. "We understand the concerns, but we have to make decisions responsibly."

He said the research quoted by Higgins contradicts Barclays' own statements, which say the bank doesn't use its own money to invest in arms companies and that it pulled out of Israeli government bond deals last summer.

Cllr Lucas also explained how the council's investment policy works. "We follow national guidelines that tell us to prioritise security and liquidity, and to act as responsible investors," he said.

The council currently has two investments with Barclays - £3 million in a 95-day notice account (which is already being withdrawn), and £1.5 million in bonds that mature in 2027. Lucas said pulling out of the latter early would result in a significant financial loss.

"We're already moving away from Barclays as part of our wider investment strategy," he added. "We understand the concerns, but we have to make decisions responsibly."

Speaking afterwards, Mr Higgins said: "At the meeting I was shut down and denied a right of reply. This is unfair, undemocratic and unconstitutional."

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Busy Epsom and Ewell Borough Council next meets

December

15 August 2025



At a busy half-hour meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council on 22nd July, councillors confronted some of the borough's most pressing issues, including the future of Horton Cemetery, the lack of social housing, and the need to reinvigorate scrutiny of Council actions.

Calls to Honour the Dead at Horton Cemetery

Cllr **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) raised a poignant question about the fate of those buried in the long-neglected Horton Cemetery. "My belief is that the culture and heritage of having the Epsom cluster – five large Victorian institutions in which people lived and died – should be remembered," she said. "9,000 people died and are buried in a cemetery in the borough. Will the Chair of Community and Wellbeing do something towards helping remember the people who died there and respecting their resting places?"

Responding, Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) said he shared her sympathies. "It's a place that we should remember and celebrate," he said. "If I can do anything to address the concerns that the councillor raised, I'll do so."

Social Housing: "Three Houses in Five Years is Derisory"

Cllr Chinn also delivered a sharp rebuke of the borough's performance on affordable housing. "It's not going to happen until this Council starts building homes for social rent," she declared. "Can we have all the different departments working towards finally building some homes for social rent within the borough? Three houses in five years is derisory."

Cllr Woodbridge admitted the situation was "particularly disappointing" and noted the Council is not a housing stockholder, which "limits its ability to deliver social housing directly." However, he pointed to the local plan as a potential tool to unlock affordable development. "It won't be enough ever, but it will be something," he said. He added that homelessness prevention would remain a key focus, with increased use of the housing prevention grant to strengthen support teams.

Audit and Scrutiny Committee Faces Questions Over Effectiveness

Discussion over the **Audit and Scrutiny Committee's annual report** revealed dissatisfaction with the body's performance.

"The Audit and Scrutiny Committee has carried out limited scrutiny during the past year," Cllr Chinn noted, quoting the report. "From my memory, that's exactly the same last paragraph as it was a year ago. Can I please ask what will happen to change it so that next year there is some proper, true scrutiny?"

Cllr **James Lawrence** (LibDem College), former member of the committee, agreed there was room to grow: "I do think there are good changes occurring. There is a lot more to go... We would like scrutiny to go further." He acknowledged that the committee's new chair Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) was making good progress.

Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative - Horton) took a firmer stance, calling out enforcement as a glaring omission: "There is a rainforest of information from residents and councillors with their issue on enforcement. It has been identified as a weakness in our local authority. I don't think this report reflects the issues that I believe exist."

Cllr **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) raised concerns about how scrutiny is blocked by bureaucracy: "If the committee is always saying, well, this is just too much trouble... how are things going to be any different?"

Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Steve McCormick accepted the criticisms, noting that scrutiny work had been limited but improvements were underway. "We do have a work plan in place," he said, citing a planning enforcement audit and a forthcoming September item for scrutiny. "If we do have an item to scrutinise, we will find the resource to get that done."

Alex Coley's Motion on Council Property Referred to Committee

Cllr **Alex Coley** (Independent - Ruxley) and Cllr **James Lawrence** (LibDem College) sought to move a motion that included proposals to urgently dispose of 66 High Street, 70 East Street and any other underperforming Council owned commercial properties, and the capital receipts to be placed in Capital Reserves.

However, the details were not debated, as the Council voted to refer the motion to the Strategy and Resources Committee instead.

Epsom and Ewell Property Investment Company is wholly owned by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. It has a property

portfolio of £51.2m and in the year end 31st March 2024 made a profit before tax (excluding property re-valuations) of £1.366m and a dividend was paid of £614,986

The company's strategy is to "maintain a diversified, balanced and low risk property portfolio to provide income over the long term to our ultimate shareholder, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council."

The next Full Council meeting is scheduled for 9th December 2025.

Image: Mayor Robert Leach and deputy-Mayor Lucie McIntyre of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council bow heads in prayer with the Chaplain. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council - YouTube.

Casting vote approves 9 new homes in Epsom

15 August 2025



Tripling the number of houses on a brownfield Epsom site vexed Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Planning Committee on 10th July.

The Application from Nuro Homes Limited proposed the erection of 9 new dwellings on adjacent plots of land acquired by the developers in the Whitehorse Drive and Bucknills Close roads of Epsom off the Dorking Road.

A previous application for this development had been refused by the Planning Committee in April 2024 and the developers appealed to a Planning Inspector. The appeal was refused where the Inspector was in agreement with the Council's refusal on the ground of highway safety but the objection concerning hazards in waste collection the Inspector stated could be addressed.

A revised application came before the Planning committee with a widened access from the development onto Whitehorse Drive. RA Councillors Neil Dallen, Jan Mason, Phil Neale and Humphrey Reynolds were not convinced that the revisions were sufficient to address safety concerns for pedestrians and in particular school girls attending Rosebery School in Whitehorse Drive.

Kate Chinn (Labour Court) emphasised the need for more housing - though this development was not providing anything affordable for those on low incomes, she added. With the improved access she stated people are mindful and the fears of pedestrian vehicular collisions should not be overstated.

The officers of the Council recommended the Application be granted.

Cllr Dallen proposed the Application be refused. The Chair of the Committee, Cllr Steven McCormick (RA Woodcote and Langley Vale) required him to cite the planning policies that justified refusal. As Cllr Dallen floundered through his papers an officer identified the reasons given at the meeting that refused the original application in 2024 and Cllr Dallen repeated them.

Cllr Julian Freeman (Liberal Democrat College) questioned the procedure of having a vote on a motion to refuse when the matter to be voted on was the recommendation to grant.

In a bizarre dance on the voting 2 voted in favour of refusal and two voted against refusal. The Chair cast his vote against refusal. This was followed by a vote on granting the Planning Application with 4 voting in favour and 4 voting against. The Chair voted in favour of granting the Application and therefore the officers' recommendation was carried.

Image: Top plan original with narrow access on Whitehorse Drive. Bottom plan revised plan showing proposed housing and widened access. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council planning documents.