

## A motion in note or a note in motion?

28 May 2026



Dear Editor,

Thank you as always for your coverage of last night's council meeting.

You correctly report that the mayor refused to allow councillors to debate my motion on the constitution, falsely framing it as an attempt to change the constitution, and that I denied this.

As both councillors and the public were prevented by the mayor from even seeing the motion, I thought your readers might like to. It was not a motion to amend the constitution but to amend the recommendation in the report, to add two unarguable factual points. Both were framed as to "note", meaning that no action was required.

Had they been allowed, councillors would have been invited to:

- Note that, while the constitution states at paragraph 2.1: "The Code of Conduct for councillors is available in Appendix 1 and the arrangements for making a complaint and dealing with complaints can be found in the council's Operating Framework", no such arrangements exist in the Operating Framework.

- Further note that while the live register of delegations and the Terms of Reference for the Full Council and other Council Committees, Sub-Committees, Advisory Panels and Joint Arrangements delegate to hearings panels the determination of complaints referred by an Investigating Officer regarding alleged breaches of the councillors' Code of Conduct, neither document provides any authority for such panels to issue any sanction.

It was my intention to draw the attention of councillors and the public these deficiencies in the constitution that councillors were being asked to approve, but with no attempt to amend it, as claimed by the mayor.

To be fair to Cllr McIntyre, it was obvious that she was merely reading from a script given to her by the administration, probably by those who are responsible for ensuring that the constitution is fit for purpose and who have a vested interest in concealing its failings. It was her first meeting as mayor and we might hope that she will learn from the incident.

My mistake was not that I submitted the amendment to the recommendation "late", as there was no requirement to submit it in advance, but that I submitted it in advance at all, giving the administration the opportunity to engage in procedural shenanigans. I will learn from this.

Of course, as Cllr Lawrence eloquently and movingly attested, the absence of a proper procedure for complaints against councillors has real world consequences. The administration has targeted a number of opposition councillors, including myself, with code of conduct complaints while shielding senior Residents Association councillors.

Finally, you are right that the underlying problem with the meeting was that many councillors regard a meeting where matters of such importance as the council's constitution are considered as a purely "civic" event, and any discussion to be keeping them from the refreshments provided at council tax payers' expense.

Cllr Chris Ames

Labour, Court Ward

Related report:

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## Unitary in name, unitary in nature?

28 May 2026



Dear Editor

Your criticisms of the silencing of the newly elected Liberal Democrats Councillors by our local MP (8<sup>th</sup> May) is well founded, and will concern residents who may well wonder whose interests those Councillors will represent. However, I wish to raise another issue in relation to the management of the Election Count that I found disappointing and concerning.

Following the announcement of the result for my Division I sought to make the customary speech of thanks to officers, and to the residents who voted for me, but I was told that the Returning Officer in Reigate had determined that there would be no speeches at any Election Count across Surrey. So, hundreds of years of, sometimes, raucous hustings, elections, and speeches of thanks to the election team and voters, all dismissed by officialdom.

It got worse. I sought to have a photograph taken in the room following the announcement of the result, but I was told that was not allowed either, as it might “compromise the secrecy of the vote.” As I watched the news on TV later in the day, with BBC cameras showing footage of a host of candidates in polling stations, and panning out across the counting room, I wondered what was so concerning that required the East Surrey election count to be sanitized and devoid of any of emotion, and the high and lows that come winning and, yes, with defeat.

So, because I could not do this on the day perhaps, through your on-line newspaper, I might be allowed to thank the teams at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council who undertook the work to ensure that on election day, and at the count, all went to plan. To Kerry Blundell, EEBC’s Electoral Services Manager, whose tireless work over many years ensured a smooth and successful election outcome. My thanks also to the Polling Station teams, many up at 5.30am and not home until after 11.00pm. It is a long day, yet they maintained their welcoming and efficient presence through to the end. And to those undertaking the count which, whilst being more complex by voters having two votes, was completed in good time.

Finally, my colleague Cllr Peter O’Donovan and I wish to thank all those residents in Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington who voted for us on 7<sup>th</sup> May. We will work hard to repay your trust in us by following through the promises we made, but also by being accessible and responding swiftly to your enquiries. We will also be working for all the residents in the Ward, and look forward to working with and for them over the next five years

Yours faithfully,

Cllr **Eber Kington** (Surrey County Council and East Surrey Unitary Council)

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[Lib Dems sweep up in East Surrey Unitary Council election for Epsom and Ewell](#)

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## Ex-local LibDem leader explains part of her departure

28 May 2026



Dear Editor

It is indeed regrettable that our (otherwise rather good) MP, Helen Maguire, wished to control what each and every new Liberal Democrat councillor has to say, and presumably fears they are not competent to string a few words together and celebrate their victory.

Not every Liberal Democrat victory in Surrey belongs to Ms Maguire, much as she wishes it does.

It seems to be a problem for Ms Maguire to be a team player, to delegate and trust — and one of the reasons I left the Liberal Democrats after 25 years, the majority of those years leading the Opposition on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

It was also partly the reason Cllr James Lawrence left the Liberal Democrats more recently and similarly became an Independent councillor for the final year of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

She would do well to concentrate on giving the new team in Surrey the respect and degree of autonomy they have earned — and will cherish — in local government, and which will be necessary for them to run East Surrey Council and fulfil the promises made in their election literature and on the doorstep.

Cllr Julie Morris

Independent Councillor for College Ward – Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

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## Cllr Coley on an attempt to create another layer of local government

28 May 2026



Dear Editor,

I read the 29th March letter to the editor “Local Councillors react to hospital merger idea” with great interest. The letter mentions a decision ‘taken behind closed doors three weeks ago, without public comment and clearly no intention to engage with residents.’

I agree, this does not augur well. The central theme of the letter is reminiscent of parallel activity at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.

Last week I discovered, by accident, that our borough council has supported an Expression of Interest to form a Foundation Strategic Authority as part of the Government’s next wave of devolution. This is a significant move with substantial implications for planning, housing, transport, skills, economic development, net-zero initiatives, police and fire services and perhaps most crucially – mayoral powers.

Cllr Hannah Dalton, the Leader of the Council in Epsom & Ewell has joined some, but not all, councils in Surrey to sign the Expression of Interest. There has been no announcement.

To obtain the proper authority in signing this Expression of Interest some Surrey councils have called an Extraordinary Council Meeting, some used a committee meeting and some brought a report to their Cabinet delegating authority to their Leader. There are also some councils which expressly give the constitutional authority to act, to their Leader.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has done none of these.

I have subsequently written to the Council’s Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer seeking clarity.

Do residents wish for their thoughts and concerns for the future to be guessed and assumed, perhaps ignored? Is a precedent being set, where a lone councillor can make strategic decisions on behalf of our borough without any of us knowing? Where is the public debate?

It feels that we have leadership-in-hiding and decisions made in secret. Like they say in Thelma and Louise “You get what you settle for.”

I don’t think we should settle for this.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Alex Coley (Ruxley), Leader of the Independents – Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

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## Local Councillors react to hospital merger idea

28 May 2026



From Councillors Eber Kington (RA) and Steven McCormick (RA)

Dear Editor,

Your article of 26<sup>th</sup> March exposing the plans by Epsom and St Helier University Hospital Trust to merge with St George's Hospital Trust is most welcome. However, the fact that the decision was taken behind closed doors three weeks ago, without public comment, with no reference on the ESHUHT website, and clearly no intention to engage with residents, is quite alarming.

The stated position, that the Trusts "have not agreed to merge" but will "submit a strategic case for merger to NHS England, asking them to approve developing a full business case" is hard to believe. Of course there is nothing fully worked up, but even a strategic case will have been developed by reviewing and testing options for cost savings such as merging services in single sites or in just two rather than three.

And the fact that patients and residents generally were the last to know of these plans, and only through the press, does not augur well if NHS England does agree that the Trusts can develop a full business case. But if that is what is to happen, the ESHUHT Board must be open from the start about what is within scope of any plan and what is not.

We also note that our own MP was aware of the developing proposal yet also decided not let residents know. She suggests that her priority is to ensure that residents in the Trust area "continue to receive the high-quality healthcare they deserve." However, we believe that most residents in Epsom and Ewell will also want reassurance that those key services are not stripped out of Epsom Hospital and located at St Helier and far away St George's Hospital.

Clearly, the state of the Hospitals' finances is behind this decision, as Epsom, St Helier and St George's Hospitals have all been set targets to clear debts, and Government support is due to be withdrawn over the next three years. However, the need to find ways to deliver current and new services in a more efficient way does not have to be done in secret. It can, and must, be an open process that encourages patients, members of staff, and residents to be part of the work that shapes their hospital services for years to come. And our residents need to know right now, that greater openness will be the case.

Yours

**County Councillor Eber Kington and County Councillor Steven McCormick**

Related report:

Epsom Hospital to "merge" with St Georges in Tooting?

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## Appeal to twin Epsom with Bucha in Ukraine

28 May 2026



From the committees of Surrey Stands With Ukraine and the Bucha-Epsom Association to all Councillors of the Borough of Epsom and Ewell.

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### Re: Motion to Support Twinning with Bucha, Ukraine - Full Council, 10 February 2026

Dear Councillors,

We write to you as a residents of Epsom and citizens of Ukraine resident in Epsom who believe we should stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine. Surrey Stands With Ukraine was founded in Epsom — a grassroots, volunteer-run charity formed at the outset of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.

Since then, our community has come together in ways few could have imagined. Epsom and Ewell has sent over **£5 million worth of humanitarian aid** to Ukraine. Through initiatives by *Surrey Stands With Ukraine*, *Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network*, local schools, churches, and dozens of individual volunteers and host families, we have built bonds of solidarity, compassion, and friendship with Ukraine — and especially with **the people of Bucha**.

This is why we urge you to support the motion at Full Council on 10th February to **endorse a twinning arrangement between Epsom and the town of Bucha**.

Now is the time:

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to do something meaningful — not just symbolic — that reflects the values our Borough has shown in abundance since 2022.

**The hand of friendship has been extended to us by Bucha**, a town now known around the world for both the suffering it endured and the resilience it has shown. Its Mayor, Anatolii Fedoruk, has held office for 28 years and has personally asked that Epsom become its **first UK twin**. That offer may not remain open forever. Delay may see it pass to another town.

This is not a political issue. Nor should it be subject to any “party line”. We appeal to you all to treat this matter as a *free vote of conscience*, guided by your role as civic leaders, not party representatives.

This twinning initiative has nothing to do with sending aid or diverting council resources. **No funding or council officer time is required.** As with our Town’s twinning with Chantilly, the operational side will be entirely run by a dedicated **Bucha-Epsom Association** — a volunteer-led, self-financing group which will invite councillors and community leaders on to its committee and work closely with the Chantilly association to avoid duplication.

What is needed from the Council is a **symbolic yet vital endorsement** of the principle of twinning — the first step to recognising what our community has already built, and what it can go on to achieve.

Twinning with Bucha now — *during the war*, not after — carries a deeper meaning. True friendship is shown in hard times as well as good. Kindness should always be forefront of our minds in all our actions. That is the kind of friendship Bucha seeks, and one we should be proud to offer.

Imagine the future educational and cultural benefits:

- Our children participating in moderated online exchanges with students from Bucha.
- English-learning Ukrainian youth paired with Epsom school pupils for real-life conversation.
- Artists, musicians, sportspeople, and teachers collaborating across borders.
- Civic resilience and peace building projects that our Borough could help shape.

At a time when war continues and local government reorganisation looms, it may feel tempting to delay. But we urge you not to let that be an excuse. If anything, the imminent changes make it *more compelling* that **Epsom and Ewell makes this decision now**, while it still exists as a borough council with a distinct identity. Let our legacy be something enduring, generous, and globally visible.

This proposal brings no burden, only benefit. It requires no budget, only goodwill. It demands no partisanship, only perspective.

We ask each of you, as elected representatives of our community, to do what Epsom and Ewell has done again and again since 2022: **extend your hand, open your hearts, and lead with humanity.**

With hope and determination,

Alan **Avis**

Tetyana **Bilyk**

Lionel **Blackman**

Roy **Deadman**

Galyna **Donstova**

Denise **Faulkner**

Vladimir **Nakonechniyi**

Lisa **Stewart**

Pierre-Michel **Tarrant**

Surrey Stands With Ukraine

Bucha-Epsom Association

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## 100 years campaigning to keep Surrey Green

28 May 2026



Dear Surrey,

The countryside is your greatest achievement. A beautiful masterpiece built by centuries of collaboration between people and nature. From meadows and woodlands to rivers, coasts, and the green spaces that bind us together, the countryside connects and sustains us all.

For a century, the Campaign to Protect Rural England has been its guardian. Despite the relentless, growing pressure on our landscapes, we've stood up for the countryside and helped give the people who love it a voice. That will never change.

Many of the pressures facing our countryside today were familiar to our founders - not least the challenge of providing homes, infrastructure and prosperity on a small island. But new pressures have emerged with more catastrophic impacts on the land we love. Nature is in freefall and climate change threatens to alter our landscapes for good.

Now more than ever, decisions about how we use our land are leading to the needless loss of landscapes and everything they support. Without drastic action, much of what makes our countryside unique and beautiful will be lost.

Wherever we live, we rely on the countryside for clean air, home grown food, thriving wildlife and resilience in the face of climate change. Yet these foundations are being chipped away. Too often decisions are shaped by profit, not what's needed most - and the countryside pays the price.

Here in Surrey, we have even been faced with a series of major housing developments, access roads, 'solar farms' and 'battery energy storage systems', in Green Belt countryside. Many of these sites are on the edge of the Surrey Hills National Landscape itself.

Now, as 2026 dawns we are now battling a growing number of planning applications which rely on councils downgrading Green Belt land to so-called 'grey belt', as well as excessive and unsustainable housebuilding targets imposed on local communities.

Our centenary vision is for a countryside that's greener, more resilient and protected for future generations. There is a better way - one we're calling for, and one everyone can be part of:

- Stop the loss of countryside. Let's protect what we love and do everything we can to make sure green fields and woodlands aren't needlessly lost.
- Improve the quality of the countryside for future generations. That means thriving communities, clean rivers, healthy food and resilient landscapes rich in nature.
- Inspire more people to care for the countryside. A countryside for all where more people take action to enjoy and protect it.

Across the country, people are already showing what's possible - restoring hedgerows, rethinking development and sustainable farming, and making space for nature.

As we begin our centenary year, we're sending this message to everyone: love your countryside and be part of its future. This is just the beginning - and we all have a part to play in shaping what comes next. If you share this vision, join the movement today, add your name to this letter and stand with us.

Yours faithfully,

Andy Smith

Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (Surrey)

Photo: Surrey Hills Credit Aleksey Maksimov CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 DEED

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## A Decision Not Fully Bourne Out?

28 May 2026



From Councillor Alex Coley.

Dear Editor,

I read Emily Dalton's article *Ewell's "UFO" shaped Bourne Hall to take off anew* in the *Epsom & Ewell Times* with great interest, for a number of reasons.

I took part in the LGA Cultural Peer Challenge which looked at options for the future of Bourne Hall Museum in August last year. At that time, I was the lead Independent councillor in England for sector-led improvement, which is the local government policy area under which LGA peer challenges take place.

The peer challenge was notable for two things: firstly, the short notice and brevity of information provided; and secondly, the non-attendance of all but one Residents' Association councillor (a former employee of Bourne Hall) at the group session where we met with the peer team. Seven RA councillors were invited, including the Leader of the Council. All four leaders of the opposition political groups were in attendance.

In October, I wrote to the Council's Chief Executive asking when the report would be published, as is expected in all LGA

peer challenges. I was told it would form part of the Community & Wellbeing Committee papers on 13 January 2026. When I noticed that the report was not included in the committee papers, I wrote again to the Chief Executive asking why not, and was told this would be sorted out, with the admission that she had thought it would be included. Yet it was never published or shown to members at the committee.

The day after members voted on the decision, I received a further email from the Chief Executive explaining that it had been decided to incorporate a high-level executive summary of the peer challenge report instead, as this was felt to better fit with the focus of the committee report. I was told this decision was taken in conjunction with the committee chair, Cllr Clive Woodbridge. The peer challenge report has still not been made public and, as such, I have submitted a Freedom of Information request to obtain it.

Internally, I understand that the report contains findings by the LGA peer team which are not favourable to Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. These reportedly include:

- General confusion and mixed messages about the museum's closure
- A decision to exclude stewardship and governance questions from the scope of the museum's future
- Failure to complete work recommended in a 2023 review of Bourne Hall
- Disproportionate recharge costs which do not reflect the true running costs of the museum
- Frustration on the part of the peer team at being unable to access more detailed income and expenditure information relating to Bourne Hall
- Fragmented staffing structures which may be contributing to gaps in communication, information-sharing and missed opportunities

Should I infer that the reason the report has not been made public is embarrassment to the Council, rather than a genuine desire for a high-level summary to better fit the focus of the committee report?

Cllr Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee, accepted that, "*in hindsight*", the LGA report should have been included in the committee papers, after being challenged by Cllr Bernie Muir and Cllr Rob Geleit during the meeting. And yet, at the time of writing, it has still not been shared with the public.

Will it be made public before the Strategy & Resources Committee considers the £359,000 requested spending?

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Alex Coley

Independent - Ruxley

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## More erudition on local government reorganisation in Epsom and Ewell

28 May 2026



Dear Editor,

In his letter of 13 January Trevor Burt makes a number of good points, including rightly calling out the determination of the ruling Residents Association (RA) clique to impose parish councils on the residents they claim to represent without giving them the opportunity to express support for an alternative "community governance" model.

He is also correct that Epsom and Ewell residents will have proportionately more influence in the smaller council of East Surrey than in the bigger pond of Surrey County Council.

But the RA's determination to force through the creation of parish councils that have little support in the borough is explained by a simpler mathematical calculation. Even in the unlikely event that the political party that claims not to be a political party were to win all the seats available in our current borough, it would still be in a minority on the new council.

As I and others have said, parish councils are about preserving the relevance of a clique that is used to seeing Epsom and Ewell as its fiefdom.

In the meantime, the RA will continue to mismanage the council, as the latest fiasco over the Rainbow Leisure Centre shows, as it wastes the valuable time of council tax payer-funded officers on the pursuit of the RA councillors' vanity project.

The Rainbow Centre fiasco also shows how determined the RA are to keep the truth of their incompetence from residents. It may interest your readers to know that I have written to the administration to seek confirmation that the decision to keep the huge repairs bill secret included an assessment of what the public interest required.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Chris Ames (Labour - Court Ward)

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Dear Editor,

Sadly, in his support and criticism of my stance on both SCC's Neighbourhood Councils and the Town Council alternative, Trevor Burt (Letters to the Editor 13/01/26) seems to miss my point.

As I state in my penultimate paragraph, the engagement of residents in determining the outcomes of policies and spending in their area does not necessarily require replacement frameworks, large expenditure and more elections. It can be undertaken by devolving funds to Unitary Authority Councillors individually or jointly to spend on local priorities, more local consultations, the co-designing of local services with residents, regular pulse surveys, as well as transferring local assets to communities. These opportunities provide for real localism and for all residents, if they choose, to have their say.

Yours faithfully,

Eber Kington

Residents Association County Councillor

Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington

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Long serving Epsom Councillor blasts LGR and NACs

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## Is Epsom and Ewell getting "proportional representation" under Council shake-up?

28 May 2026



Dear Editor,

I was heartened to read Cllr Eber Kington's letter of 9th January. For once, a Resident Association councillor has broken ranks with the ruling Residents' Association line by publicly disavowing the party's own sponsored option of creating two community councils to replace Epsom and Ewell Borough Council following Local Government Reorganisation. That departure is to be applauded.

However, I must respectfully challenge the assertion that the current options before us truly trust residents — "the people

most qualified to decide what is best for the borough,” as Cllr Kington rightly characterises them — with a meaningful say. In reality, EEBC hasn’t offered residents any choice beyond:

- \* Two community councils (effectively parish/town councils with a precept), or
- \* No community councils at all.

If Cllr Kington has alternative proposals for how local democratic accountability and community decision-making can supplement ten councillors representing East Surrey on the new unitary authority, he has left it far too late for such alternatives to be prepared, costed, and properly considered before EEBC’s much-awaited March 2026 meeting.

It is worth putting the democratic and financial context in sharper focus. At present, EEBC has 36 councillors servicing a modest borough budget of around £10.27 million for 2025/26. In contrast, Surrey County Council’s budget of £1.2641 billion including responsibilities, covering education, highways, social care and more, account for roughly 76 % of the total council tax bill paid by residents, with EEBC receiving only about 10 %.

Under the new arrangements for two unitary authorities— as confirmed by government decision — the Epsom and Ewell area will be represented by 10 councillors on the East Surrey Council, dealing with the vast majority of public services currently under County control. Crude though it is, this means that for the major service budgets now handled at county level, Epsom and Ewell will have significantly greater relative influence than before. Currently, just five county councillors represent the borough’s interests on a much larger Surrey budget; in future, ten unitary councillors will cover roughly half of the former Surrey population’s budget responsibilities.

Yes, it is true that we lose some of the micro-representation previously afforded by a larger cohort of borough councillors on planning and routine community matters — though even now many planning decisions are subject to Government inspectors overruling local decisions on appeal. But on the biggest pots of public spending — education, adult social care, highways, children’s services — residents will likely be better represented proportionately than under the old two-tier county/district system.

So when debating the merits of Neighbourhood Area Committees versus community councils, let us be clear about the alternatives on the table. Both NACs and community councils have limitations and cost implications, and both are artificially constrained by the narrow set of options EEBC has chosen to present. The real democratic choice for residents should be wider than simply more or fewer tiers of parish councils.

If Cllr Kington truly believes, as he claims, that residents should decide how council tax is spent and how their communities are governed, then let us see a credible alternative framework— with transparent proposals, budget implications, and democratic accountability — ahead of March. Otherwise, the debate will continue to swirl around consultancy-driven options that neither trust nor empower the people they purport to serve.

Yours faithfully,

Trevor Burt

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## Long serving Epsom Councillor blasts LGR and NACs

28 May 2026



Dear Editor

I am not sure where your Editorial writer of 6<sup>th</sup> January 2026 gets their information on SCC’s pilot project Neighbourhood Area Committees (Parish power, democratic ideals — and the Residents’ Association dilemma), but NAC’s are certainly not the answer to the proposed LGR centralisation of local government and are far away from the concept of local democracy.

But before I address that, let’s just step back a bit and see how we got here. The Government had no electoral mandate to

abolish SCC and Surrey's Districts and Boroughs. And even if a vague manifesto reference to the reform of local governments counts as legitimate, the Leader of SCC had no mandate to use his Executive power to drag all of Surrey's local authorities into a rushed and centralising new local government structure.

The Government and Tim Oliver also cancelled the May 2025 local County Council election, denying residents themselves of the chance to express their view on this change, via the ballot box. That said, residents used a different mechanism to say what they thought. The results of the Government's own public consultation on the Unitary Options, published in October, showed that 51% of respondents expressed support for the three Unitary Option and only 19% favoured SCC's two Unitary option, with 56% strongly opposed to it. Yet the Government decided it knows better.

The outcome is that we won't have the devolution of power as promised under LGR but, instead, the centralisation of local government upwards and into two Unitary Authorities covering populations over ½ million. And in my Division, covering Ewell Court, Auriol, and Cuddington, just two Unitary councillors will replace the current eight local councillors with the expectation (I suppose) that this is sufficient to ensure that our residents needs and expectations will still be adequately met.

And this is where the Government's concept of Neighbourhood Area Committees comes into play. How ironic that, having realised Unitary Authorities will have nothing "local" about them, the Government decides (fully supported by the ruling party at SCC) that they will also impose what will fill that void.

Your Editorial seems quite keen on these. They write *"These advisory bodies bring together local councillors, police, NHS, voluntary sector leaders and community stakeholders — arguably, the very people most qualified to inform decisions on community priorities."*

However - and given that I am a Residents' Association councillor you probably won't be surprised at this - I think the people most qualified to determine local priorities and what their council tax should be spent on, are residents and council taxpayers themselves. Not an unelected quango with a small minority of residents working to an agenda determined by the Unitary Authority. Neighbourhood Area Committees therefore do not pass the tests of democratic local government, representation of the people, nor the ability for local people and communities to influence local outcomes.

Your Editorial also states that NACs come *"at minimal administrative cost."* I am not sure that's a given if it's only based on SCC piloting four NACs. If introduced by the East Surrey Unitary there could be 36 or more of them. And how long will it take before the Police, NHS, and Fire Service, for example, realise that that simply cannot resource every NAC and every meeting in Surrey.

So, I do not support the NAC option. It is not local, it is not democratic, and it excludes the voice of most residents. But neither do I support the Town Council and precept model which will add a further tax burden on residents alongside any new elected Mayor's annual precept, in order to run allotments and not much else.

We need to look at options such as providing Unitary Councillors, individually or jointly in their localities, with funding to allocate locally. We need more local engagement and consultations on the introduction of school streets, speed limits and no verge parking zones and more. We should increase opportunities for community asset transfers enabling communities take over council assets that are better run by those who will use them. And we should undertake more co-designing with residents and users of local services and facilities, to better reflect their needs and aspirations.

So, going forward, if I get the chance to influence the local arrangements, it won't be to install a quango of unelected public servants and self-selected individuals, but it will be introducing localised structures and financial decision making to ensure that our residents are able to influence the important local choices and funding allocations that affect their lives.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Eber Kington - (RA Surrey County Councillor Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington and former RA Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillor)

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Editor's note: Epsom and Ewell Times received its published information about Neighbour Area Committees and the cost of running 16 meetings of pilots direct from Surrey County Council's communications team.

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Related letters and editorial

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## Letters from local Councillors on Epsom and Ewell

# parishes

28 May 2026



Posted in the order of receipt.

## **From Cllr Alex Coley (Independent Ruxley)**

Dear Editor,

It is disingenuous to go to residents with a consultation that shows a band D precept of £43.52 (rounded up to £44), when this could be more than six times higher. The Council's own figures add up to a Band D precept of £296.62 for Epsom Parish Council, when certain key community assets are transferred. This is due to the enormous burden of running costs (£73.10) and building repairs (£180).

You will hear that this consultation is simply for the creation of new parish councils dedicated to representing residents' voices and the statutory provision of allotments. That is a Trojan Horse. Seeking a view from residents on a lower figure and then multiplying it several times later is deeply misleading. These additional costs are very likely to be even higher than shown as they are based on out-of-date running costs reported in February 2024 and building repair costs from July 2019.

Residents who worry about their area being left behind will discover that creating a new parish council opens up the opportunity for the forthcoming unitary councils to offload costly buildings. With an uncapped precept, residents can be made to pay for these offloaded buildings — whatever they cost. This can happen at ANY time AFTER the new parish council is created. The one thing that definitely won't be left behind is your money. I am seeking further analysis to calculate itemised costs for all the many buildings, parks and open spaces which could be transferred in future years, adding to the parish precept even further.

Using figures in the Council report from 9th December, these are the expected Parish Tax bands for Epsom when the three key community assets are included after the consultation has closed.

Band A — £197.75  
Band B — £230.70  
Band C — £263.66  
Band D — £296.62  
Band E — £362.53  
Band F — £428.45  
Band G — £494.36  
Band H — £593.24

Residents are being treated like Turkeys. Not just voting for Christmas, but paying for Christmas too!

Yours faithfully,

Alex Coley (Independent - Ruxley)

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## **From Cllr James Lawrence (Liberal Democrat, College Ward)**

Dear Editor,

I would like to remind readers that this consultation is to set up two parish councils, that will only manage allotments. That is the only service proposed to be provided to residents. Of the 11 allotment sites in the borough, the council currently runs only 7. Some wards for which councillors are proposed don't even have any allotments in them. Before addressing the clear ambition to further expand responsibilities and costs, as indicated by "could work with East Surrey Council in the future to undertake any services which it is agreed may be better run at a local level, such as parks, open spaces and community buildings etc." I will first focus specifically on the proposals as written.

The consultation document (appendix 4 of 9 Dec 2025 Full Council papers item 11) on pg 8 states that "the budget essentially covers" two key things: "Parish Council Administration" and "Allotments". What is not explained anywhere in that document is the fact that of the total collective cost of £1.52mil, only £0.02mil is required for the management of the 7 allotment sites. This is the only part of the precept (the new tax) that may possibly relate to the suggested ambition to "improve community engagement, local democracy, and service delivery" (pg 2 of appendix 4), and even then only for the few hundred council allotment holders. At only 1% of the proposed cost, the "local democracy" part of the extra tax is at best a rounding error on the amount you will pay.

As has been indicated, in reality it is highly unlikely that the parish precept will remain at ~£45. What is the future projection of this additional tax? We will receive no discount on our unitary council tax rates. The council's own papers (appendix 7) predict significant rises to the tune of ~£220 above the £45 for a Band D property if the three big community assets of Bourne Hall, Epsom Playhouse and the Community & Wellbeing Centre are included. Why are none of these future expectations and cost breakdowns not included in the consultation document? I will leave the reader to decide.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr James Lawrence (LibDem College)

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### **From Cllr Bernie Muir (Conservative, Horton Ward)**

Dear Editor,

The white elephant of parish councils is an exercise in self-indulgence and self-interest at vast expense to the Borough's residents.

"The proposal adds an extra, unnecessary layer of cost and local bureaucracy with little, if any, benefit, especially given that all areas WILL be represented by new Neighbourhood Area Committees comprising of your Councillors, health, police and a tailored list of local groups or individuals that serve your community — a fact not mentioned in the Consultation."

Without having determined what the Parish Councils would do, other than manage allotments thus what it would cost, other than 'considerably higher' than the initial charge, they are asking residents their view on setting up two costly councils based on effectively no, or missing, information.

The maths reveal that lack of value — The council quotes an additional cost of £44-£46 for the first year (for a Band D property) to cover the cost of maintaining allotments, despite this costing only 60p per household with the rest of the precept, some 99% of the first-year charge, going on administrative costs.

The average cost per property would actually be almost 20% higher at £53 in the first year, exceeding the figures quoted in the consultation (around £45). That is because the average property in Epsom and Ewell is Band E, not the quoted Band D figure. The actual cost in the first year would vary between £30 (Band A) and over £90 (Band H).

However, that is only the tip of the iceberg.

The council has ambitions to take on much, much greater costs, all of which would be charged to residents as an additional council tax 'precept' in future years. The first three assets being considered for transfer to the new parish councils would alone increase the average additional precept cost per property in Epsom to around £350, with costs for Epsom households varying from £198 (Band A) to over £590 (Band H, Epsom) based on the council's figures.

The council's own public report pack goes on to state 'If other community assets (e.g. country parks etc) were to be transferred, the costs would be considerably higher'. Even £590 per year could go considerably higher! All this is on top of the standard council tax charge. Whilst borough council tax rises were capped at 3% each year, there is no cap at all on parish council precepts.

Before responding to the consultation, I encourage residents to ask themselves what, specifically, the proposed parish councils are going to provide, and whether it is worth the large, increasing and uncapped costs.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Bernie Muir (Conservative Horton)  
Vice-Chairman Surrey County Council  
Surrey County Councillor — Epsom West Division  
Epsom & Ewell Borough Councillor — Horton Ward

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### **From Cllr Hannah Dalton (RA Stoneleigh) leader of the ruling Residents Associations Group on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**

Dear Editor,

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is not alone in making the decision that, as a result of Surrey local government reorganisation, there is an urgent need to review or establish Community Councils (also known as Parish or Town Councils). This work is also being undertaken by Guildford Borough Council, Mole Valley District Council, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council, Runnymede Borough Council and Surrey Heath Borough Council.

From July to October 2025, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council conducted the first resident consultation on the proposal to establish Community Councils, and 67% of respondents were supportive of the proposal. As a result of the consultation, and listening to our residents, further work has been carried out and the Council is undertaking a second and final resident consultation from December 2025 to February 2026.

It is disappointing that the Labour, Liberal Democrat, Conservative and Independent groups are seeking to derail this work and, in doing so, deny the residents of Epsom and Ewell the second consultation to make an informed decision on whether to proceed with establishing two Community Councils. To my mind, this is another example of political parties denying residents their democratic voice — which we have already seen through the cancellation of the Surrey local elections due to take place in May 2025, and more recently, through not listening to the resident voice in the consultation

on Surrey local government reorganisation, where residents were vehemently opposed to the establishment of two Unitary Councils.

The case for establishing a Community Council becomes stronger when you consider what the new East Surrey Unitary Council — which will represent a population of 551,000 — will mean for democratic representation for the residents of Epsom and Ewell.

Currently, the residents of Epsom and Ewell have 35 Borough Councillors and 5 County Councillors. Following the establishment of the East Surrey Unitary Council, this will reduce to 10 Councillors for a population of 81,000; that is a 75% decrease in democratic representation. If ever there were a compelling reason to explore introducing a local Community Council, it is this.

The key areas the second consultation is seeking residents' views on are:

- to establish two Community Councils — one for Epsom and one for Ewell
- to maintain the 14 individual wards that currently make up the Borough of Epsom and Ewell
- to propose 2 Community Councillors for each ward, elected as usual, who would all be volunteers and receive no remuneration for representing residents at a local level
- a proposed precept of around £45 a year (approximately £3.75 a month or 12p a day)

The precept would cover the new Community Councils' administration — such as employment costs, office supplies and equipment, website and IT, insurances — but more importantly, services such as planning, because the Community Council would be a statutory consultee.

This is a pragmatic approach to the proposed introduction of Community Councils, as currently we do not know how the new East Surrey Unitary Council will function.

However, it is worth noting that evidence from areas which have already undergone local government reorganisation shows that there is a critical role for Community Councils, and that the 'Neighbourhood Area Committees' being proposed by Surrey County Council, in practice, do not have the requisite powers or representation to deliver for the residents they represent.

This Epsom and Ewell Community Governance Review consultation will close at 11.59pm on Sunday 1 February 2026 and can be accessed online at:

<https://eebc.inconsult.uk/CGRproposal/consultationHome>

Paper copies of the consultation can be found at:

The Town Hall  
Bourne Hall  
Stoneleigh Library  
Epsom Library  
Ewell Court Library  
Community and Wellbeing Centre

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Hannah Dalton

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### **From Cllr Kate Chinn (Labour Court Ward)**

Dear Editor

I do not believe there is a need for community councils and they will cause additional costs for residents. There are far too many unknowns. The new unitary council is only obliged to pass on management of allotments which, if the Residents Association councillors get their way, would be two costly administration systems set up for a minimal service.

Alternatively, all the borough's costly and heavily subsidised venues including the Playhouse and Bourne Hall could be transferred. Both need continued costly refurbishment. Costs that would be passed on to residents.

The RA-led council are clearly pushing for two parish/community councils - one for Epsom and one for Ewell. An increase of administration from the two currently representing the borough.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Kate Chinn