

Different ways to tackle foul-deeds



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's approach to dog-fouling in its public parks may seem rather tame compared with the nearby Surrey Borough of Spelthorne.

Spelthorne has adopted powers in the Anti-Social Behaviour and Policing Act whereby its parks are made the subject of "Public Space Protection Orders" [PSPO]. Under these orders fixed penalty fines can be imposed on dog walkers who fail to clean up and indeed for walking unready with a "poo-bag".

The order, which makes it an offence to take dogs into certain marked areas with fines of up to £1,000 if it leaves its mess behind, has to be renewed every three years. On Wednesday, January 18 Spelthorne Borough Council's neighbourhood services and enforcement committee did just that.

Despite the notices, dog fouling continues to be an issue with the council receiving around 80 complaints a year. Leader of the council, Councillor Joanne Sexton also pushed for new signage to include scannable QR codes in the hope of making it quicker and easier to report offences – and therefore reduce the amount of dog poo lying on the ground.

Officers told the meeting that catching the antisocial behaviour in the act is extremely difficult given how brief the indiscretions are but said that by reporting it the council could find patterns of behaviour and look to target problem areas – turning up at 5am if that's what the data showed.

The zones cover the council's parks and open spaces with dogs excluded from fenced off areas such as tennis courts. Officers told the meeting: "We would like people to report to us. If we know that a dog goes to the park at 3pm on most days we can put in some patrols to give that person some advice – we won't go in heavy. Our aim is always not to give people fines but to make them compliant with rules and regulations. If people see dogs running around like crazy and frightening their dog they should report it."

Spelthorne Borough Council provides about 550 bins as well as dog waste disposal bags in 50 of its parks and open spaces.

Since Spelthorne imposed the order in 2012 it has issued a total of 11 warnings under the PSPO – 2 for dog fouling, 1 for means to collect (not having a bag), 1 dog in tennis courts, 1 professional dog walker with too many dogs, and 6 directions given to keep a badly behaved dog on a lead.

The authority also issued 3 Fixed Penalty Notices for dog fouling offences in the same time frame (all paid).

However, Spelthorne acknowledges that dog fouling (and other dog related issues) are notoriously difficult offences to actually enforce, as unless the dog owner is actually known to the person reporting, or officers happen to be in the right place at the right time, there is often very little to no evidence that allows investigation.

This reality may explain Epsom and Ewell Council's more realistic approach stated on its website:

"What can we all do about dog fouling? Report it and we'll remove it. If you notice dog fouling, let us know by filling in our online form 'Street Cleansing' at the top of this page or calling 01372 732000."

Nevertheless, without the authority of a PSPO it still may be an offence under the Anti Social Behaviour and Policing Act to allow a dog to persistently foul a public area, leading to the possibility of a prosecution and fine.

Surrey's debts match Woking's but its position is secure?



Surrey County Council expects to add a further billion pounds in "additional" debt to its balance sheets but experts have praised its financial sustainability and suggested it is better placed to cope with any potential issues.

The council currently has about £1.3 billion in capital financing requirements and has forecast this to surge to £2.4bn by 2028/29. It expects to fund much of this through borrowing.

According to its own figures the council has an estimated borrowing limit of £1.06 billion which it forecasts will grow to £2 billion by 2028/29. It will do this, it says by borrowing an additional £1.24 billion over that time frame.

The finances were presented to Surrey County Council's Audit and Governance committee on Wednesday January 17 and comes as data found Surrey councils were racking up some of the biggest debts in the UK.

Analysis from the Shared Data Unit shows Woking Borough Council topped the charts owing £1.95bn as of September 2023 – working out at about £19,000 for every resident, the highest in the country. Spelthorne was second with average debts of £10,415, per person and Runnymede fifth, on £7,270 with the Public Accounts Committee warning that these massive debts posed a risk to local services.

Addressing the meeting was council officer Nicola O'Connor. She said: "The table does demonstrate an ongoing commitment to capital expenditure by the council. Our capital program, to be approved in the coming weeks, remains ambitious and remains significant in terms of our capital investment over the next five years. That does result in an anticipated increase in our borrowing. We will manage that and review actual spend compared to forecast before we undertake borrowing."

She added: "There is an expectation that the borrowing of the council will increase in the coming years in order to support and finance that ambition in the capital program."

Surrey County Council lost £27 million from the value of its capital investments in 2023. The finance model continues the same line the council has managed in the past with no significant changes. It sees the continuation of its plan to "maximise our internal borrowing and to balance the long and the short term debt portfolio in order to manage that cost of carry".

Surrey County Council borrowed an additional £79m in 2023. This is forecast to rise by a further £156m this financial year, with further sums of £372m, £360m, £193m, £129m and £131m added in debt in each of the following years until 2029 – bringing the total additional borrowing for £1,18 billion.

If the plan is followed through the council's capital funding requirement would grow from £1,3bn to £2,4bn – bringing it almost in line with bankrupt Woking Borough Council which declared itself effectively bust last year.

It would also mean the council would be spending £59m a year to service the debt through minimum revenue protection payments. Overall the council's financial health remains bullish, considering the serious risks other local authorities were in.

Paul Dossett of accountancy firm Grant Thornton told the meeting that, although the council was not immune to financial challenges hitting local authorities across the country, it had the support in place to better navigate them. He said: "It's a very very strong position and you have the right mechanisms in place". He added: "Your strong governance is linked to the fact that your financial sustainability is in a better place than some other councils. Your strong arrangements for

aching value for money is linked to the reasons of your financial sustainability.

“I’m not downplaying the challenges you face. because you face some... but overall it’s a very strong report it will be absolutely in our top quartile at least for these types of reports this year.”

Related reports:

Relative relief about Epsom and Ewell’s debt?

Surrey Borough running up big debts

Underinvestment hits most vulnerable

Tory leader pleads with Tory Government

Surrey County chief talks to the BBC

A blast celebrates 40 years past of Epsom Playhouse



On Friday 19th January, the Band of the **Coldstream Guards** joined residents of Epsom to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the **Epsom Playhouse**.

Led by Director of music Lieutenant Colonel **Stewart Halliday**, the band performed an eclectic mix of music ranging from classic marches to hits from the West End.

As expected the band played with military precision, and there were some virtuous solos from all sections including a stunning performance of ‘Victors Tale’ from the film ‘The Terminal’ by principal clarinettist Lance Sergeant **Natalie White**.

The audience was delighted to see the concert organiser and former Senior Director of Music, Household Division, Cllr Dr **Graham Jones** MBE (RA Cuddington) pick up his baton once again to conduct the band, and encouraged the audience to participate in the encore in the ‘Radetzky March’ by Johann Strauss.

This concert has raised awareness and funds for the Epsom & Ewell Royal British Legion and the Epsom & Ewell Mayor’s Charities. With all programme sales being match funded by Barclays Bank.

We hope this will be the start of more world class bands coming to perform at Epsom Playhouse.

The Epsom and Ewell Times is proud to have supported the concert.

Claudia Jones - Reporter

Image courtesy Steven McCormick Photography

Lionel Blackman, who was in the original staff team of the Playhouse when it opened 40 years ago, writes:

40 years have passed since the Epsom Playhouse first opened its doors to professional and amateur performers alike. The Council head-hunted **Graham Stansfield**, a great professional, to kick-start the programme and establish the venue. The first management was in the hands of a then young and dynamic **Robin Hodgkinson**. The theatre came with the development of the **Ashley Centre** by the **Bechtel Corporation**. Originally the main hall’s retractable seating allowed the venue to host balls and exhibitions. Today it has fixed and comfortable seating for 406 and a smaller flexible hall space, The Myers, with a seating capacity of 80.

From those early years onward Epsom Playhouse attracted many high-class acts: The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the bands of Humphrey Lyttleton, Kenny Ball and James Last. The Pasadena Roof Orchestra and the Instant Sunshine entertainers came regularly. The world famous Stepan Grappelli once cast his magic violin over a sell-out audience and many many more through to today. Many of the UK’s top comedians will spend an evening in Epsom when on tour: Jack Dee, Count Arthur Strong, Harry Hill and many others. It remains the venue for the annual and very popular Christmas Pantomime.

The venue is the permanent home of local amateur talent the Epsom Symphony Orchestra and The Epsom Players among others.

The **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** and all local residents who support the venue can be proud of The Epsom Playhouse and its 40 year roll-call of talent, opportunity and entertainment.

Why not give up an evening of Netflix or YouTube and see some live entertainment at your local venue? Visit www.epsomplayhouse.co.uk

Should we have a petition about petitions?



While Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s ePetition platform offers residents a voice in local decision-making, a closer examination of the data reveals a challenging picture. From September 2016 to the present, the Council’s ePetition system has faced difficulties in garnering community support and has seen a high rate of rejections, often on vague grounds.

Debate Requests - An Uphill Battle for Support

a) Petition Requests Submitted for Full Council Debate: 13

b) Permitted: 4

c) Successfully Reached Required Number of 1500 for Debate: 1

The stark reality emerges when analyzing the numbers. Despite 13 petition requests for Full Council debate, only four were permitted, with a solitary petition

managing to secure the necessary support. The challenges in mobilizing community backing for debates raise questions about the effectiveness of the ePetition platform in truly representing resident concerns.

Rejected Petitions:

1. Continued designation of Hook Road Arena as Green Belt land
Reason for Rejection: Relates to the Council’s Planning or Licensing functions, separate statutory processes in place.
2. Railings outside the Metro Bank and Lester Bowden’s
Reason for Rejection: Relates to a matter for which this Council is not responsible or cannot influence.
3. Petition to EEBC regarding height and density regulations for Proposed building developments
Reason for Rejection: Relates to a matter for which this Council is not responsible or cannot influence.
4. Subject matter not specified in petition submission
Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council’s ePetition Scheme.
5. Objection to the Epsom Hospital Development Scheme
Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council’s ePetition Scheme.
6. Hook Road speed limit & cameras
Reason for Rejection: Relates to a matter for which this Council is not responsible or cannot influence.
7. Keep Epsom and Ewell Green Belt
Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council’s ePetition Scheme.
8. Fairview Road temporary homes for the homeless
Reason for Rejection: Relates to the Council’s Planning or Licensing functions, separate statutory processes in place.
9. Compulsory Purchase Order for Horton Cemetery
Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council’s ePetition Scheme.

Dismayed at the Council’s refusal, made on the basis it was for the Strategy and Resources Committee not the Council (sic), The Friends of Horton Cemetery set up their [own petition on change.org](#)

The rejection of petitions, often on grounds as vague as not complying with the ePetition Scheme requirements, underscores the challenges residents face in navigating the system. This pattern raises skepticism about the transparency and accessibility of the ePetition platform.

Scrutiny and Accountability

The removal of the Council Officer appearance request from the Petition Scheme in May 2023 marks a significant shift in the dynamics of accountability, leaving residents with fewer avenues to question and scrutinize Council decisions.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s ePetition system, while ostensibly a tool for community engagement, faces challenges in attracting support and exhibits a high rate of rejections. The rejection of petitions on rather vague grounds raises questions about the system’s accessibility and transparency, prompting a critical examination of the Council’s commitment to genuinely amplifying resident voices.

For more information and to explore current and past ePetitions, visit [www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk](#).

Image: The Surgeons Petition or The Barbers Triumphant: Science Museum, London. (CC BY 4.0)

Epsom centre brings hope to youth who need support



With one of three Surrey centres based in **Epsom** the multi-agency **Hope Service** gets a glowing **Ofsted report**. Published last month the report finds that the Hope Service, provided by Surrey County Council and Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Trust, ‘continues to be an outstanding school’ following its previous ‘Outstanding’ inspection outcome in 2018.

The Hope Service, which is registered as a Pupil Referral Unit, offers a ‘Day Programme’ with a curriculum comprising education, therapies and activities. This is part of the broader multi-agency **Hope Service offer in Surrey** which supports young people age 11-18 who are experiencing complex mental health, emotional, social and behavioural challenges which cannot be met by one agency alone. The Hope Service works with the young person, their family and wider network to offer support to try and prevent placement breakdown or the need for a psychiatric hospital admission.

In a glowing report, Ofsted inspectors note that ‘pupils flourish at this inspirational school’ due to the ‘nurturing relationships they form with staff as soon as they join’. Inspectors also found that young people receive ‘highly specialist support, in every aspect of learning and development’ helping them to grow in confidence and in turn ‘realise their full potential and aspire to a bright future when they leave school’.

The report also highlights that ‘staff take careful steps to construct an ambitious curriculum for every pupil’, with pupil voice central to this and pupils’ views captured ‘at each stage when planning individual curriculum programmes’.

Inspectors found that the school has a ‘palpable air of serenity’, empowering individuals to have a ‘clear sense of self-identity and autonomy’ and readying them for adulthood. The school also offers a significant amount of expert advice and support to the wider community via their outreach work and parent and carer support and information sessions, with parents and carers crediting the school for ‘giving their child hope for a positive and healthy future’.

Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, said;

“I’m thrilled to see that this incredible school continues to be recognised as Outstanding by Ofsted. One of the priorities in the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy is to support children and young people with their mental health, including focusing on access to early, appropriate support to prevent further escalation of need, and supporting the emotional wellbeing of parents and care givers.

“The outcomes the Hope Service achieves for Surrey children are remarkable, with staff being able to provide the support young people need to meet their emotional and mental health needs, while at the same time providing a top quality education delivered with high levels of personalisation, kindness and belief in each young person.

“Young people and their families come into contact with this service at a challenging time in their lives, and its vital that we and partners are able to provide a high quality service upon which they can rely.”

The full inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website: **50234890 (ofsted.gov.uk)**.

You can read more about the Hope Service, including the school offer, assessment and out of hours ‘Extended Hope’ crisis service, and free fortnightly online parent and carer support sessions on a range of topics on the **Hope Service** website.

Image: cc Bruce Matsunaga. Licence details

Mystery Local Plan critic revealed



Epsom and Ewell Times reported in full the speech from a member of the public at the Licensing, Planning and Policy Committee (LPPC) of 22nd November 2023. He addressed Councillors forcefully on a response to the Government’s revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). See report [here](#).

Undeterred the gentleman appeared again at the Thursday 18th January meeting of the LPPC. Cllr. **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) asked Chair Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley Vale) to identify the speaker. As far as we could tell his name is John Seaton or Seaton.

Following the private “members’ briefing” of 10th January about the Local Plan, reported in the Epsom and Ewell Times [HERE](#), there was anticipation that something would be said in public about that meeting on Thursday. Nothing was said.

The only contribution about the Local Plan was the three minutes Mr Season/Seaton was permitted. Again, our transcript of his address is published in full. Epsom and Ewell Times invites corrections and responses to his opinions.

“Last year, this Council voted to pause the Local Plan process. In order to buy time to base its regulation 19 Local Plan on Government’s revised NPPF. The great news is that this pause strategy worked. The critical thing now is to take full advantage of the opportunity that you have created. To do this, you need to be very clear about the changes to NPPF that Government has made.

There are two very important points that you must fully understand. First point: Government has clearly stated that the standard method calculation just gives an advisory starting point. When I spoke to you at the start of your last meeting, I emphasized how Government has used its standard method to set a negotiation anchor. Government has now admitted that its anchor is not credible. So it has rebranded it as an advisory starting point. It is critical that all councillors and officers involved in a Local Plan process fully understand that there is nothing binding about the standard method number.

You do not need to meet this target in full. You do not even need to meet half this target. You do not have to meet any specific proportion of this target. You just need to meet the actual needs of our borough.

Second point: Paragraph 145 of the new NPPF states there is no requirement for Green Belt boundaries to be reviewed or changed when plans are being prepared or updated. That was a direct quote from NPPF.

Could government have been any clearer? In case you missed it, there is no requirement for Green Belt boundaries to be reviewed or changed. I have highlighted during previous LPPC meetings that this Borough can fully meet its actual housing need over the plan period using only brownfield sites and previously developed land within the Green Belt.

In the Regulation 18 Local Plan, Council used the brownfield sites shortfall versus government’s anchor to declare the exceptional circumstances required to alter Green Belt boundaries. The two changes to NPPF that I have just highlighted together with the quantum of brownfield and previously developed sites available in the Borough make this declaration of exceptional circumstances and resulting changes of Green Belt boundaries unjustifiable.

It would not be consistent with achieving a balanced Local Plan which meets Council’s legal duty to achieve biodiversity net gain and a credible local nature. Any proposals to change Green Belt boundaries in the regulation 19 Local Plan would expose Council to legal challenge. And the associated cost and programme overruns as well as angering the residents you are supposed to serve.”

Related reports:

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

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

[Local Plan \(2022-2040\) Un-Pause Recommended](#)

[Cllr Persand intervenes ahead of Local Plan debate](#)

and many many more. Search “local plan” in search function above.

Image: Clockwise from Chair: Cllrs - Steven McCormick (RA), Peter O'Donovan (RA), public speaker (Seaton / Seaton), Keiran Persand (Con), Julie Morris (LibDem), Clive Woodbridge (RA), Phil Neale (RA), Steve Bridge (RA), Council officers.

Council’s contribution to our safety



Epsom and Ewell’s Crime and Disorder Committee met Wednesday 17th January to endorse an updated Community Safety Action Plan for 2024-25.

This followed a period of consultation in which **Chris Grayling** MP called for more attention to be paid to prevent local parks being used for drug dealing, one resident’s request for slimy leaves being swept up being disregarded as not relevant to the Plan, the **Liberal Democrats** calling for more action on minor crime such as theft from cars and a citizen asking for the Stones Road tunnel under the railway line to be closed because of drug-dealing.

The plan was adopted unanimously and a summary follows:

In an effort to maintain its reputation as a safe haven amidst changing crime patterns, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has rolled out a comprehensive Community Safety Action Plan for the upcoming year. The plan addresses emerging challenges, emphasizing the protection of vulnerable individuals and enhancing community engagement.

The borough aims to tackle crime at its roots by prioritizing the most vulnerable and those at risk. The implementation of Community Harm and Risk Reduction Meetings (CHaRMM) is a cornerstone of this strategy. These multi-agency gatherings plan interventions for both victims and perpetrators, with approximately 65 cases managed each year.

Key initiatives include attending monthly CHaRMM meetings, ensuring proper resourcing for Domestic Homicide Reviews, and conducting Antisocial Behaviour Case Reviews. These actions aim to provide a voice for victims, address hidden crimes, and enhance overall community safety.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council are determined to be on the frontline against serious organized crime. Staff, including the Environmental Enforcement team and Environmental Health Team, will undergo awareness sessions. The council also plans to report intelligence via appropriate channels, using its unique position as landowners, event organizers, and chairing Safety Advisory Groups to contribute to counter-terrorism efforts.

The rollout of ACT Awareness (Action Counter Terrorism) training and the establishment of Serious Organized Crime Joint Action Groups demonstrate the borough’s commitment to staying vigilant and proactive in the fight against criminal networks.

Beyond addressing vulnerable populations, the plan includes joint initiatives such as Joint Action Groups (JAGs), which focus on targeted interventions in specific geographical areas. The move towards a standing JAG arrangement ensures a continuous forum for partner agencies to collectively address area-based issues.

Additionally, a thorough review of town centre data will be conducted, utilizing available tools to identify trends and behaviours that require attention.

To foster a safer community, the borough will continue joint initiatives with other enforcement agencies, including “Meet the Beat” and “Violence Against Women And Girls” day of action. Social media will also play a pivotal role in keeping residents informed and engaged.

The Council pledges to amplify partner messages on social media, ensuring targeted and informative content that showcases the results of their community safety efforts.

The meeting lasted 2 minutes 37 seconds.

Council wants to prevent suicides



Tuesday 16th January Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Community and Well-Being Committee considered local suicides.

In 2019, the Borough Council launched its Health & Wellbeing Strategy (HWBS), recognizing a concerning suicide rate of 10.4 per 100,000 residents from 2016-2018—higher than the Southeast’s 9.2. A total of 21 lives were tragically lost. To address this, mental and emotional wellbeing became a priority in the borough’s HWBS and subsequent action plan. However, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the plan’s execution.

Since the HWBS approval in late 2019, the borough has witnessed a spike in suicide rates, reaching 14 per 100,000 residents between 2018-2020—claiming 29 lives, with 19 being male. The Southeast’s rate during this period was 10.1 per 100,000. To counteract this alarming trend, the Council proposes an assertive response in the form of a revised Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

The increase in suicides is reminiscent of a previous increase observed from 2009 to 2013 during a period of significant financial hardship. Recent changes in the standard of proof used by coroners, shifting from ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ to ‘on the balance of probability,’ might impact the recorded number of suicides.

In March 2023, the Council’s Health Liaisons Panel supported the development of a Suicide Prevention Action Plan (SPAP). This plan aligns with Surrey County Council’s Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2026, emphasizing six priorities for suicide prevention.

The Council’s SPAP, rooted in Surrey’s broader strategy, aims to:

- Enhance the response to individuals in crisis with suicidal thoughts.
- Foster collaboration with Public Health Surrey County Council, statutory partners, and the community & voluntary sector.
- Collaborate with Public Health Surrey County Council to utilize real-time surveillance data for meaningful and effective SPAPs.

Specifically referencing the Alison Todd Protocol, an assessment tool identifying areas of practice and growth, the SPAP demonstrates the Council’s commitment to suicide prevention. The plan, to be led by the Council’s Community Development Team, spans from January 2024 to January 2025 before undergoing review.

Cllr Kate Chinn (Labour Court ward) was concerned about Council staff who might not assess the risk of suicide correctly and the effect on them if a resident subsequently died. She was assured that training would be given and support for staff provided in that situation.

The committee adopted the plan unanimously.

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Local Co-Vid volunteers rewarded with Council support



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s financial support for five key local voluntary organisations came up for review 16th January at the meeting of the Environment and Well-Being Committee.

Age Concern Epsom & Ewell:

- Focus: Providing support and services for older people in the community.
- Activities: Offering a range of services such as social activities, information, and advice to enhance the well-being of older individuals.

Citizens Advice Bureau Epsom & Ewell:

- Focus: Providing free, confidential advice and support to the local community.
- Activities: Offering assistance on a wide range of issues, including legal, financial, and personal matters, to help individuals navigate challenges they may face.

Central Surrey Voluntary Action:

- Focus: Supporting and promoting voluntary and community work in the area.
- Activities: Facilitating connections between volunteers and local organizations, offering resources and training, and fostering collaboration within the voluntary sector.

RELATE Mid Surrey:

- Focus: Providing relationship support and counseling services.
- Activities: Offering counseling for individuals, couples, and families to improve and strengthen relationships. Addressing a variety of relationship issues through professional guidance.

The Sunnybank Trust:

- Focus: Supporting individuals with learning disabilities.
- Activities: Offering a range of services and activities to enhance the quality of life for people with learning disabilities. This may include social events, skill-building programs, and support for independent living.

Introducing a report to the Councillors the Community Development Officer said: “I have to say that during the COVID crisis, we would not have been able to cope unless we had the support of our voluntary organizations who stepped up and were absolutely amazing in getting volunteers to come forward and help the Council give the service and help the residents in what was a particularly difficult time. This report, I think, reflects the fact that we appreciate that support and that we wish to continue supporting those organizations in what they do on behalf of our residents.”

The support, approved by the committee, is summarised in the table below.

	Current and Proposed Support for Voluntary Organisations 2024/25 £s											
	Age Concern Epsom		Citizens Advice Bureau Epsom &		Central Surrey Voluntary Action		RELATE Mid Surrey		The Sunnybank Trust		Total	
	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25
Direct Grant Funding	0	0	74115	74115	7989	7989	0	0	0	0	82104	82104
Licence / Rent - Notional Grant	14,616	14,615	28,686	28,686	7,344	7,344	14,910	14,910	0	0	65,556	65,555
Service Charge - Notional Grant	15,639	12,764	30,694	25,052	7,858	6,414	4,800	4,800	0	0	58,991	49,030
Rent paid to EEBC	-2,936	-2,936	0	0	0	0	-1,294	-1,294	-3,420	-3,470		
Grant for Volunteer Parking	100	100	1920	1920	0	0	0	0	0	0	2020	2020
Subsidy for Staff Parking Permits	1,920	2720	3,840	4080	0	0	0	0	453	680	6,213	7480
Subsidy for volunteer Parking	0	0	7600	8000	0	0	0	0	0	0	7600	8000
Totals do not include rent paid to EEBC	32275	30199	146855	141853	23191	21747	19710	19710	453	680	222484	214189

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Relative relief about Epsom and Ewell’s debt?



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s debt is about average with all 381 United Kingdom local authorities. UK councils owe a combined **£97.8bn** to lenders, equivalent to **£1,455** per resident, as of September 2023. Epsom and Ewell’s debt per person is **£795**. From highest debt per person to lowest Epsom and Ewell ranks 195 out of 381.

In the national league table of debt shame other Surrey Boroughs occupy the leading positions: Woking is first with debt of £18,756 per resident followed by Spelthorne in second place at £10,415. Guildford is 5th.

Taking into account all types of local authorities, such as police and crime commissioners and combined authorities, the debt pile rises to **£122bn**.

The 11 boroughs of Surrey are ranked in the table below. Highest debt per resident to lowest.

Standing in Surrey	Borough	Population	Total amassed debt 2023-24 Q2 (£)	Debt per person 2023-24 Q2 (£)	National standing out of 381
1	Woking	103,889	1,948,583,000	18,756	1
2	Spelthorne	102,995	1,072,698,000	10,415	2
3	Runnymede	87,739	637,900,000	7,270	5
4	Guildford	143,929	178,826,000	1,242	132
5	Mole Valley	87,608	102,850,000	1,174	147
6	Waverley	128,878	149,771,000	1,162	151
7	Tandridge	88,143	99,415,000	1,128	156
8	Surrey Heath	90,645	98,695,000	1,089	162
9	Epsom and Ewell	80,998	64,427,000	795	195
10	Elmbridge	139,369	50,358,000	361	276
11	Reigate and Banstead	151,423	0	0	37 others

Dame **Meg Hillier**, the chair of the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, said some examples of debt were “staggering”.

But council leaders say years of under-funding mean they have been forced to take out loans and invest in commercial properties just to keep services running.

In recent years, various commentators have warned that the debts held by councils – which must balance their budgets every year – are unsustainable. In 2020, chair of the Public Accounts Committee Dame Meg Hillier said the Government was “blind to the extreme risks” of council borrowing levels.

Since then, six more councils have had to issue section 114 notices declaring themselves effectively bankrupt: Croydon, Slough, Thurrock, Birmingham, Woking and Nottingham.

In the case of Croydon, Slough, Thurrock, Woking and Nottingham – those effective bankruptcies could be directly linked to failed investments and spiralling debts. Thurrock’s £469m funding black hole, for example, was caused by a series of failed investments in solar farms.

Dame Hillier added: “Small district councils have very little room for manoeuvre when finances are squeezed, relying on charges (such as parking fees) for a lot of their income. Unitary authorities are facing the demographic pressures on social services, social care and special educational needs.

“But beyond these day to day pressures, the PAC warned in 2020 that some councils had not only pursued strategies of commercial investment exposing them to high levels of risk, but normalised behaviour and optimistically believed that there was little downside to commercial activity. Add to this the delay in public sector audits and many councillors and taxpayers were blind to the risk.”

Cllr **Julie Morris**, (College Ward) Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council said “There is no evidence that central government is likely to assist with the broader financial issues affecting local authorities, so we need to budget carefully and 2025/26 is likely to be crunch time. We need a complete review of both mandatory services and those which are discretionary. And central government needs to wake up to what is facing government at local level.”

Cllr **Neil Dallen**, (RA Town) Chair of Strategy & Resources Committee said: “As a council, Epsom & Ewell’s investments are performing as planned. The debts are considered sustainable, with sums set aside each year to ensure they can be repaid at maturity. Through taking a proactive approach to our finances, we have a strong track record of meeting the considerable financial challenges the past decade has brought for local government through reduced central government funding, and we are looking ahead to 2024/25 and beyond to ensure that we remain a financially sustainable council.”

The other parties have also been invited to comment.