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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Epsom’s Local Plan: Councillor claims public kept in the dark

26 November 2026



Dear Editor,

Your article ‘Another Local Plan? Epsom Councillors vote to begin again’ reveals a game of musical chairs where Local Plans meet Local Govt Reorganisation.

The farce deepens because a consultation on Main Modifications to the Plan (which is currently underway) has not included crucial information: What the Inspector told the Council it needed to do to make the Plan sound. This begs the question – how do consultees assess the efficacy of the Council’s response in the schedule of Main Modifications without knowing the Inspector’s thoughts?

The existence of extensive correspondence between the Inspector and the Council was revealed, but not shared, in a report to the Licensing & Planning Policy Committee on September 22nd. Unlike previous exchanges. On October 1st, in my capacity as a member of the Council and the relevant policy committee, I asked for all Local Plan correspondence between the Inspector and the Council following examination hearings on July 2nd.

Bizarrely these were treated as a form of FOI request, specifically an Environmental Information Request (EIR). I was then told the statutory deadline for a response would be extended and I finally received the information on November 3rd. This was a week after the October 26th Extraordinary Council Meeting at which the Mayor’s casting vote sent the Main Modifications to a public consultation.

The disclosure reveals dozens of items, many redacted, pointing to yet further documents which have still not been shared. A reasonable person might think that after an examination hearing the Inspector would give clear, published instructions on what needs to be done to make the Local Plan sound. However, private correspondence reveals lengthy negotiations over two months on what the Inspector would eventually agree. Negotiations which were not made public and did not involve councillors.

Consequently on November 24th, Opposition Group Leaders have written to the Inspector with our concerns. Furthermore, eight councillors acting together have requested an Extraordinary Council Meeting to table a motion which refers to the Gunning Principles that govern public consultations. The motion asks that the Council extends the consultation and ‘provide sufficient information which is available, accessible, and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response.’

We await a reply.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr **Alex Coley** (Independent Ruxley)

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Related report:

Another Local Plan? Epsom Councillors vote to begin again

Letter to the Inspector

East Surrey Council – Not Quite What We Were Promised?

26 November 2026

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Dear Sir,

The Government's decision to move to unitary councils in Surrey was partly sold to residents as making local government simpler by removing two-tier local government, which apparently is confusing for residents.

It does seem strange, therefore, that three early decisions East Surrey Council has to make are whether to introduce Neighbourhood Area Committees below East Surrey Council (ESC), whether to set up a Strategic Foundation Authority above ESC, and whether to seek the introduction of an elected mayor.

The ruling group at East Surrey Council has committed to doing all three, so two councils will eventually become four local authorities, with only two democratically elected. And all four will be paid for by the council taxpayer.

Funding is another key issue. The Government's position has been that moving to unitary councils will save money, yet the cost of local government reform in Surrey is currently estimated to be £32.5 million.

In addition, Surrey has been hit hard by the Government's Fair Funding Reforms, which will see Government grants to ESC cut by £30 million over the next couple of years. We are heading to a position where most of East Surrey Council's expenditure will have to be financed by council tax, and almost inevitably by the maximum amount possible.

It must be a priority for East Surrey councillors to ensure value for money in service provision, appoint a lean senior management structure, and use every opportunity that a fresh start provides to look at more creative and effective ways to deliver key services.

The RA and Independent Group at ESC is the third largest group and, as the leader of the group, I used the first council meeting in May to map out some key priorities for ESC.

For example, closer-to-home SEND places for East Surrey's children, and a better system for dealing with potholes, with a guarantee of a "right first time" repair.

It is important too that there is no reduction in the funding and support in kind to voluntary and charitable groups that provide some of the most important services and support to some of our most vulnerable residents.

None of these are designed to produce huge savings, but they are ways in which we, as East Surrey councillors, can show we are serious about some of the key issues that affect our residents.

Yours faithfully.

East Surrey Councillor ***Eber Kington*** (Residents Association)

Is Chantilly better governed than its twin Epsom?

26 November 2026



Dear Editor,

Thank you for reporting the visit of an Epsom municipal delegation, led by the Mayor, to Chantilly. Their programme sounded interesting and enjoyable.

That Chantilly holds 55 days of racing over 11 months makes racing at Epsom — our major claim to fame — seem rather puny. The Epsom visitors' other entertainments will make the Chantilly visitors' return visit here a bit lacking in local colour and character.

This disappointing comparison leads to three questions, all familiar bones of contention over many years:

1. Is France more or less centralised than the UK? Which country seems to be better governed?
2. Would Epsom do better under a French mayoral system? Our borough built 37 houses, I believe, last year, which

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suggests a lack of purpose or belief in the future of our borough.

3. How does France maintain its vigorous regional diversity and local character while ours is about to be squeezed to death by local government reform?

Would you be willing to let the Mayor illuminate these issues, drawing on her delegation's experience at Chantilly? It might spark an interesting correspondence.

Yours faithfully,

Edward Clay

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Related reports:

- Epsom and Ewell Mayor leads delegation to Chantilly to celebrate 30th anniversary of twinning Epsom & Ewell Times
- Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association presents Cyril Frazer Awards for 2026 Epsom & Ewell Times
- Epsom and Ewell to have three tiers of government when promised one? Epsom & Ewell Times
- Epsom & Ewell Borough Council publishes final Annual Report Epsom & Ewell Times

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East Surrey is still going ahead – so what happens next?

26 November 2026



Readers may have seen the recent national news that the Government has stopped or paused Local Government Reorganisation in several parts of England. Understandably, some people have asked me: **does this mean Surrey is stopping too?**

The simple answer is **no**. Surrey is going ahead.

The Government has confirmed that its review of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) does not affect the decision already taken for Surrey. We are further down the road: elections for the new East Surrey and West Surrey councils took place in May, and we are now working towards the new councils formally taking over on **1 April 2027**.

For us locally, East Surrey Council will bring together Epsom & Ewell, Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge, alongside the relevant services currently provided by Surrey County Council.

Until 1 April, residents should continue to use their existing councils as normal. Behind the scenes, however, there is a huge amount of work taking place.

Since being elected in May, my fellow councillors and I have been serving on the Shadow Council. In plain English, our job is to **build the new council before it takes over**. This includes bringing together services, staff, budgets, buildings and systems, while making sure essential services continue without disruption.

As the Shadow Cabinet Executive Member responsible for Adult Social Care and Health, I am particularly focused on services supporting older and Disabled people, carers and some of our residents.

We also need to be open about the **financial challenge ahead**.

The Government is changing how councils are funded, with more emphasis on levels of need and deprivation. This will mean significant financial pressures for our area over the coming years. At the same time, demand and costs are rising, particularly in adult social care and children's services.

Creating one council gives us opportunities to reduce duplication, work more efficiently and make better use of public money. But reorganisation will not magically solve every financial problem.

That is why I believe we must be completely open with residents. If difficult decisions have to be made, you deserve to know **why**, what choices we have, how much they cost and what they could mean for local services.

We must also listen. East Surrey will be a large council serving different communities. Epsom and Ewell must continue to

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have a strong local voice.

There is still a lot of work ahead between now and 1 April. I hope through these regular articles to explain what is happening in clear, plain English – the progress we are making, the challenges we face and, most importantly, **what it all means for you, your family and our wider community.**

David Buxton OBE

Shadow Councillor for Epsom West (East Surrey Council)

Shadow Cabinet Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health

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Free bus travel is a good idea; so why does it stop at 15?

26 November 2026



Dear Editor,

This August, children aged five to 15 can travel free on local buses across England. I think that's genuinely good. It makes days out cheaper, helps children get to summer activities, and might persuade a few families to leave the car at home.

But I can't quite work out why it stops at 15. And where I live, age isn't really what decides the price of a bus seat anyway.

I'm 16. I live in Epsom and travel to school in Wallington, which is in the London Borough of Sutton. I have a 16+ Zip Oyster photocard. Going to school in London, it turns out, makes no difference at all; the rule follows where you sleep, not where you study.

So here is what the same card is worth to different people. If you're 16 and live in a London borough, it gives you free bus travel. If you're 16 and live outside London, as I do, it gives you half the adult fare – about 88p a journey. And if you're 16 and have never applied for one, you tap a contactless card and pay the full £1.75.

Three 16-year-olds. Same bus, same stop. One pays nothing, one pays 88p, one pays £1.75.

Nothing in that reflects need, or distance, or what anyone's family earns. It reflects which side of the Greater London boundary you sleep on, and whether somebody remembered to tell you the card exists.

That second part bothers me most, because it's the easiest thing to fix. Some students will inevitably miss out simply because nobody has explained the system clearly enough. A benefit that depends on knowing it exists ends up helping the organised rather than the people who need it.

And the cost starts to matter more at 16 than it did at 15. At 15, most journeys are still with your family. At 16 you're travelling on your own to sixth form, a Saturday job, or a work experience placement you were told to arrange yourself. Nobody tells you that you can't apply for those things. On paper they're open to everyone. But one student can afford the journey every week and another quietly decides they can't, and from the outside that never looks like unfairness at all.

I should admit I'm arguing against my own convenience here. I have the card, and half fare is not a hardship. I'd still rather Epsom's 16-year-olds got what Sutton's get. The Greater London boundary was drawn to decide who administers what; it was never meant to decide which teenager can afford to get to an interview in Croydon. TfL buses cross it every twenty minutes.

Surrey does have its own scheme, the LINK card, which halves fares for under-20s. It's useful, it's badly advertised, and it doesn't work on TfL services – which are the buses that actually serve this town.

Of course the government has to draw a line somewhere, and August's offer was aimed at families with younger children. That's fair. Public money isn't unlimited. But 15 isn't an obvious place to stop, and a postcode isn't a principle at all.

Two things would help. Extend the August offer to everyone under 18; we're legally required to be in education or training, and most of us earn very little. And make sure every pupil in Epsom and Ewell hears about both the 16+ Zip and the LINK card before their sixteenth birthday, with a plain list of what each one covers.

Free buses this August are a good idea. I just don't think a birthday, a boundary and a form should decide who keeps them.

Yours faithfully,

Emad Rehman

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ISSN 2753-2771

Aged 16, Epsom, student at Wilson's School, Wallington

Who pays for the homes we do not build?

26 November 2026



Dear Editor,

My family moved to Epsom five years ago for many of the same reasons cited by those defending the Green Belt: the space, the schools and the feel of the town. I am 16, and I am conscious that a similar family arriving five years later might not be able to manage it.

For the past month, I have been reading the Local Plan and the objections to it. In all of this debate, I have not found the perspective of the generation it is supposedly about.

Both sides speak the language of protection. Those defending the Green Belt want to protect landscape, character and the reasons families came here in the first place. Those supporting the housing numbers want to protect the ability of younger residents to remain here. Neither is a bad-faith position, although the tone of the debate does not always reflect that.

What neither side says plainly enough is where the cost goes when a needed home is not built. It does not vanish. It comes back as a higher price, a longer commute, three adults sharing a two-bedroom flat, a 28-year-old still living in a childhood bedroom, or a teaching assistant unable to afford the borough in which she works.

Those costs often fall on people who cannot object to the plan because they do not live here yet. They have no residents' association and they do not write to local newspapers. Their silence is not consent. It is absence.

I am 16, so I will not pretend to know the correct number of houses. But I would put the same question to both campaigns: if your proposal is fair, name the people who will bear its cost – and say whether you have asked them.

I would rather grow up in a borough that answers that question honestly and then decides than one that wins by outlasting everyone who might have disagreed.

My family got here in time. That is exactly why I do not think the door should close behind us.

Emad Rehman,

Glyn Hall thanks Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

26 November 2026



Dear Editor,

Glyn Hall, originally gifted by local benefactor Margaret Glyn, has served generations as a place for education, connection and community activities.

However, after more than 150 years, the building has reached the end of its usable life and has been closed.

Volunteer trustees have worked tirelessly to secure funding and develop plans for a replacement hall. They had already raised significant funds, including £85,000 from local sources, but had exhausted every avenue available to obtain the remaining money needed to regenerate the site.

The trustees are delighted to confirm that Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has approved funding totalling £315,000, inclusive of the previous £85,000 award, enabling the trust to implement its approved planning permission.

The trustees said they were extremely grateful to council members for approving the award and recognising the positive

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ISSN 2753-2771

impact that restoring this historic community facility would have on local people.

The project will now enter its next phase, and the trust is seeking additional volunteers and trustees. It particularly wishes to hear from people with experience in construction, social media or project management.

Details of the trust's forthcoming annual general meeting will be publicised shortly.

The project represents an excellent opportunity to return a much-needed community asset to public use.

Anyone able to help or support the trust should contact Matthew Anderson at mjranderson64@gmail.com.

Yours faithfully,

Matthew Anderson

Trustee Glyn Hall

Glyn Hall was erected around 1870 in Cheam Road, in the heart of Ewell Village. It was bequeathed by Margaret Glyn in 1946 for the use of Ewell residents.

In January 2024, the trustees obtained planning permission to demolish the existing wooden building and replace it with a new hall.

For further information, contact Matthew Anderson by email at mjranderson64@gmail.com or telephone 07801 785403.

Related reports:

Glyn Hall faces uncertain future as trustees issue urgent appeal to save Ewell landmark

Campaign to save Ewell Village's Glyn Hall

Epsom and Ewell Council's final spending spree?

Readers bemoan Council's feet-dragging on twinning Epsom with Bucha

26 November 2026



Dear Editor,

Very disappointed with Epsom and Ewell Council, this would have been a simple arrangement. I myself stayed in the borough of Bucha only a few weeks ago on my way to Odesa. I was only a few miles from the area occupied by the Russians, they were only stopped by the Ukrainians destroying the bridge. Imagine living in Epsom and enemy forces occupying Ewell killing people in the streets. Shame on the council members voting against this.

Yours faithfully,

Richard Gough

Dear Editor,

As a Ukrainian, I want to sincerely thank the people of Epsom and Ewell for everything they have done to support Ukraine over the past more than four years. Your kindness, generosity and the incredible humanitarian support you have provided have meant more than words can express.

Humanitarian aid has saved lives. But today, a statement of friendship and solidarity matters too. It tells Ukrainians that we have not been forgotten and that we are not standing alone.

The war has not become easier. Every day people continue to die, and cities continue to be attacked. We all hope this war ends in Ukraine, because if Russian aggression is not stopped here, its consequences will not stop at Ukraine's borders.

Thank you for speaking up, for raising these issues, and for continuing to stand with Ukraine. It means more to us than you may ever know.

Yours faithfully,

Natalia Pankratova

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Whose Local Plan is it anyway?

26 November 2026



Dear Editor,

Why no review?

I read with interest your article of 2 June about the recent Local Plan consultation.

Mr Brown's contention that the consultation was unconstitutional was undoubtedly correct. This is because the Local Plan documents being consulted on were required first to be 'considered and approved' by the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC) under the council's constitution.

Digging a little further into this failure of the elected councillors to review Local Plan documents indicates that this is a pervasive and deeply concerning issue.

The Local Plan is the single most important output, by the council, for the future of the borough. Given the local government reorganisation, it should also be the council's swan song; an opportunity to provide clear and positive strategic direction for the next 14 years.

How has the council gone about achieving this? There are a plethora of articles in this paper highlighting repeated failures of the Residents Association-led council to direct, review or challenge the Local Plan process over several years. This would be concerning enough on its own, but is exacerbated by not just a reluctance, but an outright refusal by Residents Association (RA) councillors to undertake the role they were elected to perform.

Reviews of Local Plan documents should have been happening frequently and as a matter of course. As they weren't, opposition councillors took the unusual step of working together to try to hold the council to account.

Motions have repeatedly been brought both to full council and to the LPPC attempting to require councillors to review Local Plan documents, but on every occasion they have been voted down by RA councillors.

There appears, to interested observers, to have been a systematic and ongoing attempt to confound any and all attempts to scrutinise the Local Plan. This has happened for several years, with the three most recent examples being:

- The request by Cllr Lawrence in the 10 March 2026 LPPC meeting to review the new Local Plan documents before they were submitted to the Inspector. The Monitoring Officer advised against allowing this request. The Chair, Cllr O'Donovan confirmed he hadn't even seen the documents being submitted but refused the request to allow the committee to review them. Cllr Reynolds encouraged the Chair to put the decision to a vote but was turned down.

- The mid-March 2026 request by Cllrs Persand, Freeman and Geleit to hold a Special meeting of the LPPC to agree to review the Local Plan documents before they were submitted to the Inspector. The Monitoring Officer delayed holding the meeting for 2 months until 19 May 2026, after the documents were submitted. The RA councillors voted not to review the documents.

- Given the urgency of the matter and the failure of the LPPC to perform its role, on 11 June 2026, a request was made by Cllrs Persand, Freeman, Geleit, Ames, Howells, Lawrence, McCormick and Goldman for an Extraordinary Council Meeting. The motion was to require the LPPC to review the Local Plan consultation documents, and if appropriate approve them, in accordance with the constitution. The meeting should clearly

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> have been scheduled by the Monitoring Officer to occur prior to the 2 July public hearings on the consultation documents. The Monitoring Officer has instead delayed the meeting until 21 July and tagged it onto the pre-existing council meeting, after the consultation hearing has been completed.

The councillors mentioned above, from all opposition parties, should be applauded for their tenacity and their willingness repeatedly to stand up for the residents they represent.

Residents are asking why the Monitoring Officer appears to repeatedly obfuscate, delay and obstruct, and why RA councillors are not taking the lead, or at least supporting, attempts by opposition councillors to execute the roles they were elected to perform.

Given all the above, it perhaps should come as no surprise that the RA was all but wiped out in the recent East Surrey Council elections. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the RA should take the opportunity to do what they should have been doing all along, actively engaging with, and reviewing the Local Plan documents. They should be ensuring the documents are factually correct (which in many instances they have not been), that they align with the council's strategy and that they represent the views of the borough's residents.

This is the RA's last chance either to redeem its reputation and leave the door open to a future return to council membership, or to leave residents bitterly resenting the final failures of the group so many of us voted for over the years, as they hammer nails into the coffin of the RA group's legacy.

Whose Local Plan is it anyway?

The Local Plan is written by the council and is the responsibility of the council throughout its drafting and execution.

Since the examination started last summer, council officers and councillors have repeatedly distanced themselves from the changes officers have specifically proposed to the inspector. These council proposals include building on extensive additional areas of green belt land such as Downs Farm, Priest Hill, Burgh Heath Road and Cuddington Glade.

Having actively put these sites forward, officers and councillors have denied responsibility, repeatedly arguing that it is 'the inspector's Local Plan' and that they have no say in what happens.

It is worth highlighting that the government guidance says quite the opposite. When reviewing the council's Local Plan, the government is at pains to clarify that:

'The Inspector will always bear in mind that **the plan belongs to the LPA**, and subject to the duty to ensure the plan's soundness, will not seek to impose his or her own views on its vision or its content.'

(The 'LPA' is the Local Planning Authority, in this case Epsom and Ewell Borough Council).

It couldn't be much clearer, councillors, the plan is your responsibility before, during and after the examination. If you choose not to review proposals to put in deeply unpopular sites for development, you remain responsible for the proposals and accountable to residents for them.

Will the RA councillors perform the role they were elected to perform and that the constitution requires, or will they continue to shirk that responsibility? Time will tell, but that time is running out.

Yours faithfully,

Ben Cronin

Cheam Road

Epsom and Ewell

Related reports:

Fresh Local Plan row as residents challenge legality of latest Epsom and Ewell consultation

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Hopes and thanks of a new Councillor in Epsom

26 November 2026



Roy Deadman Reflects on Election and the Road Ahead

Dear Editor,

I am writing with a full heart and a great deal of gratitude following my election as councillor for the Epsom Town & Downs ward, and to give a short update on the progress and challenges ahead. To every resident who placed their trust in me, thank you. It means more than I can properly put into words.

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Over the past six months of canvassing, I had the privilege of hundreds of conversations on doorsteps right across the ward. Those conversations were the most valuable part of the entire campaign. Residents shared their personal stories and experiences with me, from the frustration of persistent potholes and the importance of protecting our precious green spaces, to concerns around local planning decisions.

I heard about the need for safer, better-lit walkways that properly connect our town, and the challenges facing families trying to access local SEND support. Public transport came up repeatedly, with many residents, particularly those in Langley Vale, calling for more frequent and better-connected services. Road safety and speeding through residential streets was a consistent theme, as were concerns about anti-social behaviour, e-scooters, and inconsiderate moped parking.

The Chalk Pit and the importance of holding firm on the agreements in place was raised by a number of residents, and I want to assure you that this remains very much on my radar. People also spoke passionately about maintaining funding for the brilliant local groups and organisations that already make Epsom and Ewell such a great place to live, and that support must continue as we navigate the significant changes ahead.

Now that the election is over, I want to be very clear: staying connected to this community is not optional, it is essential. In due course my fellow councillors and I will be arranging local meetups, and we will be back out on the doorstep listening and asking for feedback. Representing this ward is a privilege, and we intend to earn that trust every single day.

I want to give a very special thank you to Helen Maguire and her entire team. Their support throughout this campaign was extraordinary. Helen ran a professional, values-driven campaign and set a standard that we will all carry with us into our roles as councillors.

What made it particularly special was that Helen did not just support from a distance. She was out canvassing alongside us in the evenings and at weekends, making sure that as a team we were genuinely listening to residents and placing their views at the centre of everything we do. The trust she placed in us as candidates, and now as councillors, was humbling and deeply motivating.

I also want to thank the incredible volunteers who delivered thousands of leaflets, supported our canvassing, showed up to events, and were there at the end of some very long evenings knocking on doors, sometimes with a well-earned pint to follow. Your dedication was the backbone of this campaign.

And to my fellow Liberal Democrat candidates, now councillors, I want to say how proud I am to have stood alongside each of you. Over these months, we have built something genuinely special, a team bound together by trust, hard work, shared values, mutual respect, and a real desire to do what is right for the communities we all call home. We have also, crucially, managed to make each other smile along the way.

Looking ahead, we face significant challenges. By 31 March 2027, we will see the formation of the East Surrey Unitary Council, as Surrey County Council is divided into two new authorities, East and West, with the borough and district councils merging into the new East Council. As Shadow Councillors, we must ensure that on vesting day, local services continue without disruption. The residents of Epsom and Ewell should feel nothing but continuity and, in time, genuine improvement.

I also want us to recognise the officers, the dedicated employees across the councils involved in this transition. Their combined skills and experience will be absolutely vital to the success of the new Unitary Council, and we must support and value them throughout this process.

I am pleased to share that I will be sitting on the East Surrey Authority Employment Committee, where I hope to play a constructive role in making this transition work well for everyone.

The work has already begun in earnest. There have been local discussions and planning meetings with the Liberal Democrat Epsom and Ewell team, as well as wider meetings involving all 40 Liberal Democrat councillors representing East Surrey, laying the groundwork and ensuring we fully understand the challenges ahead.

We recently held a full councillor induction day, where I had the pleasure of meeting colleagues across all parties who will help form this new team. I was proud to be present at the first inaugural full Shadow East Surrey Council meeting, where we elected senior roles, cabinet positions and committee members, building the structures we need to move forward at pace.

The mix of skills, different backgrounds and wealth of experience amongst the shadow councillors has put us in a strong starting position to deliver on our objectives.

This is also, I believe, a unique opportunity. A fresh start means we can shape how this new council works, how it manages its budget, and how it delivers services. I am determined that we bring real efficiencies, hold outsourced contractors firmly to account against their contractual obligations, and negotiate future contracts that deliver genuine value for our residents.

Until midnight on 31 March 2027 we will be Shadow Councillors focusing on what I have outlined above. Until then we will support, where possible, the current councillors of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and continue to listen to residents in preparation for the handover of responsibility to East Surrey.

Finally, thank you to my family and friends. The extra childcare, school runs, family dinners missed, and the many hugs when I needed them most — without that steadfast support, the campaign would have been so much harder. I am deeply grateful.

I look forward to getting to work for Epsom Town & Downs. This is just the beginning.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Roy Deadman

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ISSN 2753-2771

Epsom Town & Downs Ward

East Surrey Unitary Council

A motion in note or a note in motion?

26 November 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:

May's heat infuses Epsom and Ewell Council Chamber with leadership closely contested

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Unitary in name, unitary in nature?

26 November 2026

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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Dear Editor

Your criticisms of the silencing of the newly elected Liberal Democrats Councillors by our local MP (8th 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 7th 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)

Related reports:

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Ex-local LibDem leader explains part of her departure

26 November 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.

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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

26 November 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

26 November 2026

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

Dear Editor,

Your article of 26th 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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