# Surrey prison drug smuggling drones might be investigated

Drones smuggling drugs into prison will be investigated in an inquest into a man who died in custody. The full inquest, which opens next month, will also look at his care and supervision.

Oliver Mulangala, 40, was found dead at HMP High Down, Sutton in July 2024. A pre-inquest review was held at Woking's Coroner's Court on October 29, ahead of a 10-week inquest due to begin on November 17.

At the hearing, Coroner Jonathan Stevens said it was his role to investigate any potential factors contributing to Mr Mulangala's death, including the possibility that drugs may have entered the prison by drones. However, Ministry of Justice (MoJ) representative Mr Simms said there was no evidence to suggest the substances consumed by Mr Mulangala were delivered by drone.

He warned releasing details of intelligence related to drone activity in prison, and measures to reduce or minimise drones, could risk compromising the prison's security. Mr Simms said the MoJ's decision had "not been taken lightly" but said "it was not in the public interest" to provide this information.

Barrister Michael Etienne, acting on behalf of Mr Mulangala's family at the coroner's court in Woking, said the family wanted the inquest to look at the monitoring, care and supervision in the 12 months prior to Oliver's tragic death. The court heard that the prison officer who failed to conduct the roll call the morning of July 13 was subsequently dismissed. When Mr Mulangala was found by officers, they undertook initial life support.

Coroner Stevens asked to see all the evidence available from family statements, the MoJ and NHS trust, before deciding if it is relevant for the full inquest. A full inquest with a jury is due to take place for two weeks from November 17. Numerous witnesses will be called, including senior figures from HMP High Down, current prisoners and those responsible for Mr Mulangala's health.

The Ministry of Justice and North West London NHS Trust have been identified as interested persons in the inquest.

**Emily Dalton LDRS** 

HMP High Down from Google maps

# Surrey Police officer inspires change to racism law in private places

Surrey Police officer Sergeant Candice Gill is celebrating this week after successfully campaigning for an amendment to the law that will have a far-reaching impact.

While it is a criminal offence to racially or religiously abuse someone in public, this does not extend to incidents occurring in homes. This loophole left police officers and emergency workers with no legal protection from such attacks during home visits.

Candice experienced the impact of this first-hand. She says: "I cast my mind back to the day of a racially aggravated incident against me. I knew the man was racist. Once I was inside his house, he made it overtly clear. The abuse he threw at me was both damaging and humiliating, and there were no legal consequences.

"It seemed like a no-brainer to me that something had to change. But changing the law seemed way too big, far out of my remit, impossible even."

Surrey Police Deputy Chief Constable Nev Kemp heard about this outdated gap in the law and committed to championing the cause with Candice.

He capitalised on opportunities to brief ministers and wrote numerous letters. Alongside Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend, Candice and Nev made a trip to Parliament to press the case for change.

When they learnt earlier this year that there was cross-party support in Parliament and the changes would be made, Candice and Nev were thrilled. Last week they received written confirmation that the government will make an amendment to the law, subject

to the Police and Crime Bill receiving Royal Assent later this year. The government will introduce two new offences, ensuring that emergency workers are covered under the law when doing their jobs in private homes.

Candice says: "I am absolutely delighted to have heard that my proposal to have the law changed has been agreed.

"I hope the change will go some way into making all officers but particularly the officers who are ethnically or religiously diverse feel more protected and more valued while doing one of the hardest jobs out there. The positive impact is widespread across all police forces and other emergency services."

Deputy Chief Constable Nev Kemp says: "More than once, I heard from colleagues that the impact of being singled out and attacked for simply being who you are was more profound than being physically assaulted.

"This important change wouldn't have happened without Candice and is a reminder of the difference we can make with determination and teamwork. Letters of support from national leaders representing the ambulance service, fire and rescue service and the Police Federation have helped to confirm the difference it will make to emergency workers across England and Wales.

"Surrey is a consistently improving force, and this is further evidence of our pathway to becoming a leading force in fighting crime and protecting people."

Policing Minister Dame Diana Johnson said: "Candice's story is heartbreaking. Our emergency workers put themselves in harm's way every day to keep us safe and they should never have to tolerate abuse due to their race or religion while simply doing their job.

"As part of our Plan for Change, this government is rebuilding the bond between the public and police, and part of that means ensuring our officers have the protections they deserve.

"By closing this loophole, we're sending a clear message that racial and religious abuse directed towards those who serve our communities will not be tolerated, and I thank Candice, Deputy Chief Constable Nev Kemp and all those at Surrey Police who have campaigned for this important law change."

# Mental Health and Justice in Special Epsom Film Screening

A powerful evening of film and conversation is coming to Epsom Picturehouse on Monday 23 June, as local mental health charity *Mary Frances Trust* teams up with national organisation *Women in Prison* to present a special screening of the acclaimed documentary *HOLLOWAY*.

The event, beginning at 7.30pm, will include a live Q&A with guest speakers exploring the intersection of trauma, mental health, and the women's prison system — themes at the heart of both the film and the work of Mary Frances Trust.

Directed by BAFTA Breakthrough Brit Daisy-May Hudson and Emmy-nominated filmmaker Sophie Compton, *HOLLOWAY* invites six women back to the now-closed Holloway Prison, where they form a women's circle to share deeply personal stories of incarceration and survival. The result is a compelling portrait of systemic failure and personal transformation, as the women trace the roots of their journeys through trauma and into healing.

Created through a trauma-informed, co-creative process, the film features contributions from Aliyah Ali, Mandy Ogunmokun, Sarah Cassidy, Lady Unchained, Gerrah, and Tamar Mujanay. It won the Audience Award at the BFI London Film Festival and has prompted vital discussions wherever it has been shown.

Following the screening, audience members will hear from a panel of guest speakers:

- Karryn Robinson, London Prison Services Manager at *Women in Prison*, who leads the Unsentenced Women project at Bronzefield Prison. Karryn has previously worked as a trauma specialist counsellor, Crisis Team Manager at MIND, and as a domestic abuse advocate within the Probation Service.
- Megan Siarey, Delivery and Strategy Lead for Co-Production and Community Engagement at Mary Frances Trust.
- Sophie Compton, Emmy, Grierson and BIFA-nominated director of HOLLOWAY and Another Body.

The evening promises to be a moving and enlightening experience for anyone interested in mental health, justice reform, and the power of community-led support.

#### **Event details**

Epsom Picturehouse Monday 23 June, 7.30pm Tickets available at: picturehouses.com

#### Watch the trailer and find more details via Mary Frances Trust:

https://www.maryfrancestrust.org.uk/mft-co-hosts-special-screening-qa-holloway-at-epsom-picturehouse/

Image: Contributor Mandy opens up about her early childhood trauma during the women's circle. Six women who had been imprisoned in Holloway Prison took part in the women's circle over 5 days, returning to the now-closed Holloway Prison to tell their stories.

## Surrey jail addresses prison population crisis

Sixty six temporary prisoner cells, built at HMP Coldingley during the Covid-19 pandemic, will be made permanent in an effort to "ease" the crisis facing the service. Nationally, the prison population has doubled in the past 30 years while only 500 new cells have been built in the past 14 years. It has left the service scrambling around looking for a series of short-term ways to increase capacity until four new prisons come online by 2031, creating 14,000 extra spaces.

The latest stop gap has been the approval of 66 cells in HMP Coldingley in Bisley by Surrey Heath Borough Council on Thursday, June 6. The cells were approved unanimously during a brief two-minute item with no questions or debate from members. Case officers addressing the meeting said: "No objections have been raised by any statutory consultees, while there is a national need for prisoner accommodation. The application is therefore recommended for approval."

The plans were reported to committee due to its size – although details were scant on the advice of the Ministry of Justice, which said the application contained officially sensitive information, including the layout. The confidential information has not been shared in the public domain however the publicly available aspects of the report said the overall site comprises a variety of buildings of up to four storeys in height, predominantly concentrated towards the north-western flank and centre. Among them are a central accommodation block, an engineering workshop and a laundry building. Sports pitches and open spaces are at the south-west with the prison entrance at the north-eastern corner of the site. The entire perimeter of the category C site, that is male prisoners who cannot be trusted in open conditions, is secured by a 5.2-metre-high security fence.

The report read: "The proposed development supports a demonstrable national infrastructure need and aligns with national and local policy objectives." It added: "The installation of the cells was considered necessary in the event of a national emergency to allow for safeguarding procedures to be implemented during COVID-19. There is also an on-going national shortfall of prison spaces, with the prison population having roughly doubled in the last 30 years with only 500 places added to the country's stock of jail cells in the last 14 years. At national level four prisons are being built as part of the Plan for Change to create 14,000 extra spaces by 2031 to assist with the crisis. Until then, however, short term measures such the installation of Rapid Deployment Cells, and the retention of the temporary accommodation installed during the pandemic such as this site, help to ease the burden of rising demand."

The application is supported by comment from the Department of Justice (see confidential paper). "There is a clear need for existing prison sites to support the increased demand and shortage of supply of prison places across the country. The proposed development therefore helps to support a demonstrable national need."

Related reports:

Surrey prison failed IPP prisoner

HMP Coldingley (image Google)

## Illegal dumps dump a dumps in Surrey

Persistent and ongoing fly-tippling problems have forced the permanent closure of a Surrey recycling centre, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council has said.

The Lower Kingswood site in Stubbs Lane has been plagued with illegal dumping despite being plastered with warning posters saying flytipping was a criminal offence – and that continued misuse would result in its closure.

The council has said it will continue to monitor the site after its Monday, May 19 axing in an effort to deter any further tips.

The flytipping, it added, was not only a nuisance but risked contaminating recycling turning it into useless landfill.

Cllr Hannah Avery (Conservative, Horley Central and South), is the executive member for neighbourhood services.

She said: "We're grateful to the many residents who do the right thing when recycling their waste.

"Unfortunately, fly tipping at our recycling sites, which can contaminate this recycling, undermines the efforts of the responsible majority.

"I want it to be easy for residents to recycle as much as they can, so am really pleased that all households in the area local to Stubbs Lane can now use our full collection service and are able to recycle all the materials collected at Stubbs Lane, with the exception of textiles, from home."

The council said its efforts to curb the illegal fly tipping, including fixed penalty notices, failed to prevent large volumes of non-recyclable waste being dumped at the site.

Reigate and Banstead run an alternating waste collection service. Week one – which it calls blue week, collects food as well as paper and cardboard – with a fortnightly garden scheme for members.

The second week, dubbed green week, collects food, paper and cardboard - with a fortnightly mixed recycling and general refuse of anything that can not be recycled.

The council said it has reminded all its residents, businesses, and charities they must dispose waste responsibly and that failure could result in prosecution or a £400 fixed penalty notice.

Stubbs Lane flytipping (image RBBC)

## **Epsom and Ewell PSPO**

Anyone arrested for behaving badly on Epsom Derby day could be stuck with a £100 fine, a Surrey council says.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has green-lit a public space protection order (PSPO) ahead of this year's Epsom Derby on June 7. Members voted through the new rules at a full council meeting, which could last up to three years, on Tuesday May 6.

The order applies to anyone harassing or threatening others, or continuing to drink alcohol after being ordered to stop by a police officer, community support officer or council officer. People wearing a piece of clothing with the intent to hide their identity to commit crime or behave anti-socially could also be at risk of large fines.

"There is an escalating amount of antisocial behaviour in the borough," said Councillor Shanice Goldman, Chair of the Crime and Disorder Committee. She said: "The PSPO is a new tool specifically for the Epsom & Ewell area which will allow police and appropriate council staff to address antisocial behaviour effectively, without immediately resorting to arrests."

Cllr Bernie Muir exclaimed: "Some residents are actually actively thinking of leaving the borough." She said people have told her they do not like walking through an "intimidating" bunch of people to get into a restaurant or Epsom playhouse. Cllr Muir said: "Just having to put up with what is bad enough in itself the fear and uncertainty of antisocial behaviour but it's going to impact economic life as well."

Members spoke up in support of the order and hoped it would bring positive change to Epsom and Ewell. Cllr Goldman said: "I hope this order will ensure a more enjoyable experience for everyone on the day, as well as a safer environment in the borough going forward."

Report: https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/documents/s35629/Adoption%20of%20a%20Public%20Spaces%20Protection%20O

rder.pdf

Press

release: https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/news/epsom-ewell-borough-council-put-measures-place-combat-anti-social-%C2%A0beha viour-borough-ahead

## **QR Code Scams Surge in Surrey**

#### A 667% Rise Since 2019 as Criminals Target Public Spaces.

QR code-related scams in Surrey have surged by more than sixfold since 2019, new figures reveal — mirroring a dramatic national increase that experts say is the work of organised crime groups exploiting new technology to defraud the public.

According to Action Fraud data analysed by the BBC Shared Data Unit, the number of scams linked to QR codes in the Surrey Police area rose from just **three in 2019** to **23 in 2024**. In total, **54 reports** have been recorded over the five-year period.

The technique, known as *quishing*, typically involves fraudsters placing fake QR codes — often stickers — over legitimate ones on parking meters, menus, or public signage. Unsuspecting users are redirected to malicious websites where personal data and payment details can be harvested.

Nationally, nearly **3,000 QR scams** were reported between 2019 and 2024, with **1,386 cases reported in 2024 alone** — up from **100** in 2019. In Surrey, the jump from **3 cases in 2021 to 11 in 2022** and **23 in 2024** marks a particularly sharp local escalation.

### "Life savings lost"

Katherine Hart of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute warned the problem is vastly underreported. "People might only lose £2.99 initially and not realise they've passed their data to a criminal organisation," she said. "But days or weeks later, they receive a call from someone pretending to be their bank or the police. These criminals already have your personal details and use them to wipe out your bank account."

Hart described quishing as a "huge challenge" for global enforcement, with many scams tied to serious and organised crime. "We've seen huge amounts of money lost this way. People have seen their life savings gone — and that money is going to finance criminals," she added.

## Surrey councils and police urged to act

Local councils across the UK — including nearby Guildford — have issued public warnings, and experts are urging Surrey authorities to follow suit, especially given the rising number of incidents. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) warned that OR codes in open spaces, such as car parks and train stations, pose a particular risk.

A spokesperson for the NCSC said: "When directed to a website by a QR code, take care to ensure it is genuine, and be cautious if you're asked to provide excessive personal information."

Detective Superintendent Gary Miles, head of the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau, urged the public to "stop and check" before scanning QR codes. "If the QR code looks tampered with or takes you to a site that doesn't feel right, don't share personal or financial information. Leave the website immediately," he said.

## Victims speak out

Cases nationwide have involved parking scams, fake menus, and bogus delivery notices. In one instance, a woman in Thornaby lost £13,000 after scanning a code at a railway station. Other victims have lost hundreds of pounds at seafront car parks or fallen for codes found on leaflets and packaging.

National Car Parks (NCP) has responded by increasing daily checks of QR codes on its machines and is considering removing some payment-linked QR codes altogether to reduce risk.

### What can you do?

- Inspect QR codes before scanning. Look for stickers, tampering, or signs of damage.
- Be sceptical of QR codes in public spaces or unfamiliar emails/texts.
- Avoid entering financial details after scanning a QR code unless you are certain the site is legitimate.
- **Report suspicious activity** to your bank and Action Fraud at actionfraud.police.uk or call 0300 123 2040.

Wayne Stevens, National Fraud Lead at Victim Support, reminded the public: "There is a lot of embarrassment and shame around cyber fraud, but it is vital victims don't blame themselves. If you've been impacted, contact Victim Support for free, confidential help."

As QR codes become a mainstay in everyday life, vigilance in Surrey and beyond is now essential. What was once a convenient shortcut can, in the wrong hands, become a costly trap.

# **Epsom and Ewell Council Approves Public Spaces Protection Order for Borough-Wide Expansion**

The Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Crime and Disorder Committee has voted to recommend the adoption of a borough-wide Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) following a public consultation that showed overwhelming community support.

The new PSPO, which will now be referred to Full Council for final approval, aims to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) by prohibiting a range of activities, including harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse, and alcohol consumption in public spaces after a warning from an authorised officer. The order also bans wearing face coverings, such as balaclavas, with the intent to commit ASB or crime, a measure police say will help deter group-related intimidation.

At the meeting, Public Protection Manager Oliver Nelson introduced the officers' report, highlighting the strong public backing for the PSPO. He noted that 92% of respondents supported extending the order for three years, and 83% backed its expansion across the entire borough. "The consultation has given us a clear steer from residents," he said. "We've slightly refined the prohibitions based on feedback, ensuring the PSPO is proportionate and enforceable."

Police representatives, including Acting Inspector Tommy Pearson and Chief Inspector Kelly Clifton-Sinclair, attended the meeting in support of the proposal.

Lib Dem Councillor **James Lawrence** (College) expressed his support, citing the consultation results as key to his decision. "Over 200 people responded to the consultation, with 92% of respondents supporting an extension to the PSPO and 83% supporting it covering the entire borough. My fellow Lib Dem councillors and I are happy to uphold public opinion on this and support the PSPO as proposed," he said.

However, some concerns were raised over the demographic spread of consultation responses. Councillor **Christine Howells** (RA Nonsuch) noted that only 2% of respondents were under the age of 24, questioning whether younger voices had been fully heard. In response, Committee Chair Councillor **Shanice Goldman (RA Nonsuch)** acknowledged the difficulty in securing wider engagement but highlighted outreach efforts to schools, faith groups, and youth charities, including Buddy Up, a mentoring programme for young people.

Councillor **Tony Froud** (RA Stoneleigh)sought clarification on the geographical scope of the PSPO, asking whether it applied to specific areas or the entire borough. Cllr Goldman confirmed that the order would be borough-wide, expanding upon previous PSPOs that only covered certain locations. "It's about making sure enforcement is not limited to certain hotspots," she explained.

The Committee also unanimously agreed to recommend a £100 fixed penalty for breaches (reduced to £80 if paid within 10 days). The PSPO will now go to Full Council for formal adoption, where it is expected to pass with broad support.

If approved, the borough-wide PSPO will be in place for three years, subject to review. Council officers have committed to a public awareness campaign, including new signage and social media outreach, to ensure residents are informed about the restrictions.

Sam Jones - Reporter

Image credits: Google and Tobias "ToMar" Maier Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0

## **Guildford Students protest against PSPOs**

Surrey students have come out against a council's draft rules about public spaces, saying they could be "detrimental" to local students. Under the proposed new rules, students could be banned from being in a group of two or more people in the town centre which could "cause harassment, alarm or distress" to other people.

Guildford town centre has public space protection orders (PSPO) aimed at tackling persistent anti-social behaviour affecting others. Introduced in 2022, the rules are now up for review. Boundaries for the PSPO cover the town centre, Stoke Park and some neighbouring residential roads, the Mount (residential area and green open space), including Black Cat Alley.

But students at the University of Surrey have attacked the draft regulations as "vague" and have said that they can be "misinterpreted" in a way that can be harmful to students in Guildford.

Leading the cause, the Student Union's President Liam White said in a statement: "We are concerned by the overly conditional phrasing of 'acting in a manner that is likely to cause' and the vague nature of 'distress'. This feels like an extremely broad scope to enforce, given that members of the public may potentially be 'distressed' when encountering young adults socialising in public, even if it is not disorderly or anti-social."

Under a PSPO, individuals deemed to be breaching the order can be asked to change their behaviour by police officers, PCSOs, or GBC compliance officers. Fines and written warnings can be given for repeated breaches.

He argued the PSPO is not phrased in a way which prevents groups acting disorderly but instead relies purely on a member of the public claiming to be distressed or alarmed. Mr White claimed this is "unreasonable" to potentially penalise members of the public, including students, in the town centre.

A spokesperson for Guildford Borough Council said: "We appreciate everyone who has taken time to respond to the Town Centre Public Spaces Protection Order consultation. These were draft proposals and the purpose of the consultation was to encourage feedback.

"In response to our partners and consultees, including the Student Union, we have adapted the proposed restrictions. The revised draft restrictions will be presented to the Executive on 27 March 2025 for consideration."

Other key concerns raised included how "rowdy and inconsiderate behaviour" could be defined by someone's clothing. The draft proposals state: "Wearing a piece of clothing with the intent to obscure or hide his/her identity for the purposes of committing crime and/or anti-social behaviour".

The Student Union said this is particularly concerning for members of the community who wear clothing that covers their face or hair for religious purposes. "We question how appropriate it is to be enforcing restrictions on clothing, rather than other indicators of anti-social behaviour," members said.

Students also criticised the proposed public space rules against the "anti-social" use of bicycles, skateboards and scooters in pedestrian areas. They said some of Guildford's community is already "resistant" to the Beryl Bikes scheme and extending the PSPO will "disincentivise people from using sustainable travel".

**Emily Dalton** 

## Criminal car park QR codes wrong on many levels

Fake QR codes, used to scam motorists into giving away their bank and card details, have been found in Guildford car parks.

The scam codes have been placed on payment machines, signs or barriers in an attempt to defraud people into thinking they are making genuine payments, Guildford Borough Council has warned.

Not only are the unsuspecting drivers handing over private details to the scammers but they are also putting themselves at risk of collecting a fine for not having a valid parking ticket.

The council has issued a warning to help people from getting caught out and said it does not use any QR codes at its car parks - so if you see one it's a scam.

Lead councillor for commercial services, Councillor Catherine Houston, said: "We are aware of the increase in QR code parking scams across the country and I want to reassure residents that our teams regularly inspect our car parks to keep them safe and free from fraudulent activities.

"Criminals are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their methods so if you do spot a QR code in one of our car parks, please don't scan it; report it to the council instead.

"By raising awareness of such scams, we help to protect drivers from being misled so that residents and visitors can use our car parks in confidence."

Once scanned, the codes take people to a fake website that asks for credit and debit card information, mimicking genuine payment providers.

The council has now placed signs within all its car parks explaining to only use the RingGo app and to not use any QR codes found.

It has also pledged to remove any codes found with its enforcement team carrying out daily checks.

Scammers have targeted Guildford car parks (image Google)

# Online Fraud in Epsom & Ewell: Call for an Online Crime Agency

Online fraud, particularly through fake retail websites, has become a significant issue both nationally and within our local community of Epsom & Ewell. Recent data underscores the pressing need for enhanced measures to protect consumers from these deceptive practices.

### The Local Impact

In the 2023/24 financial year, Surrey reported 1,276 cases of online shopping fraud, resulting in losses totaling £848,000.his equates to an average loss of approximately £665 per victim. These figures highlight the substantial financial impact on residents and the pervasive nature of online fraud in our area.

#### **National Perspective**

Across the UK, online shopping scams are alarmingly prevalent.n the year leading up to October 2023, there were 71,894 reports of such scams, with total reported losses amounting to £106.8 million.he average loss per victim was £1,486, indicating that the financial repercussions can be devastating.

### **Current Policing Resources**

The primary body for reporting fraud in the UK is Action Fraud, the national reporting center for fraud and cybercrime. Reports submitted to Action Fraud are analyzed by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB), which then disseminates information to relevant police forces for investigation. However, the increasing volume and sophistication of online fraud cases have strained existing resources, leading to calls for more specialized approaches.

### The Proposal for an Online Crime Agency

**Helen Maguire**, Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom & Ewell, is advocating for the establishment of a dedicated Online Crime Agency. This agency would focus exclusively on combating online fraud and related cyber crimes. The proposed agency aims to:

- **Specialized Focus**: oncentrate resources and expertise specifically on online fraud, ensuring more effective prevention and enforcement.
- Enhanced Coordination: acilitate better collaboration between various law enforcement bodies, technology companies, and financial institutions to address the multifaceted nature of online scams.
- Victim Support: rovide dedicated support to victims of online fraud, quiding them through reporting processes and

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helping them recover losses where possible. P Maguire emphasizes the urgency of this initiative, stating, "Victims in Surrey have been left short-changed and vulnerable to opportunistic fraudsters. We urgently need action. The previous Conservative government completely failed to act. They were asleep at the wheel when it came to online fraud."

Maguire argues the establishment of a specialized Online Crime Agency could play a pivotal role in safeguarding consumers. By focusing dedicated resources and fostering collaboration across sectors, such an agency holds the promise of mitigating the impact of online fraud on our community.