

## Surrey's one stop shop to save energy



Surrey residents can now receive support to upgrade their homes with energy saving 'retrofit' measures including insulation, heat pumps and solar panels through an innovative Home Energy Improvement 'One-Stop Shop' pilot scheme.

Surrey County Council (SCC) is working in partnership with Furbnow, specialists in home energy improvements, to help people make the transition to a lower energy and better performing home.

The service is for households that are looking to invest in their home's energy performance but need help to get their home energy project planned, designed and installed. Eligible Surrey residents can access 60% off the cost to plan, design and manage their home energy project.

**Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Environment said:** *"I am delighted that we are working with Furbnow on such an innovative and important pilot to support our residents to install energy saving measures."*

*"We know that cost plays a huge part in residents being able to self-fund improvements to their homes, but this could be a way for everyone to reduce their bills for the long-term."*

*"As well as saving money, and making your home more resilient and future proofed, residential energy use accounts for over 30% of Surrey's emissions so improving the energy performance of as many of our homes as we can makes a huge difference in achieving our goal of being Net Zero Carbon by 2050."*

All Surrey residents can receive support from Furbnow's team via their website, and the first 245 homes can access a subsidised whole house assessment and Home Energy Plan, if they live in one of the 300,000 Surrey homes that have poor energy performance.

**Becky Lane, CEO of Furbnow, added:** *"We're thrilled to partner with Surrey County Council on this groundbreaking initiative. The Home Energy Improvement One-Stop Shop is designed to simplify the often-complex process of home energy upgrades. By providing expert guidance, quality assurance, and streamlined service from planning to installing, we're empowering Surrey residents to make their homes more energy-efficient, comfortable, and valuable."*

*"This not only benefits individual homeowners through reduced energy bills and improved living conditions but also contributes significantly to Surrey's carbon reduction goals. We're excited to see the positive impact this pilot will have on the community and the environment."*

All Surrey residents can receive support from Furbnow's team via their website, and the first 245 homes can access a subsidised whole house assessment and Home Energy Plan, if they live in one of the 300,000 Surrey homes that have poor energy performance.

A Home Energy Plan, after the in-person survey, outlines recommended energy efficiency improvements for a home, detailing, the benefits, estimated costs, impacts, and suggested installation order. This can reduce their energy consumption and their bills, and improve the respiratory health of their household, and perhaps even increase the value of their homes. Furbnow also manage the design and installation of any energy efficiency improvements to your home to take the hassle out of your project.

It's free to register and there is no obligation to go ahead with a Home Energy Plan or the installation of measures.

For more information about the One Stop Shop scheme, visit [www.furbnow.com/surrey](http://www.furbnow.com/surrey).

## Epsom's Master plan to walk and cycle



On 24 September, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Licensing and Planning Policy Committee approved the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan. The Masterplan sets out clear and comprehensive guidelines for the development of Epsom Town Centre. The Committee also endorsed the Epsom & Ewell Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan that aims to increase walking, wheeling and cycling across the borough. Together, the plans feed into the vision of the borough and form part of the evidence base for the borough's Draft Local Plan.

### Epsom Town Centre Masterplan

The Masterplan sets out a vision to make Epsom Town Centre a place that attracts, connects and inspires people, with a strong sense of community, commerce and creativity. Climate change is the cornerstone of the Masterplan with a comprehensive approach to transport, low carbon development, green infrastructure and health. The Masterplan also identifies site locations where regeneration and improvements could take place, subject to planning permission being granted.

The Masterplan was subject to two rounds of public consultation, with over 2,000 individuals or organisations responding to the consultations, highlighting interests, attachments and aspirations.

### Epsom & Ewell Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

The Plan aims to provide a safe, attractive and convenient infrastructure to encourage residents, visitors and workers to walk, wheel and cycle. Plans include expanding the existing network and improving connectivity to key destinations within the borough.

The Epsom and Ewell LCWIP is part of Surrey's broader LCWIP programme to develop LCWIPs county-wide. Following endorsement of the LCWIP, Surrey County Council can formally adopt the document.

Cllr **Peter O'Donovan**, (RA Ewell Court) Chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee said: "The Town Centre Masterplan and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan provide Epsom & Ewell with a fantastic opportunity to bring wide ranging benefits to our community."

Our lifestyles and working patterns have changed dramatically over the last few years, especially since COVID-19, and I'm proud that these plans allow us to strategically improve areas for residents to enjoy, and help us to provide solutions for broader issues that we, as a borough, face including housing and climate change, which is at the heart of the Masterplan and supports the transition towards zero-carbon transport throughout the borough. The Masterplan will also help in the process of assessing planning applications."

He added: "I would like to thank all the residents who took part in the public consultations and feeding into our vision for the borough. We want our community and visitors to be proud of Epsom & Ewell and through these plans, we are in a position to deliver!"

### About the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan

The Town Centre Masterplan forms part of the evidence base for the Draft Local Plan and will be taken into consideration for decision-making, however it will not

be a statutory planning document. Local Plan FAQs | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council ([epsom-ewell.gov.uk](https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk))

The Town Centre Master Plan was approved at the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee on 24 September 2024. The responses received to the consultation have been published on our consultation portal and a summary of the responses received is attached as Appendix 3. *Epsom Town Centre Masterplan information starts from p.169* –

[democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/documents/g1657/Public reports pack 24th-Sep-2024 19.30 Licensing and Planning Policy Committee.pdf?T=10](https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/documents/g1657/Public%20reports%20pack%2024th-Sep-2024%2019.30%20Licensing%20and%20Planning%20Policy%20Committee.pdf?T=10)

#### **Epsom & Ewell Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan**

The Epsom & Ewell LCWIP was approved at the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee on 24 September 2024. *E&ELCWIP information starts from p.421* – [democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/documents/g1657/Public reports pack 24th-Sep-2024 19.30 Licensing and Planning Policy Committee.pdf?T=10](https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/documents/g1657/Public%20reports%20pack%2024th-Sep-2024%2019.30%20Licensing%20and%20Planning%20Policy%20Committee.pdf?T=10)

In 2017 the Government produced a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) outlining its ambition to make cycling and walking a natural choice for shorter journeys or as part of longer journeys by 2040.vSecond cycling and walking investment strategy – July 2022 – GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

The Epsom and Ewell LCWIP is part of Surrey’s broader LCWIP programme to develop LCWIPs county-wide. These have been considered during development of the Epsom & Ewell LCWIP for greater connectivity across political boundaries.

Plans to improve walking and cycling – Surrey County Council ([surreycc.gov.uk](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk))

Image: Google street view Epsom

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## Epsom Local Plan controversy heats up



### **Epsom & Ewell Council’s Tense Debate Over Green Belt Protections and Housing Targets: Key Decisions from the Licensing Planning and Policy Committee Meeting**

On Tuesday, 24th September 2024, the LPPC of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council convened to deliberate on a highly contentious matter: changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and their potential impact on the borough’s Green Belt and housing targets. Chaired by Councillor **Peter O’Donovan**, (RA Ewell Court) the meeting attracted public attention, with many residents filling the gallery, reflecting the importance of the issues under discussion. At the heart of the debate was the question of whether the council should uphold strict protections for the borough’s Green Belt or adapt to the government’s increasing pressure to meet housing demands.

Councillor Peter O’Donovan began by welcoming the public to the meeting, acknowledging the deep concerns of residents. He then proceeded with the formalities, including the adoption of the minutes from the previous meeting and a roll call of councillors and officials present. O’Donovan stressed the gravity of the evening’s discussions:

“We have important decisions to make this evening that will shape the future of our borough for years to come. The government’s proposed reforms to the NPPF are significant, and while we recognize the need for housing, we must balance this against our responsibility to protect the Green Belt, which is vital to both the environment and the identity of Epsom & Ewell.”

Following his introduction, **Ian Mawer**, the council’s Planning Policy Manager, provided an overview of the NPPF changes, particularly the impact on housing targets and Green Belt land. He noted that the consultation on these changes was closing later that evening, and the council needed to finalize its draft response.

“We are looking at a proposed increase in our housing needs,” Mawer explained. “Based on changes to the standard method for calculating housing needs, our target could increase from 576 homes per year to 817. This would place significant pressure on both brownfield and Green Belt land, and we must carefully consider the implications of these changes.”

### **A Call for Fair Tree Protection**

One of the first substantive discussions centered on a seemingly smaller but crucial issue: tree protection applications. Councillor **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) argued that the council’s response to the NPPF changes downplayed the importance of adequate funding for tree protection measures.

“We have always struggled with the resources to meet our tree protection needs,” Woodbridge began. “Our current response underplays this issue. I think tree applications, especially those related to trees in conservation areas or subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), should be subject to a fee process that helps recover our costs. This would ensure we can meet our obligations without burdening the public purse too heavily.”

Woodbridge’s remarks sparked a broader conversation about local authority resources and the need for a sustainable fee structure that would help finance these vital environmental protections. “We must be tougher on this,” he added. “It’s not just about protecting trees—it’s about ensuring we have the resources to do so effectively.”

### **A Sharp Critique of Housing Targets**

As the discussion turned to housing targets, Councillor **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch) made an impassioned and controversial statement against further development in the borough, particularly on Green Belt land. Leach took a hardline stance, asserting that the borough had no need for additional housing.

“In my view, the housing need for this borough is zero,” Leach declared, “We don’t need more homes on Brownfield, Green Belt, or any other kind of land. The housing numbers we’ve been given are based on flawed calculations—a case of multiplying one wrong number by another wrong number and somehow thinking we’ve arrived at the right answer. But we all know that number is wrong. Our Green Belt is not negotiable.”

Leach’s speech took an unexpected turn when he criticized both the current Labour government and previous Conservative governments for their handling of migration policies, which he blamed for the housing crisis. “The population of the UK has risen from 45 million to 67 million in my lifetime, and almost all of that is due to migration,” he said. “This housing crisis is a direct result of the government’s failure to control immigration, and now we are being asked to sacrifice our green spaces to accommodate more people.”

Leach’s remarks met with mixed reactions. While some in the public gallery nodded in agreement, other councillors were quick to counter his assertions.

### **A Call for Balance and Realism**

Councillor **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington) was among those who pushed back against Leach’s extreme stance, advocating for a more balanced approach. Neale acknowledged the challenges posed by increasing housing targets but emphasized the need for the council to take a pragmatic view.

“I understand the passion behind Councillor Leach’s remarks,” Neale said, “but the reality is that we do have a housing crisis in this borough. I have two sons who have had to move out of the area because they simply cannot afford to live here. And we have a growing homeless population that we are struggling to accommodate. To say we have no need for more housing just doesn’t reflect the reality on the ground.”

Neale went on to argue that while the Green Belt must be protected, the council must also find ways to meet its housing obligations. “We need to strike a balance. We can’t just say ‘no’ to everything. If we do, we risk losing control of our local planning decisions altogether.”

### **Addressing Climate Change and Housing Needs**

Councillor **Julie Morris** (Lib Dem College) brought another crucial issue to the fore: the intersection of housing development and climate change. She criticized the NPPF reforms for failing to place sufficient emphasis on sustainable development and renewable energy.

“We’re facing a climate crisis, and yet, when I look at the government’s proposed changes to the NPPF, there is very little focus on sustainability,” Morris lamented. “We should be pushing for stronger commitments to renewable energy and green building standards. Our response should reflect this urgency. I’m



disappointed that the government has missed an opportunity to make these reforms about more than just numbers.”

Morris also raised concerns about the type of housing being built, arguing that the borough’s needs were not just about quantity but also quality. “It’s not just about meeting a target of 817 homes per year,” she said. “We need to be building homes that meet the actual needs of our community, particularly affordable housing for young families and the elderly.”

**The Question of Local Democracy and Transparency**

As the meeting continued, the issue of transparency and local democracy emerged as a critical point of contention. Councillor **Kieran Persand**, (Conservative Horton) a vocal advocate for greater openness in the local plan process, questioned whether the council was doing enough to involve the public and ensure their concerns were heard.

“Residents have been left in the dark for too long,” Persand argued. “We’ve had consultations, but have we really listened? I’m hearing from residents across the borough that they feel shut out of this process. They want more say in what happens to their Green Belt, and they deserve that say. We should be leading the charge for more transparency, not hiding behind bureaucratic processes.”

Councillor Julie Morris echoed Persand’s concerns, adding that the council had missed opportunities to engage the public more effectively. “We’ve had chances to talk about this—whether it’s Green Belt protections or housing targets—but we haven’t taken them,” she said. “We could have held more public meetings, we could have been more open about the challenges we’re facing. Instead, we’ve been too closed off. That needs to change.”

**Green Belt Protections: A Divisive Issue**

As the meeting drew to a close, the committee faced a critical decision: whether to adopt the council’s draft response to the NPPF consultation, which supported increased housing targets while maintaining a cautious approach to Green Belt development.

Councillor Robert Leach made one last impassioned plea to protect the Green Belt: “I believe the housing need for this borough is zero, and I will say it again. We cannot afford to lose our Green Belt. It’s what makes Epsom & Ewell special, and we should be fighting to protect it, not handing it over for development.”

In contrast, Councillor Phil Neale urged his colleagues to think practically: “None of us want to build on the Green Belt. But if we don’t submit a local plan that meets the government’s requirements, we risk losing control over the process entirely. That’s a real danger. We have to be pragmatic here.”

**The Decision: Moving Forward with Caution**

In the end, the committee voted to approve the draft response to the NPPF consultation, which included support for increased housing targets but emphasized the importance of protecting high-performing Green Belt land. The decision was met with mixed reactions, with some councillors and members of the public feeling that more could have been done to safeguard the borough’s green spaces.

Councillor Peter O’Donovan closed the meeting by reassuring the public that the council would continue to fight for the best interests of the borough. “We’ve made a decision tonight, but this is not the end of the process,” he said. “There will be further opportunities for public input, and we will continue to work hard to protect what makes Epsom & Ewell such a special place to live.”

As the government’s NPPF consultation comes to a close, the residents of Epsom & Ewell will be watching closely to see how their council balances the need for housing with the imperative to protect their cherished Green Belt land. For now, the battle between development and preservation continues.

26th September Epsom and Ewell Council issued a press release stating its responses to the consultation on the NPPF. You may read it [HERE](#).

The Surrey Campaign for the Protection of Rural England also issued a press release you may read [HERE](#)

Related reports:

[Challenges to Epsom and Ewell Council’s Handling of Local Plan](#)

[Time to press the gas on Epsom’s Local Plan?](#)

[Epsom and Ewell Brace for Government Housing Targets](#)

[Here we go again on the Local Plan?](#)

[Minister gets heavy on a Local Plan delay](#)

[Mystery Local Plan critic revealed](#)

[Local Plan costs eat into Council reserves](#)

[Local Plan to move forward after passionate debate](#)

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**Epsom Council dead set against the dead?**



Tuesday 17th September Epsom and Ewell Borough Council gave one minute of its time before discarding a motion to take steps to recover an Epsom cemetery of 9000 souls from a private property speculator. The matter came before Councillors sitting on the Strategy and Resources Committee.

**Horton Cemetery** Hook Road in Epsom, between 1899 and 1955, received the bodies of patient paupers from the Epsom cluster of five psychiatric hospitals. Sold in mysterious circumstances to Marque Securities in 1983 the five acre site has been neglected ever since. Relatives have travelled from as far as Australia to pay respects but cannot enter the private land that is now hazardous to tread. Surrounded by twisted iron railings, unkempt undergrowth and fallen trees.

In an officer’s report to the Councillors it was argued that a compulsory purchase order (CPO) could not be legally obtained.

The officer’s report acknowledged the status of the site as a Cemetery and the prohibition on its development. However, in the opinion of the report author the fact that the owner could walk about the Cemetery and enjoy it as a wood gives it an “amenity woodland ” value. Comparative valuations were provided to Councillors based on sales of woodlands (not cemeteries) in the South-East.

**Lionel Blackman**, Honorary Secretary to the **Friends of Horton Cemetery** responded to the latest setback to the aims of the Charity. “Some progress has been made. The “amenity woodland” description now sits alongside the Council’s recognition that the land is a cemetery. On the occasion of the Council’s previous refusal to contemplate a CPO “amenity woodland” dominated the thinking. Nevertheless, it is regrettable that Councillors were not advised of previous cases where CPOs have been used to acquire neglected cemeteries, including Arnos Vale in Bristol and West Norwood.”

He added: “It is in large part a question of money. Pure woodland valuations include the element of speculative development value. That cannot apply to a cemetery the report acknowledges cannot be developed. Where there is a will there is a way. One day the Council will find the will to correct this historic outrage.”

Related reports:

[Petition to reclaim Horton Cemetery from property speculator](#)

[Local community gathered at Horton Cemetery](#)

You are invited to commemorate the 9000 souls in Epsom’s forgotten cemetery

**Council: Horton CPO debate shelved**

Image: Horton Cemetery in 1952

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# Housing Targets Spark Fierce Debate in Epsom and Ewell



New Government proposals for housing targets have prompted a passionate response from local officials, community groups, and residents. The Government’s recent consultation on planning reform suggests a dramatic 41% increase in the number of homes to be built in Epsom and Ewell, a figure that has alarmed many and sparked fears of irreversible damage to the borough’s unique character and environment.

Councillor **Neil Dallen** MBE (RA Town Ward), Vice Chair of Licensing and Planning Policy, led the charge in voicing opposition to the Government’s proposals in a letter addressed to **Angela Rayner** MP, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Cllr Dallen’s letter paints a dire picture of the potential impact of the housing increase, emphasising that the proposed rise from 576 to 817 homes per year would place immense pressure on the borough’s already-stretched infrastructure and services.

“We are happy to ‘play our part’ and accept that some new housing is needed,” Dallen writes, acknowledging the need for development in line with local plans. However, he warned that the scale of the increase could “destroy our historic district and market town if they come to fruition.” According to Dallen, the increased housing numbers would lead to “endless planning by appeal, change the character of the district, and entirely undermine the plan-led system of Local Plans.”

Dallen also pointed to the significant challenges posed by the geography and heritage of Epsom and Ewell. “With around 50 per cent of the district as Green Belt,” he noted, there is already limited space for development. Protected areas such as Epsom Downs, Epsom Common, and Horton Country Park add further constraints, leaving “few available sites” for development. Dallen concluded his letter with a plea for the Government to consider the borough’s unique challenges and ensure that the final version of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) “does not do irreparable damage to valuable and historic parts of the Country.”

The sentiment expressed by Cllr Dallen has resonated with local residents and community groups, particularly the **Epsom Green Belt Group**, who have been vocal in their opposition to the housing targets. In a letter to the *Epsom and Ewell Times*, the group echoed Dallen’s concerns, calling the proposed target of 817 homes per year “undeliverable” and warning that the borough could face severe consequences if the plans proceed unchecked.

“Once it’s gone, it’s gone forever,” the group writes, referring to the potential loss of Green Belt land. They argue that the mandatory housing target would require building on 21 hectares of Green Belt land per year to achieve, an act that would “increase the housing in the Borough by 50% over the plan period,” bringing with it traffic problems, pressure on schools, and strain on local healthcare services.

The group points to the example of Elmbridge, another borough facing similar housing pressures, as a potential model for Epsom and Ewell to follow. In Elmbridge, the council submitted a draft local plan that restricted development to brownfield sites only, with no Green Belt sites included. Although the planning inspector raised concerns about Elmbridge’s plan, the Epsom Green Belt Group believes there are lessons to be learned. “Our draft Local Plan should be more prescriptive about what affordable and social housing is required from each site,” the group argues, suggesting that council-owned sites like Hook Road Car Park could be earmarked for 100% affordable housing.

The group’s letter also highlighted the importance of protecting the borough’s Green Belt, arguing that there are “no exceptional circumstances” that justify the release of Green Belt land for development. They urge the council to resist any voluntary agreements that would allow Green Belt development, emphasising that planning officers should be guided by a strategy put together by elected councillors.

The open letter from Epsom and Ewell BC, addressed to all residents of Epsom and Ewell, calls on the community to unite in opposition to the Government’s proposals. The group stresses that the scale of the housing increase could have devastating effects on the borough’s heritage and environment, and they urge residents to take action before it is too late. “We need your help to meet this threat to the historic and market town of Epsom & Ewell,” the letter states, encouraging local organisations and residents to respond to the Government consultation before it closes on 24th September.

Cllr **Hannah Dalton**, Chair of the Residents’ Association (RA) Group, which currently leads the council, has also spoken out against the Government’s housing proposals. Echoing the concerns raised by Dallen and the Epsom Green Belt Group, Dalton warned that the increased housing targets could “destroy our historic district and market town if they come to fruition.” She acknowledged the need for new housing but described the proposed numbers as “immense” and unsustainable. “The previous housing figures were already difficult to achieve and unfairly distributed across the country,” she said. “These new proposals make that even more difficult.”

Hannah Dalton also pointed to the borough’s high population density, noting that Epsom and Ewell is “over five times denser than the average in England.” With half of the district protected as Green Belt or other types of protected land, the scope for development is extremely limited. She stressed the importance of submitting a strong response to the Government’s consultation, outlining the “serious harm this scale of development will bring.”

The Council’s letter to residents, and the voices of councillors like Dallen and Dalton, underline the growing anxiety within Epsom and Ewell about the future of the borough. With the Government planning to publish a revised NPPF by Christmas, there is a palpable sense of urgency to the debate. The window for public consultation closes on 24th September, leaving little time for local residents and officials to make their voices heard.

As the consultation deadline approaches, many in the borough are calling for the Government to reconsider its housing targets and take a more measured approach to development. “You cannot squeeze a quart into a pint pot,” Cllr O’Donovan remarked, a sentiment that seems to encapsulate the feelings of many in the community. The next few months will be crucial in determining whether Epsom and Ewell can preserve its unique character while still accommodating the need for new homes.

Related reports:

Epsom and Ewell Brace for Government Housing Targets

Anchored in reason on local housing need?

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# Surrey child misses two years of education





A child missed out on two years of education due to shortages in SEND school places. Surrey County Council (SCC) has been forced to pay a mum almost £11,000 after the social ombudsman ruled there had been “excessive delay” in providing full-time suitable academic tuition.

Even as the decision was issued on 24 June, the child – who is also disabled – was still without a specialist educational placement. The local authority was found to have made a “service failure” as the child has received no academic tuition since Autumn 2022. SCC said they accept the ombudsman’s findings and sincerely apologise for any distress caused.

The ombudsman’s damning statement said: “As well as the failure to provide a school place and special educational provision, the Council failed to provide the usual education that all children expect to receive.” The report added: “The fault has caused significant injustice to the whole family and loss of education to the child.”

The mum, named Ms X in the report, complained the child’s special educational needs and disability (SEND) requirements were not being met at school. Banned from school in autumn 2022 due to their behaviour, the child received 1.5 days of alternative provision for months. The education was centred on holistic development like building confidence and creativity rather than formal academic education, according to the report.

Ms X complained to the Council in Spring 2023 that her child was not receiving any academic tuition during this period. SCC responded in Summer 2023 that a full time school place was being funded but the Council recognised Ms X’s child was not attending. SCC recognised its education offer was inadequate and agreed to increase it, offering £2400 payment to acknowledge the loss of education from Autumn 2022 to June 2023.

Despite recognising the provision was unsuitable, the ombudsman said the council had “allowed the same fault and injustice to continue from June 2023 to date”. The ombudsman judged it should not have been necessary for Ms X to come to the Ombudsman as the council “should have fixed the problems upstream”.

Legal duty remained with the council so SCC should not have relied on sourcing alternative education to the specialist school. According to the report, SCC “failed” to provide the child with special education support during their time out of school. SCC was also found wanting in showing how it tried to eliminate discrimination and advance opportunities to support the disabled child.

SCC argued that the school staff knew Ms X’s child best, but accepted it should have monitored this more closely and the provision has a ‘lack of academic focus’. SCC will pay £8,800 to Ms X, on behalf of her child, to acknowledge the impact of the lost education, calculated at £1600 per term for 5.5 terms. If SCC’s previous compensation offer of £2,400 has been paid this will be deducted.

In Autumn 2022, SCC held an annual review of the child’s educational, health and care plan (EHCP) in autumn 2022. The final review was completed in Autumn 2023, a whole year after the annual review meeting. The legal timeline for the plan to be completed is 12 weeks, yet SCC delivered the plan in 12 months. The ombudsman found the delay “excessive” and a service failure from SCC. Ms X initially received £300 to compensate for the EHCP delay in 2023, and was granted a further £200 by the ombudsman.

Despite having a year to find a specialist school place, SCC did not name a school in its new EHCP and only listed the type of school as ‘specialist’. SCC was criticised for an “excessive delay” and “service failure” in failing its legal duty to find a school placement, as only five schools were contacted in fifteen months. According to the report, there were long gaps when no consultations were sent.

SCC tried to get a specialist school placement for the next academic year (2024/25), consulting four schools last winter and during spring 2024. But Ms X said there was “no expectation” for her child to return to school for the 2024 summer term. During this time the child was still only receiving 1.5hrs of education a week.

The ombudsman said it would “expect councils to make a sustained effort to find a place for a child”, expanding its search to a wider area and independent schools if no place could be found. Although it was appreciated the number of specialist places was a national problem, the ombudsman said SCC had failed in its service.

Ms X told the ombudsman that she tries to teach her child with academic workbooks, but she does not feel equipped to do so, and that sometimes it is difficult to get her child to cooperate. Due to the time her child has now been out of school and becoming “socially isolated”, the mum said there would need to be a gradual introduction of academic work with tutors taking time to build up her child’s trust.

Ms X added the situation has impacted her other child as they cannot attend clubs or activities due to caring demands of their sibling. Ms X said she had been unable to return to work as her child has been out of school for 5.5 terms and now her income is half what it was when both her children were in school.

The ombudsman ruled “the fault has caused significant injustice to the whole family and loss of education to the child.” The report said Ms X provided additional hours of unpaid care every week to her child, which she might have been eligible for support. SCC will pay Ms X £1500 for the impact of her being unable to work, the additional caring demands, the uncertainty and frustration for the period her child has been without education.

SCC is unable to comment on any individual children specifically, but said it is “working hard to improve services”. The Leader of SCC, Tim Oliver highlighted that the most recent Local Area SEND Inspection noted progress is underway at the council.

Tim Oliver said: “We accept the findings from the Ombudsman report and sincerely apologise for any distress caused. I am aware that the Council has not always got things right for all families, that the support and service that some children with additional needs and disabilities and their families receive is not always of the standard that we would expect, and that our communication with parents and carers needs some improvement, and I am sorry about that.”

He added: “We know how important access to full time education is for all children to support their development and wellbeing, including when this must be provided outside of school”. Mr Oliver said SCC has been reviewing its arrangements for Alternative Provision in situations where young people are unable to attend school. SCC is also pursuing a multi-million capital programme to increase the availability of, and access to high quality specialist school provision across the county.

SCC said it is treating timeliness of EHCPs as a priority and has committed to spending £15m over three years to increase the capacity for key teams for EHCP. Mr Oliver said: “In line with our multi-agency EHCP Recovery Plan, we have been working hard to complete all delayed assessments and annual reviews alongside managing new applications.”

He added: “We are working closely with partners to ensure any support agreed in these plans is provided as quickly as possible, and we are committed to listening to the views of families in the completion of annual reviews and key transitions to improve outcomes for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities so that they are happy, healthy, safe and confident about their future.”

Image: Surrey County Council headquarters. Credit: Emily Coady-Stemp

## Surrey’s 3 Unis and Council leaving no one behind



Surrey County Council, in partnership with Surrey’s three leading universities – Royal Holloway, University of London; University for the Creative Arts; and the University of Surrey – is proud to announce the launch of a new Civic Agreement for Surrey.

This groundbreaking initiative defines a shared commitment for these organisations to work collaboratively in the interests of the wider Surrey community: ensuring that no one is left behind.

By pooling resources and expertise, the partners believe they are better placed to address local needs, drive innovation, and create a more inclusive and resilient Surrey by 2030.

The Civic Agreement will be formally signed at an event in Woking today (Friday September 20, 2024).

It will serve as a public commitment to working together to bring about real and positive change to the people who live, learn and work in our communities across the county

Details are set out in a 32-page formal document which defines shared priorities, objectives, programmes of work and future ambitions.

All will be delivered against four shared priorities, which are:

- Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit.
- Tackling health inequality.
- Enabling a greener future.
- Empowered & thriving communities.

**Tim Oliver OBE, Leader of the Council, Surrey County Council**, said: “Surrey’s universities are engines for regional innovation, with a profound impact across all four strategic priorities. The partners are committed to ensuring our residents, communities and businesses can easily access and benefit from our range of innovation organisations, assets, and networks. These all play a part in addressing the four objectives of our agreement, and ensuring that no one is left behind.”

**Prof. Max Lu, President and Vice-Chancellor of University of Surrey**, said: “The University of Surrey has a proud track record of collaborating with local government and university partners to address issues that matter to Guildford and the wider Surrey community. One recent example is the Games and Innovation Nexus Project, partnering with University for the Creative Arts, Surrey County Council and Warwick University. Other examples include our Centre for Doctoral Training in AI for Digital Media Inclusion, in partnership with Royal Holloway University of London. We welcome the strengthening of these ties through the Civic Agreement for Surrey, ensuring the breadth and depth of our expertise from our Institutes for Sustainability and People-Centred AI, and all our schools, and companies on our Surrey Research Park continue to enable our community to grow and thrive.”

**Prof. Julie Sanders, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Royal Holloway, University of London**, said: “As a University of Social Purpose, we want to take a proactive role in tackling societal changes, enabling sustainable social and economic growth, and improving skills and opportunities for those in our community. Our inclusive education and research has a focus on achieving positive benefits for and with our local community, and our collaboration with academic partners, community groups, schools and local government brings investment, jobs and opportunity to Surrey. As well as through the Centre for Doctoral Training with the University of Surrey and its emphasis on digital inclusion, this effort is integral to the CoSTAR project, which seeks to ensure the UK’s screen and performance industries have the infrastructure, research and innovation skills to compete globally. Declaring our public agenda through the Civic Agreement for Surrey will amplify the positive role the university can play in the region.”

**Prof. Jane Roscoe, President and Vice-Chancellor, University for the Creative Arts**, said:

“As a leading creative university, the University for the Creative Arts plays a pivotal role in driving innovation across the arts, technology and business. Through our partnerships with local government, businesses and fellow academic institutions, we are committed to ensuring that creativity remains at the heart of Surrey’s economic and social growth. Our involvement in initiatives like the Games and Innovation Nexus (GAIN) project, alongside Surrey County Council and our university partners, is just one example of how we can harness creative thinking to solve real-world challenges. The Civic Agreement for Surrey reflects our dedication to fostering a creative and inclusive environment that empowers individuals, enriches communities and drives regional innovation.”

Today’s launch of the Civic Agreement for Surrey is very much the first step in a long-term collaboration that includes every part of Surrey.

We welcome further engagement from community stakeholders, businesses, and residents who share an interest in advancing the shared priorities and objectives set out in our civic agreement.

Details on how the community can get involved will be shared in the coming months.

A video explaining the commitment is also available on each of the partners’ websites.

For more information on the Civic Agreement for Surrey and how you can get involved, contact: [civicagreement@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:civicagreement@surreycc.gov.uk)

## Epsom landlord fined for neglect



A bedsit landlord who repeatedly ignored warnings to fix flats dubbed “cold”, “damp”, “filthy”, and a “firetrap” has been hit with a court bill approaching £32,000.

Epsom Pars Limited, which runs a 21-room house in multiple occupation (HMO) near Epsom Downs was ordered to pay the fines and costs by Staines Magistrates’ Court after they pleaded guilty to 48 criminal charges.

The case was brought forward by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council after the landlord repeatedly ignored warnings to carry out improvement works to the property.

Councillor Rich Michalowski, executive member for place, planning and regulatory services said: “This case underscores the importance of landlords being held accountable to ensure tenants are living in safe, well-maintained homes.

“Reigate and Banstead enforcement teams, armed with legal powers, will continue to take action against those who fail to meet the legal standards, ensuring that unsafe and unfit housing has no place in our borough.”

The company was ordered to pay fines, costs, and a victim surcharge totalling £31,840. The charges included various forms of disrepair and fire safety offences, the council said.

The prosecution comes on the back of months of exchanges between the landlord and the council.

During that time officers from the private sector housing team were said to have repeatedly warned the landlord against its continued non-compliance that left people living in “cold”, “damp”, “filthy” “firetrap” of a property.

During sentencing, magistrates spoke of the “repeated, unacceptable non-compliance” and noted that the problems identified had put tenants at risk, according to a council statement.

Image RBBC

## Will Surrey reporting tool fill the pot-holes?



Surrey County Council’s new ‘FixMyStreet’ online reporting tool will now make it easier for residents to report potholes, faulty traffic signals and other street defects, following its launch today (Tuesday 17 September).

FixMyStreet allows people to quickly and simply report issues in their area which need fixing, cleaning or clearing. Accessed via **Surrey County Council’s website**, residents are also able to see issues which have already been reported, to sign up for local updates and to track the progress of repairs using their mobile phone or other device.

**Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said,** “We’re very aware that well-maintained roads are highly important to our residents. This is why here in Surrey, we’re investing nearly £300m in repairing and improving Surrey’s roads and pavements by 2028.

“Introducing the ‘FixMyStreet’ platform is another example of our continued investment in our vital highways service. This new reporting platform will make it easier for people to report potholes and other defects, and to check the progress of all repairs in their local area.

“Keeping Surrey’s busy road network moving and investing in improving our roads continue to be top priorities for Surrey County Council.”

To report an issue and see existing reports in your area, visit <https://tellus.surreycc.gov.uk/>

Related reports:

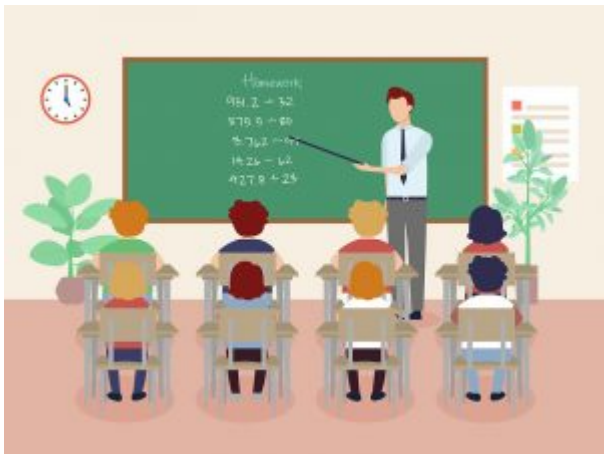
Don’t blame us for potholes say Surrey’s highway authority.

90% of Surrey road hole damage claims go to pot

Prevention costs less than cures.....

Image: Pothole in Woodcote Road Epsom. Copyright Epsom and Ewell Times

## Surrey multiplies to subtract innumerate numbers



Free, flexible Multiply courses are now available for Surrey residents who would like to improve their confidence using numbers.

Around half of the UK working age population don’t have strong numeracy skills, or don’t feel confident about working with numbers.

Now Surrey residents can do something about it without having to go back to the classroom, (unless you want to). Multiply courses are a diverse range of free, flexible courses that have been created to help plug the numeracy gap.

They come in many different shapes and sizes, so if classrooms aren’t your thing, and you’d rather do some cooking or gardening, that’s absolutely possible. Or if you need it to fit in around your work and home life, that’s possible too, with flexible online courses available. There’s a Multiply course to suit everyone – from those who just want to feel a bit more confident with numbers in their everyday life, to those who want to get a new qualification, get a better-paying job and further their career.

Multiply courses are funded by the UK government and delivered by a range of providers overseen by Surrey County Council. Courses range from a couple of hours online, to several weeks with in-person tutoring. With a total of 15 providers and over 35 courses available (with more being added soon), there’s something to suit everyone.

Individuals can sign up for a Multiply course to suit their needs, and businesses can also nominate staff who would benefit from improving their numeracy skills. The full range of courses can be seen on the Surrey County Council website with many created to fill the needs of specific industries, such as construction, healthcare and early years.

**Clare Curran, Surrey County Council’s Cabinet Member Children, Families, and Lifelong learning, said:** “Multiply courses are another tool from our skills toolbox to help improve economic outcomes for residents and businesses in Surrey. Strong numeracy skills are essential to help residents reach their potential, and businesses whose workforces are number confident can boost productivity, increase profits, and improve employee retention.

“Supporting local people to improve their numeracy skills is not only beneficial at the individual level, but also good for our communities and our economy – leading to a better quality of life for all, ensuring no one is left behind.”

Courses are starting now and will run until the end of March 2025. To qualify, learners must be based in Surrey, aged 19 or over, and not currently have a GCSE (or equivalent) in Maths.

Multiply courses can also be used by local businesses to upskill current employees, at no cost to either the learner or the business.





A full list of courses and start dates can be found on **the Surrey County Council website**.

Register your interest at **<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/multiply>**

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