EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

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Kissing goodbye to anti-social behaviour in Long Grove Park in Epsom?

20 November 2026



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has installed new kissing gates at Long Grove Park in Epsom as part of ongoing efforts to improve safety, tackle antisocial behaviour and create a more welcoming environment for residents and visitors.

Long Grove Park has been identified as an area affected by the misuse of motorcycles, mopeds, quad bikes and high-powered e-bikes, which can have a detrimental impact on the safety and enjoyment of other park users. The new gates have been carefully designed to deter unauthorised motorised vehicles while maintaining access for pedestrians, wheelchair users and cyclists.

The improvements form part of a coordinated approach with the council's Safer Epsom & Ewell partners, including Surrey Police, to address concerns about illegal and antisocial vehicle use across the borough. Both organisations recognise the growing nuisance and danger caused by the reckless use of non-compliant e-bikes and e-scooters in public spaces.

Through Operation Scramble, Surrey Police have been targeting illegal and modified vehicles, seizing those that do not meet legal requirements and educating riders about the risks they pose to themselves and others.

Councillor Alan Williamson, Chair of the Crime and Disorder Committee, said:

"Everyone should be able to enjoy our parks and open spaces safely. These new kissing gates at Long Grove Park are a practical measure that will help deter unauthorised motorised vehicles, while ensuring the park remains accessible and safe for other users.

"Tackling antisocial behaviour is a priority for the council, which is why we launched the Safer Epsom & Ewell partnership earlier this year. By working closely with Surrey Police and our other partners, we have taken a coordinated approach to addressing the issues that matter most to residents.

"The installation of these gates, alongside enforcement activity such as Surrey Police's Operation Scramble, demonstrates our shared commitment to making Epsom & Ewell a safer place for everyone. We will continue to listen to residents' concerns and take action where it is needed."

Inspector Tommy Pearson, Borough Commander for Epsom and Ewell, said:

"The illegal use of e-bikes and e-scooters is a growing problem in our borough, as it is across the country. We are committed to working with the borough council to tirelessly pursue riders who are causing fear and nuisance in our community.

"Last month saw two days of action targeting e-scooters in Epsom which delivered excellent results. I hope this activity, alongside deterrents such as the new kissing gates, provides direct reassurance that we are listening to your concerns around illegal and reckless riding and taking decisive action."

- A RADAR key arrangement will be in place for disabled park users.
- Find out more about Safer Epsom & Ewell – Safer Epsom & Ewell | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

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Photo: The Borough Commander and Cllr Alan Williamson at the kissing gate

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Gold scammer sentenced after Surrey Police

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investigation

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‘All that glitters is not gold’, fine words by non-other than William Shakespeare and in this case very apt, as the scammer that we’re about to unmask tried to steal just that, gold.

Phone data, maybe not of interest to most but to us it can paint a vivid picture into someone’s life. Phone data, along with data from ANPR played a big part in identifying this remorseless scammer in this courier fraud case.

It’s time to rewind to the start of this year, March to be exact. A 94-year-old was contacted by a withheld number. In order to protect the victim’s identity, we’re going to call him Ben. The caller stated that they were from the police and asked Ben whether he knew a female with the same surname as his. They claimed that she had been arrested for cloning a debit card, but Ben informed the caller that he knew nobody of that name.

On Thursday, 12March, Ben was called again by a male purporting to be a police officer. In order to “assist the police” with an investigation into the staff at his local bank, Ben was asked to withdraw £6,000 in cash from his bank account. Ben was repeatedly told that he must not talk to anyone about this, and that he could not even tell his family. The caller had already prepared Ben with an answer for the bank staff when they asked him what the cash was for, advising that his “grandchildren were coming to stay”. The bank’s protocol meant that he was only able to withdraw £4,000.

Ben returned home and provided the so-called officer with the serial numbers of the bank notes. He was then told that most of these notes were counterfeit, so that they would need to be collected as part of the on-going investigation. A male then attended Ben’s address, provided his name as Detective Inspector (DI) Gary Nelson and collected the cash.

DI Gary Nelson was in actual fact, Harry Caen-Reilly; referred to as a courier. The person making the phone calls to our victim is known as a victim communicator.

Fast forward two days to Saturday, 14 March, when in the late morning Caen-Reilly attended Ben’s address this time with the intention of getting Ben to buy gold. Ben had been told on the phone calls that his money was at risk, and the case would collapse if he didn’t co-operate.

When Caen-Reilly attended the address, he told Ben that ‘the police had no spare cars, so will have to take yours’. The so-called DI drove Ben to London and took him to several jewellery shops, but the purchase of gold was unsuccessful.

Not arriving back home until gone 6pm, Ben stated that he was “emotionally and physically drained”. He had told Caen-Reilly earlier in the day, “if you don’t take me home, you’ll have a corpse on your hands.”

A few days later, after sharing this story with his relatives, Ben reported this matter to the police.

You may recall that we mentioned phone data and ANPR earlier on. Well, it is time to introduce the teams involved: the Economic Crime Unit (ECU), Serious & Organised Crime Unit and the Centurion team. These teams were able to overlay phone data and ANPR data to demonstrate that Ben’s vehicle and Caen-Reilly’s phone number had travelled together at the same time. Furthermore, Caen-Reilly’s phone was in the area of the victim’s home address at the time of the cash collection on 12 March.

Through these teams working together effectively, gathering hours’ worth of CCTV and reviewing a large amount of data, Harry Caen-Reilly, 33 (DOB: 18/02/1993) of no fixed address, was quickly identified and arrested. He has now been convicted of kidnap, fraud by false representation, driving with a revoked license and driving without insurance. He was sentenced at Chichester Crown Court on Thursday, 5 November to three years in prison for kidnap and fraud by false representation.

This might not meet your typical understanding of the offence of kidnap, but in fact it is to unlawfully move a person by force or by fraud – in this case, Ben would not have consented to being taken on this journey had he not believed that Caen-Reilly was a police officer.

Detective Sergeant Milly Cummins, from ECU said: “Sometimes in courier fraud cases we see couriers who aren’t aware that they’re being used to commit crime. However, that was far from the situation here, Caen-Reilly knew what he was doing when he prayed on a vulnerable member of the public.

It is important for everyone to be aware of this type of fraud; it can happen to anyone of any age. Sharing awareness of these cases can help the public to protect not only themselves, but their friends, family and neighbours. At Surrey Police we are very much victim lead, it’s important that victims know that it is not their fault if they fall victim to something like this and there is support available to them.”

Detective Inspector Ashley Eyden, from ECU said: “I would like to thank all the teams involved who worked tirelessly to unmask Caen-Reilly. This case is a prime example of how as a Force we relentlessly pursue fraud offences and hold offenders to justice.”

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A police officer would never:

- Ask for your bank details or PIN
- Ask you to transfer funds to another account
- Ask you to hand over cash or bank cards to a courier
- Ask you to pay a fine or fee over the phone or online
- Ask you to “assist” an investigation by moving money
- Suggest you are committing a crime by refusing.
- Tell you that you cannot tell anyone about what they are asking you to do

Surrey Police

Epsom shops targeted in Surrey crackdown on illegal goods

20 November 2026



Shops in Epsom were among premises targeted in a county-wide crackdown on illegal trading and suspected money laundering which resulted in the seizure of goods valued at £55,500.

The October operation involved Surrey Trading Standards, Surrey Police, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and Home Office Immigration Enforcement, working together as part of a national campaign against organised crime operating through apparently legitimate high street businesses.

The goods seized across Surrey included illicit cigarettes, tobacco, vapes, vaping liquids, counterfeit products and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) products. Officers also used specialist tobacco detection dogs trained to locate illicit goods hidden in concealed storage compartments.

The operation, known as Operation Machinize, took place in Epsom, Elmbridge, Guildford, Reigate, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath and Woking.

However, although Surrey County Council has confirmed that Epsom was among the locations targeted, its announcement does not identify the Epsom businesses visited, the number of premises inspected locally, or the value and nature of any goods seized specifically in the town.

Nor does the announcement establish whether any Epsom traders were arrested, charged or referred for prosecution. The £55,500 figure relates to seizures across the participating Surrey areas, not to Epsom alone.

Criminal money on the high street

Operation Machinize is coordinated nationally by the National Crime Agency (NCA) and targets businesses suspected of providing a means for organised criminals to launder money.

Cash-intensive businesses can be exploited to disguise the proceeds of crime as legitimate sales. The operation also targets offences involving counterfeit goods, illegal tobacco, drugs, tax evasion and immigration law.

The NCA estimates that at least £1 billion in criminal cash is laundered annually through cash-intensive high street businesses, including some vape shops and barbers. It stresses that the campaign is directed at criminal exploitation of businesses, rather than legitimate traders generally.

Figures released by the NCA on 11 November show the scale of the latest nationwide operation. During October, officers and enforcement agencies visited or raided 3,029 premises across the UK, making 349 arrests and seizing £2.2 million in cash.

Further results included £3.7 million in account freezing orders and £6.8 million worth of criminal commodities seized,

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including approximately 49,300 illegal vapes, 1,645 kilograms of illicit tobacco and 6.3 million illegal cigarettes. These are national figures and are separate from Surrey's reported £55,500 seizure total. National Crime Agency

Surrey Police involvement

Surrey Police has separately confirmed enforcement activity under Operation Machinize on 21 October. In a neighbourhood policing update published the following day, officers reported working alongside partner agencies to tackle money laundering and the criminal use of cash-intensive high street businesses in Elmbridge.

The police said its neighbourhood teams had carried out proactive enforcement and engagement work. Surrey Police+1

The county council says the Surrey operation demonstrated the effectiveness of cooperation between different enforcement authorities, with specialist tobacco detection dogs helping officers find concealed products.

Council pledges protection for residents and legitimate traders

Kevin Deanus, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue, and Resilience, said:

"We are here to protect our residents from harm, and we take that responsibility incredibly seriously.

"The success of Operation Machinize is testament to the fact that we will not tolerate illegal activities on our streets and will always protect our residents from any potentially unsafe goods.

"Not only that, we also have a duty to protect both legitimate businesses on our high streets and their vital contribution to the local economy.

"As always, I'd like to thank the Trading Standards team involved with this operation for their invaluable work in keeping residents safe."

Residents with information about illegal tobacco, cigarettes or vaping products can report concerns anonymously on 0300 999 6 999 or through the Stop Illegal Tobacco website at www.stop-illegal-tobacco.co.uk.

Earlier Epsom operation

Epsom also featured in the previous phase of Operation Machinize in October 2025, when Trading Standards organised public engagement events in the town and elsewhere in Surrey.

A report to the Surrey and Buckinghamshire Joint Trading Standards Service Committee in May 2026 recorded that more than 800 people attended the combined events in Epsom, Runnymede and Surrey Heath. The events included demonstrations involving tobacco detection dogs and advice from police, public health representatives and Crimestoppers.

During that earlier operation, Trading Standards and partner agencies visited 20 businesses across Surrey and Buckinghamshire and seized approximately £68,000 worth of illegal tobacco, vapes and counterfeit products from 11 premises. The report did not specify how much of that total related to Epsom. Surrey County Council+1

Editorial note — further Epsom enquiries

I found no independently verified identification of Epsom premises involved in the October 2026 operation in the publicly accessible Surrey Police reports and neighbourhood updates checked.

The most useful follow-up would be to ask Surrey Police and Trading Standards for the number and locations of Epsom inspections, the goods seized locally, whether arrests or prosecutions followed, and whether any businesses were ordered to close.

I would retain the opening headline and paragraphs above, and insert the earlier Epsom operation section immediately before the council's reaction. It gives the report some documented local history without suggesting that the businesses inspected in 2025 were necessarily involved in October 2026.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Carer caught red-handed goes to prison

20 November 2026

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Hidden CCTV caught a carer stealing jewellery from her elderly and vulnerable client's home in Oxted, after his family noticed items were missing.

Lara Jones, 50, of Cowden Pound Road, Mark Beech, Kent, has been sentenced to three years in prison for burglary.

After Jones completed her first shift for the client, his family noticed an earring at the top of the stairs. When they went to return it to their jewellery box, they discovered that jewellery was missing. They suspected the new carer but could not be sure, so they installed hidden cameras in the bedroom.

On November 26, 2025, Jones entered the bedroom and was seen going through drawers and wardrobes and pocketing jewellery worth £8,000.

The victim's daughter called police on Wednesday, December 3, saying her father was alone at home with his new carer, whom the family had seen on CCTV going through bedroom drawers and cupboards. Officers attended and arrested Jones on suspicion of burglary. She was searched and the jewellery was found.

The victim's family said: "Having someone violate your trust in your own home, at a time when you are at your most vulnerable, is devastating. The emotional impact has been profound, and it has made an already difficult situation even harder.

"We are immensely grateful to Surrey Police and the Crown Prosecution Service for their dedication, compassion and determination in securing this conviction. Their support throughout has meant a great deal to our family, and we are relieved that justice has been served."

Detective Constable Jen Trudel, the officer in charge of the case, said: "The family were so disheartened that someone they let into their home to care for a loved one could be so heartless as to steal from them at the first opportunity. This has made them wary of letting anyone into their home despite the much-needed respite required. It was an incredibly emotional moment for the family when the sentence was read out, and hopefully this will allow them some closure so that they can move on with their lives."

Jones pleaded not guilty and the case went to trial in August, when a jury found her guilty of three counts of burglary. She was sentenced at Guildford Crown Court on Friday, October 9, and ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £228.

Surrey Police

Surrey Police to crack down on illegal e-scooters

20 November 2026



Surrey Police has launched a county-wide crackdown on illegal e-bikes and e-scooters, with seized machines set to be destroyed under a tougher enforcement policy from next month.

The new operation, called Operation Scramble, will see roads policing officers working alongside local Safer Neighbourhood Teams to stop riders suspected of using illegal or dangerously modified machines, or riding in an antisocial or reckless manner.

Police say they have already seized 136 e-bikes and e-scooters in Surrey during 2026, compared with 127 during the whole of last year.

Where the age of riders has been established, Surrey Police says 36 per cent have been children or teenagers.

Chief Superintendent Graham Barnett, head of Surrey and Sussex Police's operations and protective security command, said illegal use had become a growing problem.

"The illegal use of e-bikes and e-scooters is a growing problem in Surrey, and we will tirelessly pursue riders who are

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causing fear and nuisance in our county," he said.

"Many of the reports of illegal e-bikes relate to criminal activity."

He added that the force would combine enforcement with education, particularly because of the number of younger riders involved.

From next month Surrey Police says its policy will be for illegal e-bikes and e-scooters seized by officers to be sent for destruction.

The distinction between an ordinary legal e-bike and an illegal machine can sometimes be misunderstood.

A road-legal electrically assisted pedal cycle, or EAPC, must have pedals capable of propelling it, an electric motor with a maximum continuous rated output of no more than 250 watts and electrical assistance which cuts out once the bicycle reaches 15.5mph.

Riders must be at least 14 years old. A compliant EAPC can be used without a driving licence, vehicle registration, road tax or motor insurance and is generally treated in law in the same way as an ordinary bicycle.

However, a machine capable of being powered electrically beyond 15.5mph, or fitted with a motor exceeding the permitted continuous rating, does not qualify simply because it looks like a bicycle.

It is instead treated as a motor vehicle and, for lawful road use, would need the appropriate registration, insurance and driving licence requirements to be met. An approved motorcycle helmet may also be required.

The Government considered increasing the normal e-bike power limit from 250 watts to 500 watts in 2024, together with relaxing rules governing throttle-controlled "twist and go" bikes. The proposals were abandoned in January 2025 after most of the main stakeholder organisations responding to the consultation opposed them and the Department for Transport concluded there was insufficient evidence to justify the change. The 250-watt limit therefore remains.

The position for privately owned e-scooters is more restrictive.

They are legally classed as motor vehicles and cannot ordinarily be used on public roads, pavements or other public places. Special regulations allow e-scooters hired as part of authorised Government trials to be used in participating areas, but there is no such rental trial operating in Surrey.

Official casualty figures suggest the issue is not confined to nuisance complaints.

Department for Transport statistics published in July show there were 1,377 reported collisions involving e-scooters in Great Britain during 2025, resulting in 1,477 casualties. Ten people were killed, all of them e-scooter riders, while an estimated 484 people were seriously injured.

Thirteen casualties from e-scooter collisions were recorded within the Surrey Police area during 2025.

Surrey Police says that since October 2025 there have also been two collisions resulting in serious injury in the county involving e-scooters and three road traffic collisions involving e-bikes.

Concern about illegal powered bikes and scooters has already featured in local policing priorities elsewhere in Surrey. Earlier this month Surrey Police identified illegal use of e-scooters and bikes around Frimley Green Recreation Ground as an antisocial behaviour priority, saying officers could use powers including vehicle seizure as well as traffic offence reports.

There is a separate safety concern surrounding poorly manufactured or modified electric bikes.

In March 2025 Surrey County Council reported that an unsafe battery fitted to a converted e-bike had caused a fire at a Surrey home while being charged. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and Trading Standards subsequently secured the removal of the particular battery from sale on Amazon.

Government safety advice warns that counterfeit, damaged or badly modified batteries and incompatible chargers can increase the risk of lithium-ion battery fires.

Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend said complaints about e-bikes and e-scooters had repeatedly been raised during her office's Policing Your Community roadshow over the summer.

"They told us loud and clear they have had enough and we have listened to those concerns," she said.

"The result is this operation which aims to crackdown on illegal riding and take these often-dangerous machines off our streets for good. We know that their use can often be linked to wider criminal activity and the message is clear – we want to make Surrey an illegal e-bike and e-scooter free county."

Chief Superintendent Barnett said: "From next month our policy is clear: all illegal e-bikes and e-scooters we seize will be sent for destruction.

"I hope this provides direct reassurance to Surrey residents that we are listening to your concerns around illegal and reckless riding and taking decisive action."

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Related Reports

- Back to Westminster with local priorities in focus – 18 September 2026. Helen Maguire MP said she would host a roundtable of police chiefs to press for clearer Government guidance on e-scooters. epsomandewelltimes.com
- January crime and safety round-up – 4 June 2026. Surrey Police identified antisocial use of motorbikes and e-bikes as a local policing priority in Epsom and Ewell. epsomandewelltimes.com
- The New Year view from Westminster – 2 February 2026. Helen Maguire highlighted constituents' concerns about illegal and unsafe e-scooter use and called for a more coordinated response. epsomandewelltimes.com
- Surrey services get fire e-bike removed from Amazon – 13 March 2025. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and Trading Standards acted after an unsafe e-bike battery caused a house fire. epsomandewelltimes.com

Image: "idealised" e-bike and e-scooter in Epsom High Street (Google street view)

Criminal convictions follow Banstead construction site death

20 November 2026



Two companies and a manager have been sentenced 9th September), after being found guilty of a health and safety charge of failing to discharge their duties following the death of a labourer who died on a construction site in Banstead in June 2020.

Gheorghita Arsene, 33, died when a 10ft (3m) trench collapsed on top of him, covering him in soil. He had been working on a site in Park Road where an old care home was being demolished to make way for a new purpose-built home.

Following a three-month trial at the Central Criminal Court in London, principal contractor Appledorn Developments Limited were found guilty of a health and safety charge of failing to discharge their duties. They were fined £500,000 with the judge, Her Honour Judy Khan KC, commenting that "their failure to ensure that a safe system of work was motivated by the desire to get the works done quickly and cheaply".

T Vaughan Limited were also found guilty of a health and safety charge of failing to discharge their duties and were fined £650,000. They were also ordered to pay a further £40,000 in costs. The judge said she was" satisfied that systems were in place, but these were not sufficiently adhered to or implemented".

Contracts manager Anthony O'Connor, 42, of Romford, Essex, pleaded guilty to failing to discharge his duty under the Health and Safety Act 1974, which was accepted by the prosecution. The judge sentenced him to 10 months in custody, suspended for 18 months, and ordered to carry out 150 hours of unpaid work, saying that "a number of workers were exposed to the risk of harm".

The jury failed to reach a verdict in relation to a charge of manslaughter against O'Connor.

Site manager Peter Wraith, 54, from New Waltham in Lincolnshire, was found not guilty of manslaughter and assistant site manager Gregory Peake, 51, from Bromley in south-east London, was acquitted of failing to discharge his health and safety duty.

The court was told that a health and safety inspection found there were no supports to the trench and the excavated soil had been deposited unsafely close to it.

Mr Arsene, described in court as a "good man who worked hard and achieved everything through his hard work", had been working to replace a damaged pipe at the bottom of the trench and was clearing soil when one of the trench walls collapsed.

Despite desperate attempts by his colleagues, they could not pull him free.

Fire and ambulance crews were called to the scene but faced similar difficulties in digging Mr Arsene out, and he was confirmed deceased at the scene shortly after the incident took place.

Senior Investigating Officer, Detective Inspector Debbie Birch, said: "Gheorgita Arsene's death could have been avoided if the appropriate health and safety measures had been followed. It can be easy to cut corners to save time and money but this tragic death highlights just how important health and safety legislation is on all building sites.

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“Sadly, this resulted in the death of a 33-year-old man who was simply trying to do his job, and our thoughts remain with his family and friends at this difficult time.”

A Health and Safety Executive spokesperson said:

“Gheorghita Arsene’s death was as horrifying as it was preventable. He lost his life because basic precautions were not in place to protect workers from the well-known risks that come with excavation work.

“Anthony O’Connor had observed workers in the trench without adequate protection and was aware of the measures required to prevent a collapse.

“This case is a stark reminder that when basic safety standards are ignored, the consequences can be fatal. Companies and individuals alike have legal duties to protect workers and where they fail to do so, and we will not hesitate to take enforcement action.

“Our thoughts today are with Mr Arsene’s loved ones, as they mourn their loss.”

Surrey Police

Progress at Banstead’s High Down prison – but drugs and poor conditions remain

20 November 2026



A prison near Epsom and Ewell has made encouraging progress in safety and the time prisoners spend out of their cells – but illicit drugs, poor living conditions and delays in rehabilitation remain serious concerns.

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons visited HMP High Down, at Banstead, during an unannounced inspection from 1st to 11th June. The Category C training and resettlement prison held 1,085 men, close to its operational capacity of 1,113.

The inspection report, published on 7th September, described the findings as “generally positive” and praised an experienced governor and strong leadership team.

Safety was upgraded from “not sufficiently good” at the previous full inspection in 2023 to “reasonably good”. Purposeful activity improved from “poor” to “not sufficiently good”.

Respect remained “reasonably good”, while preparation for release was again judged “not sufficiently good”.

Drugs remain biggest threat

The prison had developed a more robust response to illicit drugs, including improved gate security, more extensive testing and a comprehensive programme for prisoners seeking to overcome addiction.

Positive results from random drug tests fell from 31 per cent before the previous inspection to 19 per cent. Although an improvement – and better than at many other prisons – inspectors said the figure remained too high.

Criminal gangs were regularly using drones to deliver drugs and other prohibited items. Window cages had reduced the risk, but some were damaged and weaknesses in windows, grilles and netting continued to provide access.

Inspectors concluded that the illicit economy remained the greatest threat to High Down’s stability, contributing to debt, bullying, fear and violence.

Reported violence had nevertheless fallen by 14 per cent and was broadly in line with other Category C prisons. Self-harm was 22 per cent lower than at the last inspection and there had been no self-inflicted death at the prison since then.

Despite these improvements, 56 per cent of prisoners questioned said they had felt unsafe at High Down, while 31 per cent said they felt unsafe at the time of the survey – both higher proportions than at comparable prisons.

Stark difference in time outside cells

Prisoners in full-time work or on the enhanced regime could spend as much as 10.5 hours a day outside their cells.

For unemployed prisoners, who represented about 10 per cent of the population, the average was only around three-and-

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a-half hours.

Roll checks found almost a quarter of prisoners locked in their cells during the working day. Inconsistent operation of the regime meant that some were locked up as early as 4.30pm and, in a small number of cases, were not released until 11am the following morning.

There were some popular employment-focused programmes, including railway courses and XO Bikes, which trains prisoners to refurbish bicycles. Construction courses taught bricklaying, plastering, painting and decorating, while other prisoners could qualify as baristas and learn to repair coffee machines.

Most prisoners completing courses achieved their qualifications and inspectors found that teaching standards had improved.

However, attendance at education, training and work remained too low. Some prisoners were not unlocked for scheduled classes, while staff did not always challenge those who refused to attend. Ofsted judged every aspect of the prison's education and skills provision as "requires improvement".

Dirty cells and damaged showers

Conditions varied considerably across the prison.

Communal areas were generally clean and some specialist units were well cared for, with gardens, plants and other improvements. Inspectors also welcomed a reduction in the number of prisoners sharing cells.

Elsewhere, cells were dirty and toilets and sinks were described as particularly unhygienic. Few cells had curtains, forcing prisoners to use sheets or towels to block the light, and some reported shortages of basic supplies such as toilet paper.

Many showers were grimy, damaged or lacked screens providing sufficient privacy. At the time of the inspection, 183 cells intended for one person were being shared by two.

The prison library was also too small for the population, with inadequate materials, limited seating and some broken furniture.

Rehabilitation delays

High Down became a Category C training and resettlement prison in 2022, with an emphasis on preparing men for release. Inspectors found that it was still not achieving its full potential in that role.

The offender management unit was understaffed and officers carried high caseloads. Contact was often concentrated on prisoners approaching an important sentence milestone, leaving many others without meaningful help.

This delayed risk assessments, transfers to open prisons and access to offending behaviour courses. There was a particular bottleneck for the Building Choices programme, with insufficient places and what inspectors described as at times chaotic allocation arrangements.

Of the approximately 800 prisoners released during the preceding year whose outcomes were known, around 30 per cent went into sustainable accommodation. About eight per cent were released homeless – still too many, inspectors said, although a lower proportion than at most London prisons.

Only 41 former prisoners were known to be in employment six weeks after release, rising to 58 after six months.

There were positives in resettlement support, including well-coordinated housing advice, help with benefits and debt, and efficient arrangements on the day of release. Family support delivered by the charity Pact and parenting programmes run with Sutton Council were singled out as examples of good practice.

Health-record concerns

Inspectors also identified shortcomings in health services. Records did not always contain complete details of appointment requests, triage decisions or "do not attempt resuscitation" instructions.

For at least three years, nurses had routinely poured and labelled individual doses of methadone before transporting them to prison wings, a practice which inspectors said was not consistent with professional nursing standards.

The Care Quality Commission requested action plans from the prison's health providers over record-keeping, complaints handling, clinical governance and the monitoring of risks.

Concluding the report, Chief Inspector Charlie Taylor said further improvement depended partly on the Prison Service providing resources for building refurbishment and security upgrades.

He added that High Down also required renewed attention to offender management staffing and prisoners' attendance at education.

Seven of the report's 15 principal concerns were classified as priorities requiring immediate attention.

Lionel Blackman

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Related reports:

Surrey County Council Prison Social Care Team awarded CQC 'good' rating – 9th July 2026

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Surrey jail addresses prison population crisis – 15th June 2025

Surrey prison failed IPP prisoner – 23rd December 2024

Damning report on local prison – 16th November 2023

You could re-train to reform offenders – 13th April 2023

Image: HMP High Down from Google maps

Cyber security threats to Surrey's local councils

20 November 2026



Cyber security threats to local government remain a "significant strategic risk", according to a report, with the creation of two new unitary councils posing "further complexity" to IT security.

Guildford Borough Council's audit and risk committee will next week review an update to its corporate risk register, which outlines and grades operational challenges.

These risks range from financial stability to climate change – as well as the ongoing local government reorganisation that will see two new unitary councils created next spring.

But the report also highlighted the dangers of cyber security threats to councils across the country, which the document says are "increasingly vulnerable" to such attacks.

These threats can take many different forms, including ransomware attacks, data breaches or Distributed Denial of Service (DDosS) incidents.

The report reads: "Cyber security remains a significant strategic risk given the increasing volume and sophistication of cyber threats facing local authorities, together with the potential operational, financial and reputational consequences of a successful attack."

It adds that the ongoing local government reorganisation, which will see Surrey County Council and the 11 district councils scrapped next year to make way for the new East and West Surrey Councils, makes the situation more complex.

"The ongoing transition associated with Local Government Reorganisation adds further complexity to the Council's technology and information environment and reinforces the need for continued vigilance," the report says.

The council will continue to invest in preventative measures to mitigate the likelihood and potential impact of cyber attacks, the document adds.

"The risk remains above appetite due to the external threat landscape and the potentially significant impact of a successful cyber attack," it says. "Given the nature of the risk, the majority of threat activity remains outside the council's direct control."

A Guildford Borough Council spokesperson told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS): "We take our IT security and governance responsibilities very seriously.

"As part of this commitment, we provide councillors with a high-level summary of the cyber security measures we have in place. We do not publicly share specific details about security controls.

"We're currently working with IT professionals from across county, district, and borough councils to ensure our IT systems remain secure when we come together on 1 April 2027."

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

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Idealised image

Crime and Safety Round-Up: June to August 2026

20 November 2026

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The summer months brought a mixture of serious incidents, court outcomes, crime-prevention work and neighbourhood policing activity across Epsom and Ewell.

The Epsom and Ewell Times does not normally report every individual crime. This periodic round-up draws together incidents of wider public interest, police appeals and developments affecting community safety.

Eleven arrests during the Derby

Surrey Police mounted its largest annual pre-planned policing operation for the Epsom Derby Festival on 5 and 6 June.

Officers, staff and volunteers from Surrey and Sussex Police worked with the Jockey Club, supported by drones, intelligence teams, public-order specialists and local policing officers. The presence of King Charles III and Queen Camilla added to the security requirements.

Police reported that 11 arrests were made in and around the racecourse during the two days. Additional patrols were also deployed in Epsom town centre to respond to crime and anti-social behaviour.

Chief Superintendent Graham Barnett thanked residents for their patience during an operation which inevitably caused some disruption.

Morning assault near Rosebery Park

Police appealed for witnesses following an assault on the footpath between Avenue Road and Rosebery Park between 7.30am and 7.50am on Wednesday 10 June.

An altercation reportedly took place between two people, during which a man was kicked and punched in the face. Officers particularly wished to speak to the driver of a bronze-coloured BMW who may have witnessed the incident.

Anyone with information or relevant video footage was asked to contact police quoting reference PR/45260070249. The witness appeal remains available on the Surrey Police website.

Ewell murder trial ends in acquittals

On 30 June Surrey Police announced the outcome of the trial arising from the fatal stabbing of 23-year-old Alfonso “Alfie” Sibley in Kingston Road, Ewell, on 9 December 2025.

Three teenage boys had faced charges following Alfie’s death. After a four-week trial at Kingston Crown Court, a 15-year-old boy was found not guilty of murder, manslaughter and conspiracy to commit robbery. A second 15-year-old and a 17-year-old were also found not guilty of conspiracy to commit robbery.

None of the defendants could be named because of their ages. The Major Crime Team said Alfie’s family had thanked the members of the public who tried to help him and the witnesses who assisted the investigation. Surrey Police published the full court update.

Town-centre licensing restrictions rejected

Community safety featured prominently in a June debate over whether Epsom town centre should be designated as a Special Stress Area, sometimes called a cumulative impact area.

Such a designation can make it more difficult to secure new or extended alcohol licences where there is evidence that the concentration of licensed premises is contributing to crime, disorder or public nuisance.

Epsom and Ewell borough councillors decided not to begin the process of introducing the policy at this stage. The issue is to remain under review, with councillors divided over whether the available evidence justified additional restrictions.

Attempted motorcycle robbery on Ewell Bypass

At approximately 11.30pm on Sunday 19 July, a motorcyclist was approached by two people in a vehicle on the Ewell Bypass near its junction with London Road.

The two reportedly tried to take the motorcycle and attempted to assault the rider by punching and pushing them.

A man in his thirties was arrested on suspicion of robbery and subsequently released on conditional bail while enquiries continued. Police sought witnesses and dashcam footage recorded between 11.15pm and 11.45pm, under reference PR/45260087038. Surrey Police issued a public appeal on 23 July.

Vehicle theft charge figures

Figures published during July showed that Surrey Police recorded 1,551 thefts or unauthorised takings of motor vehicles

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during 2025. Charges or summonses were recorded in 34 cases.

Local officers continued to warn that motorcycles and mopeds can be stolen within seconds. Owners were encouraged to use several layers of security, including a disc lock, a separate chain attached to an immovable object and, where possible, a cover and tracking device.

Police also used their local social-media channels in July to provide advice to tradespeople about thefts from vans. Owners were encouraged to remove valuable tools overnight, use secure internal storage, mark equipment and keep photographs and serial numbers.

Fatal collision on Christ Church Road

The most serious local road incident of the summer occurred shortly before 11.40pm on Wednesday 5 August.

A black Smart car collided with a stationary street-cleaning vehicle on Christ Church Road, Epsom. A woman in her twenties who was travelling as a passenger in the Smart car died at the scene.

The driver, also a man in his twenties, was arrested on suspicion of causing death by dangerous driving, driving while over the prescribed alcohol limit, failing to provide a specimen for analysis and causing death by driving while uninsured. He was taken to hospital for treatment.

Christ Church Road remained closed for several hours while collision investigators examined the scene. Police asked for witnesses and footage showing the Smart car between 11.35pm and 11.40pm, particularly evidence of the manner in which it was being driven. The appeal was issued by Surrey Police on 6 August.

Retail crime remains a policing priority

In August, the Epsom Safer Neighbourhood Team reaffirmed what it described as a zero-tolerance approach towards retail crime.

The measures include the prompt investigation of known offenders, cooperation with retailers and remote CCTV providers, visible and covert patrols and jointly funded private security in Epsom town centre.

Stores are also being encouraged to use the DISC information-sharing system. Police said this allows retailers to exchange information about offenders and enables a person caught stealing from one participating business to be excluded from others.

The team said its approach had resulted in a significant reduction in offending by known local shoplifters, although no supporting figures were published. Anti-social behaviour powers may also be used to prevent persistent offenders returning to shopping areas. Retail crime is listed among the neighbourhood team’s policing priorities.

Callers impersonating police officers

On 18 August Surrey Police warned residents about fraudulent telephone calls in which criminals pretended to be police officers.

The callers may claim that a bank account has been compromised, that someone has been arrested using the resident’s bank card or that money must be transferred for safekeeping. Criminals can use “number spoofing” to make a call appear to originate from a genuine police or bank telephone number.

Police will never ask someone to disclose a PIN, hand over a bank card or transfer money to a supposedly safe account. Anyone receiving such a call should hang up and contact the organisation independently, preferably from another telephone. Surrey Police published further advice about the impersonation scam.

What the recorded figures show

Published Police.uk data currently extend only to July, so August cannot yet be included in a like-for-like comparison.

Across the three Epsom and Ewell neighbourhood policing areas, 335 offences were recorded in June: 152 in Central, 106 in West and 77 in East. The combined total fell to 319 in July: 154 in Central, 90 in West and 75 in East. That represents a reduction of just under five per cent between the two months.

In Epsom and Ewell Central, the largest recorded category in July was violence and sexual offences, with 53 reports. There were also 33 reports of anti-social behaviour, 14 public-order offences and 14 shoplifting offences.

These categories record allegations reported to police and should not be read as numbers of convictions. A single incident may also generate more than one recorded offence. Neighbourhood statistics can be examined through Police.uk.

Police engagement through the summer

Local officers continued to hold “Meet the Beat” sessions at locations including Bourne Hall, Long Grove Park, Epsom High Street, the Horton Estate and Epsom Hospital.

A particularly concentrated programme took place during August, with opportunities for residents to meet neighbourhood officers in the town centre, local parks and hospital reception area.

Residents should call 999 where a crime is in progress or somebody is in immediate danger. Non-emergency matters can be reported to Surrey Police online or by calling 101. Information can be provided anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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Sam Jones – Reporter



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Crime and Safety Round-Up: April and May 2026

Epsom March crime and safety round-up

Epsom and Ewell February crime and safety round-up

January crime and safety round-up

Accident in Leatherhead led to prosecution

20 November 2026



An event structure company and its director have been fined after a worker suffered life-changing injuries. The worker sustained multiple back fractures, a punctured lung and a broken leg. An HSE investigation found the dismantling work had not been properly planned or carried out safely.

iSkate Limited employee, Natalie McCreith, 38, a former outdoor sports instructor, had worked for the company for 14 years when she was seriously injured while working at Beaverbrook Hotel & Golf Course Leatherhead, Surrey, on 26 June 2024.

Ms McCreith underwent an 11-hour operation, spent three months in hospital and she is still recovering following the incident.

During the dismantling of a steel beam temporary structure, a ratchet strap was being used to lower a steel beam weighing over 100kg. The ratchet strap was not designed for lifting or lowering loads and failed, causing the beam to fall onto Ms McCreith. She sustained multiple fractures to her back, a punctured lung and a broken leg.

Neil Munn, director of iSkate Limited, was on site at the time and made the decision to use the ratchet strap, instructing workers where to stand. He continued with the method even after Ms McCreith raised concerns about whether it was safe.

In a victim personal statement, Ms McCreith said:

“Since the accident, my life has been completely turned upside down it’s now the polar opposite of what it once was. I will never live the life I once had or be in a body that isn’t screaming at me all day, I wish I could turn back time.

“My family spent the journey from Liverpool to London thinking I was dead, they have had to watch someone they love go through agonising pain and continue to do so. I am not the person I once was, I can’t be everything I once was and for them this Journey also continues.”

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that iSkate Limited had failed to ensure that the dismantling of the internal steel frame was properly planned and carried out safely.

HSE provides guidance on structural stability during alteration, demolition and dismantling which states that demolition or dismantling arrangements should be written down before the work begins. This safe system of work may be in the form of a safety method statement identifying the sequence required to prevent accidental collapse of the structure.

iSkate Limited, of Norfolk House, Station Road, St Ives, Cambridgeshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 16(1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, by virtue of Regulation 20(1). The company was fined £12,000 and ordered to pay £6,949 in costs at a hearing at Guildford Magistrates’ Court on 28 July 2026.

Neil Munn, director of iSkate Limited, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 37 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, by virtue of Regulation 16(1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 and Regulation 20(1). He received a community order with 75 hours of unpaid work to be completed.

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Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Russell Beckett said: “Demolition and dismantling is a high-hazard work activity, but if the work is properly planned it can be carried out safely. This accident has had a devastating effect on Ms McCreith and could easily have been prevented had the right work equipment been used.”

Health and Safety Executive

Phoito: iskate ratchet strap

Surrey County Council Prison Social Care Team awarded CQC ‘good’ rating

20 November 2026



Surrey County Council’s Prison Social Care Team has been rated ‘good’ by the Care Quality Commission for the dignified support it provides to people in custody with care needs.

The specialist team provides adult social care across five prisons and an approved premises in Surrey, supporting people with dementia, mental health needs, learning disabilities, autism, and sensory and physical disabilities. The team supports prisoners who struggle with daily living tasks, helping them engage with prison services and prepare for a smoother transition on release.

Following an inspection in May, the CQC rated the team ‘good’ across all areas and identified ‘outstanding’ practice in delivering evidence-based care and treatment.

Inspectors praised staff for treating prisoners with kindness and compassion, respecting their dignity and taking a non-judgmental approach.

“People told us their care needs were met, and they liked the staff who supported them,” the report said. “They said the staff were kind and caring and treated them with respect and dignity. People and their relatives were satisfied with the service. People felt their needs were met and they received personalised care and were able to make choices in the way they were supported.”

The report highlighted positive feedback from people the team supports and their relatives, including praise for a staff member who had “stuck by me through all my growing pains” and was “what you call a good social care worker.” Another comment said: “They are very kind and understand mental health which is good.”

Inspectors also recognised the team’s visible and supportive leadership, their collaborative approach with partner services and the effective systems in place to monitor quality, mitigate risk, ensure safe recruitment and maintain good infection control.

The team’s evidence-based approach to delivering care and treatment was found to be outstanding, with the report noting: “The provider always planned and delivered people’s care and treatment with them, including what was important and mattered to them. They did this in line with legislation.”

The Prison Social Care Team, part of the council’s wider mental health social care service, brings together social workers, occupational therapists and support workers. The team is unusual among councils in that every part of the prison social care service – from assessment and care planning through to the direct delivery of care – is delivered in-house.

The team supports people across Surrey’s five prisons – High Down, Downview, Bronzefield, Send and Coldingley – as well as St Catherine’s Approved Premises in Guildford, which supports people as they move from prison back into the community.

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council’s Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said: “This is a fantastic achievement and really shows the dedication and professionalism of our Prison Social Care Team. They’re a small team working in challenging settings and it’s great to see their compassionate, person-centred care recognised for the impact it has. Alongside the ‘good’ rating for our wider adult social care service in 2024, this is another example of how the council is making sure services are effective for vulnerable residents.

“As we look ahead, we’re proud to be passing on a strong legacy for adult social care to the new councils. We have a talented and compassionate workforce, and our staff have the expertise to deliver a safe transition and ensure the new councils start well.”

The full report can be found on the CQC website.

To find out about Surrey County Council adult social care jobs, please visit our jobs page.

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Surrey University

Surrey’s Cathedral to get CCTV protection

20 November 2026



Guildford Cathedral has been granted permission to install security cameras around its listed premises through a fund to protect places of worship from violent attacks.

The cathedral will place 16 new security cameras both inside and outside its main building, which was made possible by the Home Office’s Places of Worship Protective Security Scheme.

Guildford Borough Council has now granted planning permission, giving the green light for these cameras to be installed across the Grade II* listed cathedral.

Planning documents submitted to the council read: “Due to the level of threat of terrorism in the UK remaining substantial, it is perceived that increasing the number of security cameras will help deter attacks on the premises of Guildford Cathedral.

“This work has been advised by the UK government and they are funding the work.”

It comes after new legislation requiring premises to ramp up their security measures to safeguard against potential terror attacks was passed into law last year.

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill is also known as Martyn’s Law – named after Martyn Hett, who was killed in the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing.

A cathedral spokesperson told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) they “welcome this investment” into these security systems, which comes as part of its response to this changing legislation.

They said: “We are grateful to the Home Office for awarding Guildford Cathedral funding through the Places of Worship Protective Security Scheme, which will enable us to install additional CCTV across the cathedral site.

“The improvements will support our ongoing commitment to providing a safe, secure and welcoming environment for everyone who visits the cathedral.”

The colours of the new cameras were chosen to be as discreet as possible, according to planning documents, and will broadly match the render of the walls.

“Whilst measures have been taken to specify discreet cameras and place them in discreet locations, to anyone looking carefully at the cathedral’s fabric some will still be visible,” the documents say.

“However, their visual impact is of little significance when considered against the possibility of damage of which the cameras will help prevent.”

Council planning officers wrote in their approval that the cameras “would not have any adverse impact on the listed building”.

They added: “The proposed development, due to its scale and nature, coupled with the site’s location away from any other sensitive properties, would have no unacceptable impact on neighbouring amenity, in terms of loss of light, loss of privacy or overbearing impact.”

The UK terrorism threat level was raised from “substantial” to “severe” in April – meaning a terrorist attack is deemed highly likely within the next six months.

This designation came following the stabbing of two Jewish men in Golders Green, North London.

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

Guildford Cathedral (Credit: Google Maps)

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Surrey vehicle theft charge rate among lower-performing forces, figures show

20 November 2026



Surrey Police recorded 1,551 thefts or unauthorised takings of motor vehicles in 2025, with charges or summonses recorded in 34 cases, according to Home Office figures analysed by the Liberal Democrats.

That represents a charge or summons rate of 2.19 per cent. In 1,150 cases — 74.15 per cent of the total — the recorded outcome was that the investigation had been completed with no suspect identified.

The figures put Surrey in the lower half of police forces in England and Wales for the proportion of vehicle-theft cases resulting in a charge or summons, but not at the very bottom.

Excluding the British Transport Police, Surrey's 2.19 per cent rate was the 12th lowest among 43 territorial police forces. The overall England and Wales rate in the data was 2.45 per cent.

Surrey was also among the worse-performing forces for cases ending without a suspect being identified. Its 74.15 per cent figure was the eighth highest of the 43 territorial forces, although it was slightly below the England and Wales overall figure of 75.90 per cent.

In terms of the number of vehicle thefts, Surrey sat around the middle of the national table: its 1,551 recorded offences made it the 20th highest force area out of 43. The highest totals were recorded by the Metropolitan Police, with 31,534 offences, followed by West Midlands Police with 12,979.

Among Surrey's neighbouring and nearby force areas, Sussex had a lower charge rate of 1.47 per cent, Hampshire 1.80 per cent and Hertfordshire 1.91 per cent. Thames Valley recorded 2.45 per cent and Kent 2.46 per cent. Surrey's proportion of cases with no suspect identified was higher than in Thames Valley, where the figure was 64.22 per cent, and Kent, at 70.48 per cent, but lower than Sussex's 80.02 per cent and Hertfordshire's 77.42 per cent.

Helen Maguire, Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom and Ewell, said the statistics showed that too few vehicle thieves were being brought to justice.

She said: "Across Surrey, people rely on their cars to get to work, take their kids to school, and get themselves to the doctors and other essential services. It is completely unacceptable that 1,551 individuals and families in our county have had their vehicles stolen, with so few of those responsible ever brought to justice.

"How can we expect to deter would-be thieves from stealing people's cars when so few criminals are actually being charged by Surrey Police? The Government is asleep at the wheel and people in Surrey are paying the price.

"We urgently need to restore proper community policing to tackle car theft. For too long forces have been left overstretched and underfunded, without the resources they need to respond."

The Liberal Democrats are calling for more neighbourhood policing and for a specialist National Crime Agency team to bring together automatic number plate recognition data, insurance records, border intelligence and information from police forces to target organised vehicle-crime networks.

The figures relate to the offence category "theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle". A charge or summons is one recorded outcome; cases may also have other outcomes not shown in the comparison.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Epsom town centre licensing clampdown rejected — for now

20 November 2026



Epsom and Ewell councillors have decided not to begin work on a tougher licensing policy for Epsom town centre, after a debate over whether late-night crime and anti-social behaviour justify stronger controls on new pubs, bars and late-night venues.

The Licensing and Planning Policy Committee met on 16 June to consider a request from Cllr Alex Coley to explore the work needed for a Cumulative Impact Policy, often shortened to CIP, for licensed premises in Epsom town centre.

A CIP is a licensing tool used where a council has evidence that the number or concentration of licensed premises in an area is contributing to problems such as crime, disorder, public nuisance or risks to public safety. Before adopting one, the council must first carry out a Cumulative Impact Assessment, or CIA, gathering evidence from sources such as police data, complaints, residents, businesses, health bodies and other responsible authorities.

If adopted, a CIP does not automatically ban new licences. But where objections are made to a new licence or a variation, it creates a presumption that the application will normally be refused unless the applicant can show that the proposal will not add to the existing problems.

That is stronger than the “Special Stress Area” policy already proposed for Epsom town centre. Under that approach, the town centre is recognised as an area of concern, particularly for night-time crime and disorder, and applicants are expected to address those concerns in their operating plans. But there is no presumption of refusal.

Principal Licensing Officer Paul Holliday told councillors that a CIP would require “a detailed evidence gathering process to demonstrate that the cumulative impact of licensed premises is undermining the licensing objectives”. He said adopting such a policy would introduce “a presumption of refusal for new licence applications and variations within a defined area”, unless applicants could show they would not add to the impact.

However, officers recommended that no assessment should be started at this stage. They said existing licensing powers, together with the proposed Special Stress Area, gave the council a proportionate framework for dealing with problem premises. Mr Holliday said the proposed approach would allow the council to focus on “problem behaviour rather than imposing broad restrictions”.

He warned that a CIP would need “robust and up-to-date” evidence and that without it the council could face appeals, legal challenge and financial costs. He added that a CIP could also have unintended economic effects by “discouraging investment from new operators” and limiting business diversity.

The officer report said no Surrey district or borough currently has a CIA in place, with Croydon and Merton cited as nearby examples outside Surrey. It also noted that an external estimate obtained in December 2023 put the likely cost of a CIA at £21,300, with no budget currently allocated.

Cllr **Alex Coley** (Independent Ruxley) argued that the proposed Special Stress Area may not be enough. He told the committee: “I learned about the special stress area when I was a member of this committee. I sat on a licensing panel hearing where it was my impression that it wasn’t going to make a great deal of difference. It is about mitigation and conditions.”

He questioned the impression that Epsom town centre had no significant licensing-related problems, saying: “There’s no complaints, no reviews, no nuisance, no noise, no problems. There’s nothing to see here. We all know that’s not true.”

Cllr Coley added: “I think my concern is that the town centre has gotten out of control more and more. We do have more trouble at night. I’ve talked to some of the local residents, I talked to the business, to the manager of the BID, Business Improvement District, it’s pretty clear there are problems.”

He stressed, however, that he was not insisting the council immediately spend more than £20,000 on a formal assessment. He said: “I’m not saying that we must have this… I’d like to see it explored and reviewed.”

Other councillors took a different view. Cllr **Julian Freeman** (LibDem College) said he had direct experience of Epsom at night through volunteering as a street pastor. “I probably have a very different perception than Councillor Coley,” he said. “When I go out on a Friday night with my colleagues, what I do notice very much is the professionalism of the door staff outside most of the nightclubs and bars, which is really quite impressive.”

He added: “I don’t see it as the den of iniquity and licentiousness that is perhaps being portrayed. When I wander around there, normally between sort of 10 o’clock to about three in the morning, I find it increasingly quiet.”

Cllr **Steve Bridger** (RA Stamford) opposed spending money on a CIA, saying: “This to me will be a total and utter waste of money.”

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Cllr **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington) said he was "puzzled" by the request, given that officers considered the council's present and proposed policies adequate. "We don't have any reports back from the police that this is required," he said.

Cllr **Neil Dallen** (RA Town), the committee's vice-chair, declared at the start of the meeting that he was "a member of the Business Improvement District, which looks after the town centre", but said he came to the meeting "with an open mind and not influenced in any way by that".

During the debate, Cllr Dallen said: "I do occasionally go into the town centre late at night because I live there, and it is now a lot better than it used to be. The further back you go, the better it is. It has steadily got better over the last 15, 20 years."

That declaration may nevertheless raise questions for some observers, because Business Improvement Districts are funded by levies from eligible businesses within the BID area, which includes the Town centre's licensed premises. A CIP would apply primarily to new licence applications and variations rather than existing licences, but the evidence-gathering exercise behind it could still involve scrutiny of the current night-time economy and the operation of existing venues.

Cllr **Kieran Persand** (Conservative Horton) sounded a note of caution. Referring to recent events in Epsom, he said: "I don't think we should take this concern too lightly," adding that £25,000 was "a lot of money for a council like us to spend right now", but that he wanted to understand whether there was a "middle ground".

When he asked whether there was data to support Cllr Dallen's view that Epsom was getting safer, Mr Holliday replied that earlier work on the licensing policy had found "elevated levels of ASB and violent crime in Epsom town centre". He added that, as an urban town centre, some higher levels would be expected, but that the data and councillor discussions had led to the proposed Special Stress Area.

Published Police.uk data for Epsom & Ewell Central shows that in April 2026 the area recorded 198 crimes. The most commonly reported categories were violence and sexual offences, with 47 reports, anti-social behaviour with 36, shoplifting with 27, and criminal damage and arson with 23. The monthly total rose from 151 in January to 198 in April, although monthly figures fluctuate.

Compared with other Surrey town policing areas for April 2026, Epsom & Ewell Central recorded fewer crimes than Guildford Town, which had 315 crimes, including 72 violence and sexual offences and 41 anti-social behaviour reports. But it recorded more than Woking Town, which had 102 crimes, including 29 violence and sexual offences and 28 anti-social behaviour reports; Staines Town, where the top categories included 25 violence and sexual offences and 24 anti-social behaviour reports; and Farnham Town Centre, which recorded 14 anti-social behaviour reports and 14 violence and sexual offences.

Those comparisons suggest Epsom town centre is not unique among Surrey towns in facing crime and disorder pressures. But the figures also support the officer's acknowledgement that Epsom town centre has elevated levels of anti-social behaviour and violent crime when compared with quieter local areas. What the published statistics do not prove, on their own, is whether those offences are caused by the cumulative impact of licensed premises — the key evidential step needed for a legally robust CIP.

The committee ultimately endorsed the officer recommendation that no action should be taken to initiate a CIA at this time. There were two abstentions.

The issue may return. The council's proposed licensing policy says the need for a cumulative impact policy and the Special Stress Area will be kept under review, and officers suggested that the new East Surrey authority may revisit the matter after local government reorganisation.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Crime and Safety Round-Up: April and May 2026

20 November 2026



April and May proved to be unusually busy months for Surrey Police and community safety partners in Epsom and Ewell, with a mixture of high-profile investigations, anti-social behaviour enforcement, retail crime initiatives and public engagement events.

The most significant policing story of the period centred on a reported serious sexual assault in Epsom during the early

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hours of 11 April. Surrey Police launched a major investigation following a report that a woman in her twenties had been assaulted after leaving a town centre nightclub. Extensive enquiries were carried out, including CCTV examination, witness interviews, forensic work and house-to-house enquiries. By mid-April, Assistant Chief Constable Sarah Grahame stated that investigators had not found evidence to support the offence as originally reported, although enquiries remained ongoing. The case attracted national media attention and prompted public demonstrations in Epsom town centre. Surrey Police repeatedly appealed for witnesses and urged the public not to speculate while investigations continued. (The Guardian)

The incident also led to a substantial police presence in the town as officers dealt with protests and concerns regarding public disorder. Local community leaders and elected representatives called for calm and urged residents to allow the investigation to proceed without interference. (The Guardian)

Away from the headlines, Surrey Police continued its borough-wide campaign against anti-social behaviour and organised criminality under the “Safer Epsom and Ewell” initiative launched earlier this year. The partnership between Surrey Police and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has focused on tackling anti-social behaviour, serious organised crime and repeat offending in known hotspot locations. (Epsom and Ewell Borough Council)

Police teams also continued operations targeting nuisance and criminal use of motorcycles. According to local policing priorities published during the spring, officers have been using specialist teams, covert tactics, anti-social behaviour powers and multi-agency interventions to tackle riders involved in criminality and public nuisance. The strategy includes cooperation with housing providers and the use of borough-wide Public Space Protection Order powers. (Surrey Police)

Retail crime remained a major priority throughout April and May. Surrey Police’s Epsom Safer Neighbourhood Team reported that its zero-tolerance approach to shoplifting and offences against retailers was continuing to produce results. The initiative includes rapid investigation of known offenders, direct cooperation with retailers and remote CCTV operators, and proactive arrests aimed at reducing repeat offending in the town centre. (Surrey Police)

The wider “Safer Epsom and Ewell” operation reported notable results during the spring period. Police indicated that the partnership had led to more than 150 arrests, over 90 charges and the closure of ten county-lines drug networks, highlighting the continuing focus on organised criminal activity affecting local communities. (Facebook)

Community engagement remained a significant feature of local policing. Officers held a series of “Meet the Beat” events during April and May, including sessions in Epsom town centre, Ruxley Lane and at Epsom Hospital, giving residents opportunities to discuss local concerns directly with neighbourhood officers. Police also conducted public engagement work connected with violence against women and girls in the Ashley Centre area. (Surrey Police)

Latest published neighbourhood crime statistics continue to show violence and sexual offences, shoplifting and anti-social behaviour among the most frequently reported categories in parts of the borough. In Epsom & Ewell East, violence and sexual offences and shoplifting remained the most commonly recorded offences during March, the latest month for which detailed neighbourhood figures are available. (Police.uk)

Residents wishing to report crime can contact Surrey Police via 101 for non-emergencies or 999 in an emergency. Information can also be passed anonymously through Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

The Epsom and Ewell Times will continue to monitor local crime trends, policing initiatives and community safety developments throughout the summer.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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