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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Banned fan cheers on Epsom and Ewell FC from tree

10 August 2025



A lifelong supporter of Epsom & Ewell Football Club has taken to watching matches from a nearby tree after receiving what he describes as an “unwarranted” lifetime ban from the club’s ground.

Richard Lambert, 58, has followed the ninth-tier side for nearly 44 years. The ban was imposed in January following a long-running series of disputes with the club’s committee.

Mr Lambert told the BBC he believes the suspension was triggered after he altered the name of his personal X (formerly Twitter) account to appear as if it were the club’s official account. He has been a frequent critic of the club’s management on social media and on his personal website, with some posts directed at individual committee members.

Since April, the BBC says it has approached Epsom & Ewell three times for details about the ban. The club has declined to discuss the matter beyond stating: “We have had a number of issues with this supporter over the years. We do not want to discuss this any further. The matter has been dealt with.”

A letter from the club to Mr Lambert, seen by the BBC, cites only a breach of a previous agreement over use of social media. It referred to an “indefinite” ban, but the club has since told the BBC it is now for life. Mr Lambert says he has not been officially informed of this change.

Mr Lambert, who first attended a match as a 15-year-old in 1981, has served as the club’s historian for two decades, producing statistical archives and match reports. “All I want to do is see my team play,” he said, “but I also want to see the culture at our club change towards valuing its supporters.”

Lifetime bans from football stadiums are rare and generally imposed only for serious offences or criminal acts, which is not alleged in this case. Clubs, however, are entitled to refuse entry to anyone without giving a reason.

The Football Supporters’ Association told the BBC it had attempted to mediate between Mr Lambert and the club but received no response from the club’s committee. “At non-league level, fans are the lifeblood of the game,” said the FSA’s Garreth Cummins. “In a situation like this, we don’t see that either side is winning.”

Mr Lambert initially watched games from outside the perimeter fence but says that after the club stationed security to move him on, he began climbing a tree for a better view. He ended last season 30ft up overlooking King George’s Field in Surbiton. This season, the Salts have returned to Leg O’Mutton Field in Cobham, sharing with Cobham FC, and Mr Lambert has found a lower tree with a full view of the pitch.

Founded in 1918 as Epsom Juniors, Epsom & Ewell’s greatest moment came in 1975 when they reached the inaugural FA Vase final at Wembley, losing 2–1 to Hoddesdon Town. Last season they lifted the Southern Combination Challenge Cup, defeating Abbey Rangers 1–0 in the final. The Salts averaged around 90 spectators at home league matches in 2024–25.

“If the ban stays in place for life,” Mr Lambert told the BBC, “then I’ll be climbing this tree for the rest of my life – or at least for as long as I’m physically able to.”

Richard Lambert sitting in a tree looking on to the pitch where Epsom & Ewell play, with his back to the camera and the pitch in the background

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Epsom Mother and Daughter join British Army together

10 August 2025

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A mother and daughter from Epsom have completed Army entry training within weeks of each other, marking the start of their respective military careers.

Sherene De Stadler, 40, will join the Army Reserve with the Grenadier Guards, while her daughter Chloe, 17, has graduated from the Army Foundation College in Harrogate.

Chloe was among 750 Junior Soldiers taking part in a parade at Harrogate to mark the end of months of basic training. The programme included military skills, fitness, education and a two-week battle camp and tactical exercise to prepare recruits for Army life.

Having completed phase one training, Chloe will now move on to trade training in her chosen specialism. She hopes to join the Army Air Corps as ground crew, aiming to work with Apache helicopters as part of the rear crew team.

She enlisted shortly after sitting her GCSEs at Epsom High School. “Joining the Army always interested me because of all it has to offer,” Chloe said. “I am grateful for the opportunities it will give my future career and the challenges I will need to overcome to get there.”

Over 5,000 family members attended the parade, including Sherene. “It felt amazing knowing my mum was in the audience, knowing what I’ve gone through to be on that parade square,” Chloe said. “It’s so nice to be able to talk to her about Army life because she understands and can relate to it. I hope my mum is as proud of me as I am of her.”

Sherene, who completed her own basic training weeks earlier, said: “There’s definitely been loads of tears from myself and her father today. Chloe has quit projects before when they’ve been hard, so I’m very proud of her for going through the challenges of Army training and enjoying it.”

Chloe fought to get time off to attend Sherene’s passing out parade earlier this year. “It’s very different from watching your daughter graduate from university,” Sherene said. “We’ve completed training so close together that we both have a unique mother-daughter bond that not many people get to have.”

Chloe’s advice to any young person considering the Army is: “Try your hardest and do not let other people get into your head.”

The Senior Inspecting Officer at the Harrogate parade was Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Roly Walker, with former England football manager Sir Gareth Southgate as guest of honour.

The Army Foundation College takes two cohorts of Junior Soldiers each year, offering either a 49-week course or a shorter 23-week course.

For more information, resources and how to join junior training at AFC Harrogate click here.

Epsom & Ewell Community Fund Seeks New Chair

10 August 2025

The *Epsom & Ewell Community Fund* is a philanthropic fund that provides financial support to local charities and projects across the borough.

As Chair, your role is to lead a Fund Panel made up of individuals with experience in serving the local community. The Fund is an ‘area fund’ under the umbrella of the Community Foundation for Surrey.

The Epsom & Ewell Community Fund maintains and builds assets in two parts:

1. **Grants Fund** – for immediate grant giving.
2. **Endowment Fund** – an investment fund for future generations, with the investment income used for making

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grants.

Responsibilities of the Fund Panel:

- Raising philanthropic donations from local high-net-worth individuals, businesses, and other sources.
- Deciding which local charitable organisations or projects should receive grants.
- Managing the strategic development and growth of the Fund.

Ideal candidates will bring:

- Experience of leading a team of volunteers.
- A passion to improve the lives of local people, especially those experiencing disadvantage.
- An understanding and/or experience of the voluntary sector.
- Experience in fundraising, philanthropic giving, or event organisation.
- A strategic vision.
- Strong networking skills across the local community.
- Professional experience in areas such as marketing, communications, fundraising, events, or business networking.

There are currently eight members of the Fund Panel. Meetings are held approximately four times a year, either in person or online. A representative from the Community Foundation usually attends to provide advice and support.

While this is an unpaid, voluntary position, the opportunity to help improve the lives of individuals and communities across the borough is deeply rewarding.

You can find out more about the Epsom & Ewell Community Fund at:
Epsom and Ewell Community Fund — Community Foundation for Surrey

For more information, contact **Chris Frost** at
chrisfrost810@btinternet.com or **07516 024999**

The deadline for applications is 5pm, Friday 19th September 2025.

Surrey town going to the dogs with 24/7 gambling casino?

10 August 2025



A budding Surrey casino has applied for a 24/7 gambling licence despite local opposition. Golden Slots (Southern) Limited has asked for a 24/7 gambling licence for an adult gaming centre in the former Barclays bank building on Church Street, Ashford.

Spelthorne Borough Council has refused planning permission three times for the gaming centre- but was eventually overruled at appeal in April 2025.

The government planning inspector green lit the scheme but the approval came with conditions: the 24-hour opening hours originally proposed were reduced to 9am-11pm and requirements were placed on sound insulation and managing potential late night disturbances.

The applicant’s agent said: “Irrespective of whether a premises licence is granted to operate 24/7 my client does not intend to breach any planning condition on opening hours.”

The licencing application states “the premises will be open 24/7” and states there is no restriction on opening times for adult gaming centres. According to the council, the adult gaming centre would still have to comply with planning conditions even if a 24-hour licence was granted. The discrepancy regarding opening hours can be dealt with at the sub-committee hearing.

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Spelthorne councillors voted to support a national campaign urging the Government to modernise gambling laws at a full council meeting on July 17.

The motion proposed by Cllr Harry Boparai and seconded by Cllr Katherine Rutherford calls for councils to be granted powers to implement stronger safeguards to better protect communities from gambling-related harm and to work with local health and voluntary sector partners to signpost residents to gambling addiction support and education initiatives.

The gambling licence application details an electronic lock will be used between 10pm-8am with the door locked during these hours and opened by a staff member when a customer wants to enter the casino.

The maglock will also be used when the machines are being emptied and refloated when the premises will be closed, the application said.

The application reads: “At least two members of staff working on site at any given time on the basis of a maximum of eight customers, if the numbers increase then an additional member of staff will be used for busier periods.”

Proposed design layouts of the casino show 42 seats around the edge of the premises, including a kiosk/ customer service desk with 20 seats. The number and type of adult gaming machines have not been included in the licence application.

The application also includes a local gambling risk assessment outlining how the operator plans to minimise harm to children, vulnerable people and the wider community.

Mitigation measures include 24-hour CCTV, staff training, a ‘Think 25’ age verification policy and access to self-exclusion tools for customers.

The risk assessment acknowledges the site’s proximity to schools, care homes, ATMs and existing gambling premises but insists there is a low risk of harm because of the proposed safeguards.

The application read: “Golden Slots is an established operator that has held an Operating Licence since January 2016 without any enforcement action taken against it. It operates other sites in Milton Keynes, Haringey, Cricklewood and Northampton.”

Residents can comment on the application on the council’s website until August 27. Police and public health officials can also submit comments.

Plans submitted to turn the vacant bank into an 24/7 adult gaming centre (image Google)

Asylum hotel tension mounts in Surrey

10 August 2025



The leader of Spelthorne Borough Council has again written to the Home Office, demanding the government to abandon controversial plans to use Stanwell Hotel exclusively for single male asylum seekers.

The Home Office announced on August 1 it was temporarily pausing the scheme. But it has not been abandoned.

In her second letter on the matter, this time addressed to the Minister of State for Border Security and Asylum, Cllr Joanne Sexton warned the Home Office there could be “further escalation within the community” if this “urgent and significant” issue is not seen to.

She wrote: “I am writing to you to register heightened community concern over the potential consequences of the proposed changes and the impact they will have on Stanwell Village.”

The renewed letter comes just days after hundreds of people protested outside the hotel near Heathrow Airport. Dozens of signs were held stating ‘Just say no’ and people were chanting outside the hotel.

So far two people have been arrested during the protests, one on suspicion of attempted arson and another on suspicion of “conspiracy to commit violent disorder and aggravated trespass”.

Councillors and Spelthorne MP Lincoln Jopp have also expressed disappointment at the situation, urging the Home Office to listen to the community.

The Home Office have since paused the plans but Cllr Sexton has urged for a meeting to be arranged with herself and the Labour Group Leader, Cllr Jon Button, in whose ward the hotel is located.

In her first letter on July 25, Cllr Sexton had warned the Home Office has caused “alarm” in the community and is completely inappropriate for the area.

She said the decision would undo months of successful integration and was made without any proper consultation with the council or residents.

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A Home Office spokesperson said: “The government is reducing expensive hotel use as part of a complete overhaul of the asylum system.

“From over 400 asylum hotels open in summer 2023, costing almost £9m a day, there are now less than 210, and we want them all closed by the end of this Parliament.

“We will continue to work closely with community partners across the country, and discuss any concerns they have, as we look to fix this broken system together. The security of the local communities within which hotels are located will always be our paramount concern.”

Image: Stanwell Hotel protest on July 31. (Credit: Sam Jennings/ Facebook) Permission for use.

Almost any listening environment on Earth coming to Surrey

10 August 2025



A new national audio hub featuring world-first acoustic facilities is being built at the University of Surrey, thanks to £2.2 million in funding from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). The facilities will allow researchers to simulate almost any listening environment on Earth, from a quiet living room or modern office to a vast concert hall, cathedral or bustling city street.

At the heart of AURORA³ (Anechoic and Universal Research Observation Rooms for Audio, Acoustics & AI) will be two world-class audio environments: a state-of-the-art anechoic chamber with a spherical loudspeaker array and a first-of-its-kind variable acoustics room capable of adjusting both reverberation time and physical volume at the push of a button. AURORA³ will be open to researchers from both academia and industry across the UK and globally, as well as to Surrey staff and students.

Professor Enzo De Sena, Director of the Institute of Sound Recording at the University of Surrey, and Fellow of the Surrey Institute for People-Centred AI, said:

“AURORA³ will create a national hub for excellence in sound and AI, allowing researchers to generate reproducible data, test innovations in controlled and lifelike environments, and shape technologies that benefit society.”

The initiative aims to unite the Audio, Acoustics and AI (A³) research community and fuel breakthroughs in sound technology by enabling more accurate modelling of the physical and perceptual phenomena involved in real-world hearing. AURORA³ will pave the way for voice assistants and remote communications that are more robust to noise and reverberation, more immersive Virtual and Augmented Reality experiences for entertainment and virtual prototyping, and smarter hearing aid devices that better understand and adapt to the acoustic scene.

AURORA³ will be hosted at Surrey’s Institute of Sound Recording – part of the School of Arts, Humanities and Creative Industries – and co-led with the University’s Centre for Vision, Speech and Signal Processing (CVSSP). The facilities will also work in collaboration with the Surrey Institute for People-Centred AI, the CoSTAR National Lab, and is backed by a consortium of 18 partners and 12 key users, including the BBC, Meta, KEF, Imperial College London, the University of Cambridge, and non-profits such as the Royal National Institute for Deaf People and the Institute of Acoustics.

Professor Enzo De Sena continued:

“Combined with the UK’s deep AI talent pool and rapidly expanding computing capacity, AURORA³ provides the missing facility for audio data capture, placing the UK at the centre of global audio and acoustics research.”

Image: Professor Enzo and the AURORA logo: credit Surrey University

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Box Hill teacher with naked boy interest struck off

10 August 2025

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A teacher has been struck off and banned from the profession after being found with hundreds of indecent images of children and a search history looking for naked young boys. Nicholas Heuvel worked at Box Hill School Trust in Mickleham, Dorking from September 1997 before resigning in 2017.

The school was a private boarding and day school until it merged with Reigate Grammar School and became RGS Surrey Hills in 2025.

Between January 2016 and January 2018, Mr Heuvel had up to 224 indecent images of children on his phone, including at least one of the most extreme kind. He also admitted to searching for terms including ‘little boy nudists’ and ‘young boy speedos’, between 22 October 2017 and 23 October 2017, and was given a police caution in 2021.

The Teacher Regulation Agency rejected Mr Heuvel’s claim that he wasn’t sexually motivated, finding no plausible innocent explanation and, on the balance of probabilities, that he was seeking gratification.

The panel, which concluded its findings on July 15 this year, said Mr Heuvel’s viewing and searching for significant numbers of indecent images of children over a lengthy period of time were relevant to his position as a teacher. They said it amounted to serious misconduct and fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

There was also a lack of any evidence that Mr Heuvel made any effort to report the images – which he would have known he needed to do by virtue of his role as a teacher and the safeguarding training he would have received.

David Oatley, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education, said that the period of time with which Mr Heuvel used specific search terms to access indecent images of children was a significant factor and that the risk of repetition was high due to Mr Heuvel’s lack of insight and or remorse into his actions and the impact that his actions had on children.

Mr Oatley said: “Mr Nicholas James Heuvel is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children’s home in England. “Furthermore, in view of the seriousness of the allegations found proved against him, I have decided that Mr Heuvel shall not be entitled to apply for restoration of his eligibility to teach.

Hayley Robinson, headteacher of RGS Surrey Hills, formerly Box Hill School, said: ‘We very much support the decision of the Teaching Regulation Agency to regard the safety of children as the highest priority in our profession. “We note that Nicholas Heuvel was struck off for matters unconnected with allegations about his behaviour at Box Hill School and relate to the years 2017-18, nearly a decade ago. RGS Surrey Hills is now a member of the prestigious Reigate Grammar School group of schools, where safeguarding and pupil safety and wellbeing is at the centre of everything we do.”

Box Hill School before it merged to become RGS Surrey Hills (image Google)

Water voles return to Ewell

10 August 2025



Once extinct in the county, the much-loved water vole has today (30th July) made an historic return to the Upper Hogsmill in Epsom & Ewell. This milestone is the result of a pioneering wetland restoration project led by the South East Rivers Trust (SERT) and reintroduction project by rewilding organisation Citizen Zoo, with support from Wildwood Trust, Natural England Species Recovery Programme, Thames Water and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.

Around 50 water voles were released onto the Hogsmill river and Chamber Meads wetland this morning at a celebratory event. This was the culmination of many years of work by the South East Rivers Trust, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Citizen Zoo, and partners to restore the river and create the new wetland habitat. The return of this endangered species marks a major milestone for Surrey’s biodiversity and one of the most exciting rewilding projects in the region.

“Water voles were once a familiar sight on the Hogsmill, but due to habitat loss and invasive predators, they died out. Now, after years of dedicated river restoration work, and the creation of the flagship wetland at Chamber Mead, as well

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ISSN 2753-2771

as extensive monitoring by a band of dedicated local volunteers-, we're thrilled to have brought them back to the upper Hogsmill in Surrey," said **Dr Bella Davies**, CEO of the South East Rivers Trust.

The **Wildwood Trust**, based in Kent and Devon, is one of the UK's leading centres for conservation breeding, and bred 50 water voles through its expert captive breeding programme for release on the upper Hogsmill river. Wildwood has played a key role in restoring water vole populations across the UK.

"The UK's biodiversity is facing a critical decline – putting our ecosystems, food security, and climate resilience at risk," said **Tyrone Capel**, Conservation Officer at Wildwood Trust. "Ambitious rewilding projects like this are central to our mission: returning nature to the places it once thrived. We're proud to support this initiative by breeding water voles for release along the Hogsmill and ultimately reversing the near 20 year extinction of Water voles in Surrey."

The creation of the **Chamber Mead wetlands** and river restoration work undertaken by SERT has improved conditions on the Hogsmill and transformed the area into an ideal habitat for water voles. This work forms part of SERT's broader vision to revive this rare urban chalk stream and inspire nature recovery in towns and cities.

Citizen Zoo, a rewilding organisation that has delivered a previous successful water vole release along the Hogsmill further downstream in Kingston, led on the reintroduction. The team is now calling for local volunteers to support ongoing monitoring of the population.

"This is not just a win for water voles—it's a flagship moment for urban river restoration across the UK," said **Elliot Newton**, -Director of Rewilding at Citizen Zoo. "With the help of local people, we're giving this species a real chance to thrive again."

"We are deeply committed to protecting and nurturing habitats that help biodiversity flourish, and we are honoured that the Upper Hogsmill River in our borough has been chosen as the second release site for the reintroduction of water voles." said **Councillor Liz Frost**, Chair of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Environment Committee. "They will be the first water voles living in the wild in Surrey for over 20 years. This milestone reflects the strength of our partnerships to create the right conditions for these once-extinct animals to thrive and reflects our borough's dedication to managing biodiversity and creating resilient ecosystems that play a role in tackling climate change."

Water voles—made famous as Ratty in *The Wind in the Willows*—are one of the UK's fastest-declining mammals, having disappeared from 94% of their former range. Their return to Surrey is both a symbolic and ecological milestone.

Wild Wood Trust

Leatherhead railway station gets access upgrade

10 August 2025



A major upgrade to Leatherhead railway station has officially opened, marking what local MP Helen Maguire has called a "crucial step" in the campaign to make rail travel more accessible across Surrey.

The improvements, delivered through the Department for Transport's Access for All programme, include the installation of two 16-person lifts and a new footbridge linking both platforms. The £6.2 million project also included platform widening, upgraded lighting and CCTV, and enhanced ramp access. The enhancements are designed to make life easier for elderly and disabled passengers, as well as those travelling with pushchairs, bikes or heavy luggage.

The scheme was developed and delivered by Network Rail in partnership with Southern, with much of the work taking place over the past year. Prior to the upgrade, Leatherhead was nominally step-free, but passengers needing to avoid stairs had to take a lengthy, steep detour under a railway bridge outside the station to move between platforms. The new bridge and lifts provide a direct and safe route for all users, replacing what many had described as an awkward and at times treacherous alternative.

Opening the new facilities, Helen Maguire MP praised the scheme as a long-overdue improvement for passengers in the area. "I'm delighted that Leatherhead has become the latest station in my constituency with step-free access," she said. "These improvements are absolutely vital for our town, and a crucial step in making rail travel more accessible to my constituents regardless of their need."

However, the Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom and Ewell also used the occasion to highlight wider concerns about the state of the rail network in her constituency. In particular, she pointed to the reduction in the number of South Western Railway (SWR) services running to and from Waterloo since the Covid pandemic. "South Western Railways should also increase the frequency of the Waterloo service back to pre-Covid levels to ensure that passengers are not overcrowded," she said, noting that passenger numbers have increased while service levels have not kept pace.

Maguire also raised the ongoing lack of sufficient blue badge parking spaces at local stations, and the need for ticketing

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systems that are more accessible for people with visual impairments. With SWR now operating under national ownership, she said, passengers would be expecting higher standards of service. “Delays to the Arterio train rollout and extortionate ticket price rises are a worrying start,” she added. “I will keep campaigning to ensure that rail passengers in Epsom, Ewell, Ashtead and Leatherhead get a fair deal.”

Southern, which manages Leatherhead station, has also introduced cycling improvements alongside the accessibility works. A secure cycle hub with 26 spaces and a maintenance area has been installed on Platform 1, while Platform 2 now features a double-deck cycle rack with space for 32 bikes, as well as new motorbike parking. Lighting and CCTV coverage in these areas has also been upgraded.

Jenny Saunders, Customer Services Director at Southern’s parent company Govia Thameslink Railway, welcomed the improvements, saying: “Lifts benefit everyone who finds stairs a barrier, and for some disabled passengers this project has the potential to be life-changing.”

Leatherhead joins a growing list of stations to receive Access for All funding, with similar projects completed in recent months at Barnes, Herne Bay and Motspur Park. The scheme forms part of a wider national programme to modernise railway infrastructure and open up travel to all users, regardless of mobility needs.

Network Rail’s Sussex Route Director Lucy McAuliffe said: “These upgrades have removed a significant barrier to travel at Leatherhead. We’re proud to be making a difference for passengers who, for too long, have had to navigate difficult routes to use our railway.”

While the transformation at Leatherhead station represents a clear step forward, campaigners and passengers alike will be watching closely to see whether service levels and surrounding facilities are brought up to the same standard.

Image: MP Helen Maguire opens Leatherhead upgraded railway station

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Male only asylum Surrey hotel “shock”

10 August 2025



A Surrey council leader has said she was “shocked” to learn of Home Office proposals to house exclusively male asylum seekers in a hotel in a village.

In a strongly worded letter to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Spelthorne Borough Council (SBC) leader Joanne Sexton expressed “serious concerns” regarding changes to plans for The Stanwell Hotel on the villages Town Lane.

SBC said it had previously approved for families and single women to be accommodated at the venue but the new plans would mean relocating the current families and women and replacing them with men.

The Home Office said it wants to close all hotels by the end of Parliament and will “continue to work closely with community partners”.

Cllr Sexton said the existing group of families at the hotel were “integrating well and building community ties. This abrupt change risks undermining all of that”.

In her letter to the Home Office, the leader said the council is “determined to avoid circumstances that could lead to civil unrest”. Describing the potential upheaval as an “adult male intensification”, Cllr Sexton added she is “alarmed about the potential consequences of the proposed changes and the impact they will have”.

A council spokesperson added that, while Spelthorne had a history of supporting asylum seekers including both Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, it still expects to be properly consulted and involved in decisions that significantly impact the local area.

SBC is urging the government to listen to the concerns of the local authority and the community, and is calling on the Home Office to immediately reconsider and consult on the way forward.

A Home Office spokesperson said: “The government is reducing expensive hotel use as part of a complete overhaul of the asylum system.

“From over 400 asylum hotels open in summer 2023, costing almost £9m a day, there are now less than 210.

“We will continue to work closely with community partners across the country, and discuss any concerns they have, as we look to fix this broken system together. The security of the local communities within which hotels are located will always be our paramount concern.”

The Home Office has a legal obligation to support asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute by providing appropriate support, which usually includes accommodation.

Outside of The Stanwell Hotel, Stanwell, Staines. (Credit: Google Street View)

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Surrey tops UK hydrogen bus league

10 August 2025



Surrey County Council has invested over £16m in 34 zero emission hydrogen buses to ensure the county's bus service is cleaner and greener.

Over the last few months, 11 double decker buses have gone into service to join the 23 single decker hydrogen buses which have been serving Surrey residents since autumn last year.

The buses were built in the UK by Wrightbus and are run by bus operator Metrobus, which now has a total of 54 hydrogen buses making it the largest zero emission hydrogen bus fleet in the UK.

The single deck buses can operate for 600 miles before they need refuelling. Refuelling takes less than 10 minutes and they do not need to be refuelled or recharged throughout the day, offering more time on Surrey's roads serving passengers.

The hydrogen buses are operating in the following areas:

Single deckers:

Fastway route 100: Redhill – East Surrey Hospital – Salfords – Horley – Gatwick Airport – Crawley
Routes 430 & 435: Merstham – Redhill – East Surrey Hospital – Woodhatch – Reigate
Double deckers:

Routes 420, 460 & 480: **Epsom** – Preston – Tadworth – Banstead – Sutton – Lower Kingswood – Reigate – Redhill – East Surrey Hospital – Salfords – Horley A23 – Gatwick Airport – Crawley.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said: "I am delighted that all 34 of our new hydrogen buses are now serving on Surrey's roads. It is great to be partnered with likeminded Metrobus who are also committed to providing sustainable travel options.

"I couldn't be prouder that over half of the buses we have significantly invested in, make up the largest hydrogen bus fleet in the UK and the benefits this will bring for our residents.

"Our continuous investment in our bus network has contributed to almost 27 million bus passenger journeys made in Surrey last year. And over 14,500 residents aged 20 and under are benefitting from the Surrey LINK card which offers discounted bus travel around the county."

Ed Wills, Managing Director, Metrobus, said: "We are delighted to be rolling out an additional 34 new British-built hydrogen buses on to Surrey's streets, adding to the 20 already in operation, making it the largest hydrogen bus fleet in the UK. These buses are an excellent example of what can be achieved through partnership working. Together, we put sustainability and the transport needs of local people first."

The single deck buses use the latest generation of Ballard fuel cell which uses an average 6.2kg of hydrogen per 100km. CO2 savings – hydrogen buses are zero emissions at the tail pipe and use green hydrogen.

Former Surrey teacher avoids ban from profession

10 August 2025



A former science teacher and head of year at a Surrey private school has avoided a ban from the profession despite sending 'sexually explicit' messages to three colleagues.

Leishan Silva, 44, was sacked from Downsend School in Leatherhead following an internal investigation into complaints

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ISSN 2753-2771

by three female staff about inappropriate and persistent behaviour.

He later admitted to the allegations during a private misconduct hearing held by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) on July 11.

Messages sent by Mr Silva were categorised as “sexually motivated” by the TRA. He sent one colleague messages like “f*** me, you look amazing”, “what’s wrong with c**, it’s natural?” and “your amazing boobs”. He also suggested he would like to see one of them wear a bikini on a school trip to a water park.

Between 2018-2023, Mr Silva pursued sexual conversations with three colleagues. The social media messages displayed what the TRA panel called “a pattern of behaviour over a sustained period”.

Despite finding Mr Silva’s actions amounted to “unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute”, the panel stopped short of recommending he should be banned from teaching.

Instead, they opted to publish the findings as a warning on the government’s website.

Also noted by the panel was Mr Silva’s “unblemished” disciplinary record and successful teaching career prior to the allegations. The panel said there was no evidence these concerns were brought to Mr Silva’s attention at an earlier stage.

His attention was drawn to these concerns retrospectively, so his poor conduct could not have been addressed earlier.

When the allegations were made by the three staff members, Downsend School launched an internal investigation, leading to a disciplinary hearing which resulted in Mr Silva being sacked from the school.

In mitigation, the panel noted Mr Silva had expressed remorse and insight regarding the harm and embarrassment he has caused to his female colleagues. He had also written apology letters to each of the colleagues. Mr Silva had told the panel that difficult personal circumstances at the time may have affected his judgment.

In isolation, the interactions with a colleague could be categorised as a ‘low level concern’ according to the TRA panel. But taken together, the panel said the messages showed a pattern of behaviour over a sustained period of time.

The report said: “Therefore, the cumulative effect of this repeated behaviour led to the panel’s determination that Mr Silva’s case amounted to unacceptable professional conduct.”

Concluding, the secretary of state said: “The publication of the findings made would be sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that were not acceptable and that the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.”

Stock image of empty classroom. (Credit: kieurope/ Pixabay)

Busy Epsom and Ewell Borough Council next meets December

10 August 2025



At a busy half-hour meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council on 22nd July, councillors confronted some of the borough’s most pressing issues, including the future of Horton Cemetery, the lack of social housing, and the need to reinvigorate scrutiny of Council actions.

Calls to Honour the Dead at Horton Cemetery

Cllr **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) raised a poignant question about the fate of those buried in the long-neglected Horton Cemetery. “My belief is that the culture and heritage of having the Epsom cluster – five large Victorian institutions in which people lived and died – should be remembered,” she said. “9,000 people died and are buried in a cemetery in the borough. Will the Chair of Community and Wellbeing do something towards helping remember the people who died there and respecting their resting places?”

Responding, Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) said he shared her sympathies. “It’s a place that we should remember and celebrate,” he said. “If I can do anything to address the concerns that the councillor raised, I’ll do so.”

Social Housing: “Three Houses in Five Years is Derisory”

Cllr Chinn also delivered a sharp rebuke of the borough’s performance on affordable housing. “It’s not going to happen until this Council starts building homes for social rent,” she declared. “Can we have all the different departments working towards finally building some homes for social rent within the borough? Three houses in five years is derisory.”

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ISSN 2753-2771

Cllr Woodbridge admitted the situation was “particularly disappointing” and noted the Council is not a housing stockholder, which “limits its ability to deliver social housing directly.” However, he pointed to the local plan as a potential tool to unlock affordable development. “It won’t be enough ever, but it will be something,” he said. He added that homelessness prevention would remain a key focus, with increased use of the housing prevention grant to strengthen support teams.

Audit and Scrutiny Committee Faces Questions Over Effectiveness

Discussion over the **Audit and Scrutiny Committee’s annual report** revealed dissatisfaction with the body’s performance.

“The Audit and Scrutiny Committee has carried out limited scrutiny during the past year,” Cllr Chinn noted, quoting the report. “From my memory, that’s exactly the same last paragraph as it was a year ago. Can I please ask what will happen to change it so that next year there is some proper, true scrutiny?”

Cllr **James Lawrence** (LibDem College), former member of the committee, agreed there was room to grow: “I do think there are good changes occurring. There is a lot more to go… We would like scrutiny to go further.” He acknowledged that the committee’s new chair Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) was making good progress.

Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative – Horton) took a firmer stance, calling out enforcement as a glaring omission: “There is a rainforest of information from residents and councillors with their issue on enforcement. It has been identified as a weakness in our local authority. I don’t think this report reflects the issues that I believe exist.”

Cllr **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) raised concerns about how scrutiny is blocked by bureaucracy: “If the committee is always saying, well, this is just too much trouble… how are things going to be any different?”

Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Steve McCormick accepted the criticisms, noting that scrutiny work had been limited but improvements were underway. “We do have a work plan in place,” he said, citing a planning enforcement audit and a forthcoming September item for scrutiny. “If we do have an item to scrutinise, we will find the resource to get that done.”

Alex Coley’s Motion on Council Property Referred to Committee

Cllr **Alex Coley** (Independent – Ruxley) and Cllr **James Lawrence** (LibDem College) sought to move a motion that included proposals to urgently dispose of 66 High Street, 70 East Street and any other underperforming Council owned commercial properties, and the capital receipts to be placed in Capital Reserves.

However, the details were not debated, as the Council voted to refer the motion to the Strategy and Resoucres Committee instead.

Epsom and Ewell Property Investment Company is wholly owned by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. It has a property portfolio of £51.2m and in the year end 31st March 2024 made a profit before tax (excluding property re-valuations) of £1.366m and a dividend was paid of £614,986

The company’s strategy is to “maintain a diversified, balanced and low risk property portfolio to provide income over the long term to our ultimate shareholder, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.”

The next Full Council meeting is scheduled for 9th December 2025.

Image: Mayor Robert Leach and deputy-Mayor Lucie McIntyre of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council bow heads in prayer with the Chaplain. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council – YouTube.

12,000 years of Surrey history to spring to life

10 August 2025



Fetcham Springs, Surrey – One of Surrey’s most important archaeological sites has secured £250,000 in National Lottery Heritage Fund backing to launch a groundbreaking five-year community archaeology initiative.

The Communities at the River: The Fetcham Springs Archaeology Project, led by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU), will uncover over 12,000 years of human history while offering local people opportunities to get involved through volunteering, open days, and educational events.

Thanks to National Lottery players, the funding will expand on discoveries made in 2009 at the site, which revealed

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ISSN 2753-2771

evidence of a prehistoric hunting camp dating from the end of the last Ice Age and a high-status Roman building. The new phase of work will explore periods ranging from the Ice Age to the Saxon era.

Hands-on history for all

The project, developed by SCAU's Community Archaeologist Hannah Potter, includes:

- **Volunteering on live archaeological digs**
- **Public open days** showcasing findings
- **Workshops** including **flintknapping** and even **gladiator training**
- **Visits from Stone Age and Roman reenactors**
- **Free school visits and loan boxes** for educational use

Fetcham Springs, which also holds the Wildlife Trust's Biodiversity Benchmark, is owned by SES Water, who are a key project partner and will help support landscape conservation alongside the archaeological work.

A legacy for the future

Findings will be shared through a pop-up museum, exhibitions, talks, and online resources, ensuring a lasting educational impact.

Cllr Denise Turner Stewart, Deputy Leader of Surrey County Council and Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities, said:

"Surrey has a rich and diverse history, and projects like Fetcham Springs help us preserve and share our heritage with future generations. This initiative will provide valuable educational and volunteering opportunities, allowing residents to actively engage with archaeology and deepen their understanding of our county's past."

Stuart McLeod, Director for England (London & South) at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, added:

"Projects like this inspire people of all ages to connect with their local heritage. We're proud to support Fetcham Springs, thanks to National Lottery players."

Grace Wood-Lofthouse, Sustainability Manager at SES Water, commented:

"Water at Fetcham Springs has supported life for millennia. This project will help us better understand how to protect our landscapes for the future."

For further details, visit the Surrey County Archaeological Unit website.

Image: Archaeologists at work – Cleaning a Roman wall at Fetcham Springs in 2009

Coroner visits Surrey cricket hero's mental decline

10 August 2025



Coroner's Inquest visits the loss of former England and Surrey batting great **Graham Thorpe MBE**, who died in August 2024 aged 55. Following an inquest held this week at Surrey Coroner's Court, his life and tragic death have returned to the headlines, casting fresh light on his legacy and personal struggles.

Born in Farnham, Surrey on 1 August 1969, Graham Thorpe rose through the county's cricketing ranks with prodigious talent and steely determination. He made his first-class debut for Surrey County Cricket Club in 1988 and quickly established himself as one of the most technically gifted left-handers of his generation.

Thorpe's early promise blossomed into a formidable career with Surrey, for whom he scored over 21,000 runs across formats. His stylish strokeplay, calm temperament, and ability to perform under pressure made him a linchpin for the county during the 1990s and early 2000s.

Surrey's return to success in the late 1990s—including their Sunday League title in 1996 and County Championship victories—bore Thorpe's fingerprints, and his bond with the club remained strong well beyond retirement. He later served as Surrey's batting coach, mentoring a new generation of cricketers at the Oval.

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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Thorpe made an instant impact on the international stage, scoring a century on his Test debut against Australia in 1993. Over a 12-year England career, he compiled 6,744 Test runs at an average of 44.66, with 16 centuries—cementing his place among the country's most reliable middle-order batsmen.

He was central to key series wins in the subcontinent, notably England's victories in Pakistan and Sri Lanka in 2000, and was named a Wisden Cricketer of the Year in 1998. His unbeaten 200 against New Zealand in 2002 was widely hailed as one of the finest innings of its era.

A naturally modest figure, Thorpe's contribution to English cricket went beyond runs. He embodied a quiet resilience and professionalism that won the admiration of teammates and opponents alike.

After retiring from playing in 2005, Thorpe remained in the game as a respected batting coach, including roles with Surrey and later as a key figure in the England coaching setup. He was part of the ECB's elite coaching team and served as a mentor to many of England's current generation of batters.

However, his career in coaching came to a sudden end in 2022 following the fallout from a video showing players drinking after a heavy Ashes defeat in Australia. Though not the subject of disciplinary action, Thorpe lost his role as England's batting coach soon after—an event that proved devastating.

This week's inquest at Surrey Coroner's Court revealed the full extent of Thorpe's mental health battle, casting a sombre shadow over his final years.

Thorpe had reportedly suffered from anxiety and depression since at least 2018. After the loss of his ECB coaching job in 2022, his condition deteriorated significantly. He became socially withdrawn, suffered from insomnia, and described feelings of shame and worthlessness.

His wife, Amanda, told the inquest that he had even asked her to assist him in dying, expressing an intention to seek assisted suicide in Switzerland. In April 2022, he attempted suicide and spent weeks in intensive care. Though he made a partial physical recovery, the psychological toll persisted.

On 4 August 2024, Thorpe tragically died after being struck by a train at Esher railway station. The coroner concluded that he had taken his own life. His family chose to speak publicly in the hope of raising awareness and encouraging open conversation around mental health in sport.

Surrey County Cricket Club paid tribute to Thorpe, calling him "one of the finest cricketers the club has ever produced." The club has honoured his legacy with a commemorative gallery at the Oval and moments of silence at matches.

Teammates and former England captains described Thorpe as a "warrior at the crease" and a "gentleman off it," highlighting both his cricketing prowess and quiet dignity.

Thorpe's story has also reignited national debate about the mental health pressures faced by elite athletes and the need for more robust support structures—both during and after their careers.

Graham Thorpe's life was rich in achievement, marked by loyalty to Surrey, excellence for England, and a deep love for the game. But his death also reminds us of the vulnerabilities behind even the most accomplished public figures.

As his family bravely noted, "Graham's legacy must be more than his cricket. Let it also be a call to look out for each other."

Thorpe is survived by his wife Amanda and their children. He remains, to many in Surrey and beyond, a hero of the game—and a symbol of the need to treat mental health with the seriousness it deserves.

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health, contact Samaritans at 116 123 or visit www.samaritans.org.

Image: Graham Thorpe selfie in 2005. Attribution: Jguk at English Wikipedia Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported

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