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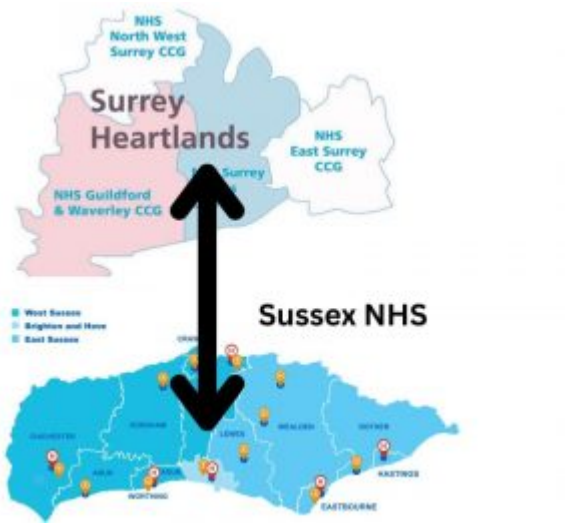
Surrey and Sussex NHS Boards to merge

24 July 2025



Hundreds of jobs are at risk as two key NHS boards for Sussex and Surrey prepare to merge as part of a money-saving drive by the government. NHS Sussex and NHS Surrey Heartlands – two integrated care boards (ICBs) – are expected to have merged by next April, shedding many of the 1,350 staff who currently work at the two organisations. The changes are part of the latest round of NHS reforms which include the abolition of NHS England and the scrapping of independent patient voice watchdogs known as Healthwatch. Sussex ICB chair Stephen Lightfoot spoke about the forthcoming changes at Brighton and Hove City Council's Health and Wellbeing Board at Hove Town Hall on Tuesday (22 July).

ICBs bring together NHS organisations, councils and others to plan and commission health services in their area, with the aim of improving health and reducing inequalities. Mr Lightfoot, who will stand down in September, said that ICBs were told in March to halve their running costs – from £39.83 to £18.76 per head of population – by December. Further bad news followed when an analysis of national funding allocations suggested that Sussex was overfunded by £186 million. Mr Lightfoot said that NHS Sussex had a £4.5 billion budget for NHS services in Sussex but the analysis indicated that it should be £4.3 billion and was 4 per cent overfunded. Mr Lightfoot said: "That doesn't sound a lot on a percentage basis but £200 million is a significant sum of money. Over the next three years, when our demand continues to increase, we're going to have to reduce our expenditure. We're going to have to work very hard to make better use of the money that we have."

He said that this would not affect the budget for delivering healthcare throughout the area – but, he said, combining Sussex and Surrey was the only safe and reliable way to deliver sustainable services. Mr Lightfoot spoke about "the massive scale of this task (and) the huge impact it's having on our staff … 1,350 people are worried if they've got a job. And of course a significant number of them will not have a job in the coming year." He added: "We're not alone. The government also confirmed it's going to rationalise all patient safety regulators. That involves Healthwatch organisations which are going to be closed, not immediately, but over the next 18 months to two years."

It would be the first time since 1974 that patients would be without a statutory independent voice, the meeting was told.

Sarah Booker-Lewis LDRS

Doctors' strike to hit Epsom Hospital

24 July 2025



Hospitals across South West London are bracing for disruption this week as resident doctors begin a five-day strike on Friday, 25 July. The week-long strike action by British Medical Association (BMA) members comes as the NHS faces one of its busiest summers in recent years, with a spike in emergency admissions driven by heatwaves and increasingly complex patient needs. Resident doctors – those who have completed their initial medical degree and are now in postgraduate training or gaining experience in non-training positions – were awarded an average 5.4% pay rise for this financial year, following a 22% increase over the previous two years. However, the BMA says wages are still around 20% lower in real terms than in 2008 and has committed to strike action in demand of "pay restoration."

The walkout will affect hospitals across England, including St George's, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group (GESH). GESH medical professionals are warning the public to expect delays and to take preventative steps to avoid overwhelming already stretched services. "While we're doing everything we can to prepare, these strikes will cause huge disruption," warned Dr Richard Jennings, Chief Medical Officer for GESH. "Patients coming to an emergency department when it's not an emergency will be waiting longer, or even directed to another service," he added. Common

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reasons for hospital admissions during the heatwave have included respiratory issues, chest pain, shortness of breath and falls. Over 800 more people have attended emergency departments this summer compared to the same period last year. Between 1 June and 14 July, emergency department attendances at GESH rose to 37,167 – up from 36,328 in 2024 and 35,460 in 2023.

To maintain emergency services, consultants and other staff will be redeployed from routine care to cover A&E, operating theatres and hospital wards, resulting in many planned procedures being cancelled or delayed. Patients and staff at St Helier have already faced significant disruption this year, partly due to the hospital's ageing infrastructure. In January, a roof collapse in the phlebotomy unit forced the last-minute cancellation of several urgent blood tests. Despite the strike action, patients are urged to attend appointments unless contacted otherwise, and to continue seeking help in emergencies. The NHS is also asking the public to consider other services first, such as NHS 111 online, pharmacies or GPs, which are unaffected by the strike. "We have a difficult week coming up and we need members of the public to help us – whether that's using the most appropriate service for their health need or taking steps to prevent becoming unwell," Dr Jennings said.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting has criticised the strike, calling it "completely unjustified" and showing "complete disdain" for patients. However, BMA resident doctors committee co-chairs Dr Melissa Ryan and Dr Ross Nieuwoudt said they had tried to compromise with the government during talks, and that strike action was a last resort. They said: "We have always said that no doctor wants to strike, and all it would take to avoid it is a credible path to pay restoration offered by the government. We came to talks in good faith, keen to explore real solutions to the problems facing resident doctors today. Unfortunately, we did not receive an offer that would meet the scale of those challenges. While we were happy to discuss non-pay issues that affect doctors' finances, we have always been upfront that this is at its core a pay dispute."

The strike will run from 7am on Friday 25 July, until 7am on Wednesday 30 July.

Harrison Galliven – LDRS

Related reports:

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Plea ahead of doctors' strikes round 5

Big housing development proposed NW of Epsom and Ewell

24 July 2025



Over 2,000 new homes could be built on the Surrey border, to the right of Claygate and Esher, and above Epsom and Ewell. Plans for 2,003 new homes and a 104-bed care home are in the pipeline at Hook Park in Chessington, to the east of the A3 Esher Bypass and south of the A309 Kingston Bypass. If approved, residents say it could bring at least another 5,000 people into the area. Developers Poppymill Ltd envisions transforming the so-called derelict site into "a new family-friendly neighbourhood that centres around a huge public park and community spaces". Around 50 per cent of the new builds could be affordable housing, of mixed tenures and with more than 600 homes for families. The proposed development site covers approximately 50 hectares of land and includes Chessington Equestrian Centre, 'The Dell' building and former scaffolding yards.

But residents claim the land is actually green belt status, preventing the urban sprawl of Chessington into neighbouring Surrey and providing an important green space. While the site is green belt, Poppymill argued the land is "compromised and inaccessible to the public" rendering it 'grey-belt', the developer claims. Details on the proposal are scarce, but initial planning documents indicated new terrace houses could be between two-four storeys tall, and apartment blocks could range from four-eight storeys high. No concrete plans have been announced, but Poppymill Ltd. has submitted a screening request which outlines the potential scheme.

The developer has asked the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames Council for a formal opinion on what information it should supply for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) – this is called 'scoping' – ahead of a planning application. But Elmbridge Borough Council has also been asked for their view on the application, given the massive potential development is close to the authority's patch. The prospective plans also hint at community space including room for retail or leisure uses, employment space, a public house, community centre and an active travel hub. Plans also include highway improvements such as a new vehicle access road from the Kingston Bypass and Clayton Road, pedestrian and cycle access and car and bike parking.

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Residents who wish to comment on the scheme can do so on Kingston council's planning website. Comments are open until July 24, 2025.

Aerial view of the Hook Park site outlined in red. (Credit: Poppymill Ltd consultation website)

Public meet tonight on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council future

24 July 2025



A public debate **TONIGHT** will ask whether Epsom and Ewell Borough Council could soon be abolished — and whether such a decision might happen without any vote or public consultation.

The event, titled *"Here Today, Gone Tomorrow? Devolution Explained"*, will take place at 7.00pm TONIGHT Wednesday 23rd July 2025 at St Joseph's Catholic Church St Margaret Dr, Epsom KT18 7JQ. It is free to attend and open to all residents and businesses.

The meeting is organised by **Rotary Connections**, a local initiative of the Rotary Club aiming to bring together businesses, civic groups, and the wider community.

The panel will include local councillors:

Eber Kington – Residents Association and Surrey County Council and former long-serving Councillor on EEBC.

Bernie Muir, deputy chair of Surrey County Council, Conservative, who also serves on Epsom and Ewell Borough.

Steven McCormick – Residents Association serving both EEBC and Surrey County Council.

Julian Freeman, Liberal Democrat Councillor for EEBC

The discussion will be chaired by **Lionel Blackman**, local solicitor and a director of the Epsom and Ewell Times.

The debate comes amid growing speculation over local government reorganisation in Surrey. Proposals in recent years have raised the prospect of scrapping all district and borough councils in favour of one or more large unitary authorities. Such a move would end the independence of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, which has served the community since 1937.

Supporters of unitary reform claim it could bring savings and efficiency. Opponents argue it risks reducing local accountability and weakening the borough's unique identity.

After initial addresses from each speaker organisers say the meeting will follow a "Question Time" format, allowing the public to pose questions directly to councillors on what these changes might mean for services, representation, and the future shape of local democracy.

Entry is free.

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Nurse demands 24 hour rail tickets to avoid night-shift double costs

24 July 2025



A specialist NHS nurse is calling for urgent train ticket reform after revealing she spends over £200 a month commuting to her job at Great Ormond Street Hospital. Alicia Arias, a paediatric cardiac intensive care nurse, has launched a campaign urging rail companies to introduce 24-hour train tickets. Her Change.org petition has already gained over 24,000 signatures. Alicia moved from London to Woking a year ago to save on rent and live in a house, said her monthly commuting costs regularly exceed £200 – despite using a discount Flexi Season ticket. She said: “Why am I living in Woking paying all of this money for trains that are always delayed?!”

Working 12-hour shifts, often overnight, Alicia said she is forced to buy two tickets for each shift: one to travel in and another to get home the next morning, as existing train tickets expire at 4:29am. “We go for a horrible night shift, we don’t have a break and then we have to pay for another ticket,” Alicia said. “It’s just not fair. It’s making it fair with 24hr tickets.” Working in paediatric intensive care, no day is the same. But every day can be gruelling. Alicia said: “I offer the treatment the last chance that kids have. It’s really hard but it’s really rewarding.” As a senior nurse, Alicia said her job ranges from teaching and supporting other nursing staff, sometimes taking over the patients, as well as looking after her own patients. “We are always short and we are always busy,” she said.

Although there are other hospitals in Surrey, Alicia said she never wants to leave her current job. “Working at Great Ormond Street Hospital is a great sense of acheivement,” Alicia said. “It’s the best thing I’ve ever done – I love it.” Originally from Spain, Alicia said she was shocked by how expensive and inflexible British transport is. Alicia said she moved to the UK 13 years ago, but the “cultural shock” of how expensive and inflexible British transport is has only really come in the last year of moving to Woking. She explained in Madrid you can get transport passes for bus, train and rail for £70 a month. When Alicia lived in central London, she would cycle to work. “I take my bicycle from Waterloo to Great Ormond Street which is really busy,” she said. “I’m pretty sure I’m going to die on the bike one day.”

“I have sometimes regretted [moving to Woking],” Alicia admitted, explaining how she is constantly juggling to find the cheapest way to buy train tickets. Alicia said the campaign is not only for nurses but everyone. “But not only me but the cleaners, the maintenance workers, people in the kitchen, people who have lower salaries than me who are struggling more,” she said. “We’re all NHS. Not only shift workers in Surrey but everywhere in the UK. Shift workers that pay for two tickets and they do it quietly. No, it’s not fair.” Another campaign which Alicia started at the same time is her petition for an NHS railcard which has also reached nearly 3,000 signatures on the House of Commons website.

A Department for Transport spokesperson said: “While we are not planning to introduce 24-hour return tickets, we are overhauling the complex fares system to make rail travel simpler and more flexible for passengers. We’ve already delivered ticketing innovations such as contactless pay as you go to additional stations in Surrey this year, giving passengers the best value ticket for their journey, with additional stations expected to get the technology soon.”

Petition link: https://www.change.org/p/make-train-day-tickets-last-24-hours-support-shift-workers
House of Commons petition link: https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/729126

Hosepipe ban not reached Epsom and Ewell yet

24 July 2025



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Frustration is growing towards Thames Water after it announced a hosepipe ban in parts of the South East just months after residents lived through a winter of “huge” leaks and sewage overflows. Thames Water has announced a hosepipe ban will kick in on Tuesday, July 22, covering all OX, GL, SN postcodes as well as RG4, RG8, and RG9, after the UK experienced one of its warmest and driest springs in over a century – followed by England’s warmest June on record. Currently the ban only impacts towns bordering Surrey, but Thames Water has said it may need to add postcodes “if anything changes”.

This year alone, residents in Surrey have endured water supply issues due to multiple pipe bursts, a report concluding water was “unfit for human consumption”, and people putting up barricades to stop raw sewage flooding homes. For some, a hosepipe ban would be the last straw. Sir Jeremy Hunt, MP for Godalming and Ash, said: “Godalming and Ash is not included in the hosepipe ban so far, but I completely understand residents’ frustration when they witness huge water leaks losing thousands of litres locally – Chilworth, Cranleigh, Ewhurst and Bramley in the last week alone – and yet Thames Water are asking us to use water sparingly brushing our teeth. I met with Thames Water CEO Chris Weston recently to press for investment locally because, although work is underway to improve water resilience, what is really needed is to connect our ‘water island’ area with the wider Thames water network – and to urgently replace those leaky pipes.”

Thames Water says its drought plan is designed to ensure the taps keep running for customers’ essential use while also protecting the environment. Water taken from the River Thames for the currently affected area is stored at Farmoor reservoir in Oxfordshire. If the warm, dry weather continues, the company anticipates reservoir levels will continue to drop. River levels are also below average, limiting how much can be drawn from the Thames while the hot weather also causes more evaporation.

Esher and Walton MP Monica Harding said: “The threat of a hosepipe ban shows how important investment in the basics is. Thames Water’s current crumbling infrastructure can’t protect us now, let alone in the future from climate change and population growth. Thames Water has failed miserably in providing the investment needed up to this point and have lost the public’s confidence. The Government should grip the ongoing crisis at Thames Water, place it in special administration, make it a public benefit company, and replace Ofwat with a tough new regulator with teeth, to protect bill payers and give us the clean water we all need.”

Thames Water is also looking to secure future water supplies and said it was working on plans for a new reservoir in Oxfordshire, securing water supply for 15 million people across the South East, including Thames Water, Affinity Water and Southern Water customers. The company is also working on what it calls a vital drought resilience project in London which will be supported by water recycling.

A Thames Water spokesperson said: “Leakage is at its lowest ever level on our network, down 13.2% since 2020, but we know we have more work to do. The extended warm weather also brings increased risks of leaks and bursts due to pipe stress and shifting foundations in the ground. We’ve increased leakage teams in our region and we’re fixing 650 leaks a week with our engineers targeting leaks with the greatest impact to local water supplies. We’re also replacing 500km of water mains over the next five years to reduce leakage. We’re using innovative technology and data to find and fix leaks faster. So far, we have installed almost 40,000 acoustic loggers on our water network to help detect leaks and expect to have 100,000 in place by mid-2027. We’ve installed over 1 million smart meters, which are critical in helping us to locate leaks at our customers’ homes. We’ll continue to roll out smart water meters to households in our area, installing or upgrading a further c.1,200,000 smart meters to homes and businesses by 2030.”

Has Woking gone barking mad?

24 July 2025



People in social housing will soon need to ask for permission before getting a dog as Woking Borough Council looks to adopt a formal pet policy. The new nine-page list of rules regarding pet ownership is being drawn up to give the council greater enforcement powers should people’s pooches start to play up. These include clear guidelines spelling out that residents in social housing must notify the council when they get a dog and complete the dog registration form, that dogs must be kept on a lead in all communal areas, and that they must not defecate on balconies or any shared spaces. Guidance on how to keep pets will also be updated to help mitigate noise problems.

In private housing, renting with pets is at the landlord’s discretion. However, when the Renters’ Rights Bill becomes effective, tenants will have stronger rights. Landlords must consider each pet request fairly, and if they refuse them, there needs to be a reasonable justification. Officers told the Monday, July 14 communities and housing scrutiny committee it has been an on-going challenge dealing with cases of nuisance pets and that the new policy should strengthen the council’s hand. Committee chair Councillor Tom Bonsundy-O’Bryan said: “Noise nuisance from dogs barking (is a problem) and a real high percentage of those came from dogs being left outside at night time. You can see why the noise

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of barking at night time is more of a pain. The RSPCA also advises against letting dogs sleep outside, the vast majority of time it's bad as they are social animals. It's just really bad to let dogs sleep outdoors overnight."

The council says it understands the benefits of keeping a pet, particularly on people's mental and physical wellbeing, but that it needed to ensure animals do not cause nuisance to other residents or damage property. Households will generally be given permission to keep up to two dogs and two cats in a council-owned or managed house, and either one dog or cat in a flat. Anyone who wishes to have additional pets will need written permission.

Surrey's NHS backlogs high

24 July 2025



Around 10 per cent of Surrey's population is currently stuck in the NHS backlog, facing long waits for crucial operations and cancer treatments, according to local health leaders.

Despite efforts to address delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, thousands of residents across the county are still waiting well beyond the national target of 18 weeks.

At a recent Surrey County Council meeting, NHS bosses revealed that while progress is being made, more than 200,000 people are still awaiting care, with over 4,000 of them waiting more than a year across Surrey. New measures like harm reviews, waiting list checks, and the opening of Ashford Elective Centre are being implemented, but staff shortages, IT issues, and NHS strikes continue to pose significant hurdles.

NHS bosses reported the significant results to Surrey county councillors at an Adults and Health Select Committee meeting on July 11. Chairing the meeting, Cllr Trefor Hogg said: "Roughly 10 per cent of the entire population of Surrey is somewhere in that backlog."

He explained that every person whose treatment is delayed suffers, their family suffers, the economy suffers and the NHS suffers as the patient's condition worsens.

Frimley InTegrated Care Board, including Frimley Park and Wexham Park hospitals still has around 89,000 people waiting for treatment – and more than 4,000 of those have been waiting over a year.

Although a slight improvement from previous years, only 55 per cent of patients are being treated within the NHS national target of 18 weeks.

Meanwhile, Surrey Heartlands ICB, which covers hospitals like Ashford & St Peter's, Royal Surrey and Epsom, is further ahead.

Its waiting list peaked in 2023 but has since come down significantly. Around 143,000 people are waiting for non-urgent but important elective care operations.

NHS bosses said the total waiting list across Surrey Heartlands' three hospitals has decreased from a peak of approximately 162,000 in September 2023 to about 143,000 by March 2025. Still, nearly 61,500 patients are waiting more than 18 weeks for treatment, while over 2,000 people have been on waiting lists for over a year. These figures far exceed pre-pandemic levels, where waits beyond a year were rare.

NHS bosses said they still recognise that waiting over a year is a huge amount of time to wait but they are working on driving the delays down.

Surrey NHS bosses credited the success of bringing waiting lists down to a range of new systems. These included a new 'harm review' for assessing patients who have been waiting over a year for surgery, waiting list validation to check there are no duplicates on the operations waiting list, and virtual consultations to monitor the patient's condition.

Surrey Heartlands has been fortunate enough to receive funding to open Ashford Elective Centre, focusing on trauma, orthopaedics and ophthalmology. So patients on a long waiting list at Royal Surrey Hospital, for example, can opt to come to Ashford elective centre for quicker treatment.

Both ICBs admitted there are still challenges including staff shortages, IT problems with new electronic health records, and the impact of ongoing NHS strikes such as the resident doctors.

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Public Meeting to Debate Epsom and Ewell's government future

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The event, titled *"Here Today, Gone Tomorrow? Devolution Explained"*, will take place at 7.00pm on Wednesday 23rd July 2025 at St Joseph's Catholic Church St Margaret Dr, Epsom KT18 7JQ. It is free to attend and open to all residents and businesses.

The meeting is organised by **Rotary Connections**, a local initiative of the Rotary Club aiming to bring together businesses, civic groups, and the wider community.

The panel will include local councillors:

Eber Kington – Residents Association and Surrey County Council and former long-serving Councillor on EEBC.

Bernie Muir, deputy chair of Surrey County Council, Conservative, who also serves on Epsom and Ewell Borough.

Steven McCormick – Residents Association serving both EEBC and Surrey County Council.

The discussion will be chaired by **Lionel Blackman**, local solicitor and a director of the Epsom and Ewell Times.

The debate comes amid growing speculation over local government reorganisation in Surrey. Proposals in recent years have raised the prospect of scrapping all district and borough councils in favour of one or more large unitary authorities. Such a move would end the independence of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, which has served the community since 1937.

Supporters of unitary reform claim it could bring savings and efficiency. Opponents argue it risks reducing local accountability and weakening the borough's unique identity.

After initial addresses from each speaker organisers say the meeting will follow a "Question Time" format, allowing the public to pose questions directly to councillors on what these changes might mean for services, representation, and the future shape of local democracy.

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Epsom and Ewell Borough Council out – Community Council's in?

and many more – search "local government reorganisation".

Fly-tipping in Epsom and Ewell part of national problem

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Organised criminal gangs are increasingly using fake waste removal companies to dump lorry-loads of rubbish across the UK — and Surrey is not immune.

According to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), over 47,000 large-scale fly-tipping incidents (involving tipper lorries or more than a van load of waste) were recorded by councils in England in 2022/23, costing local authorities more than £13 million to clear. Behind many of these cases are sophisticated criminal operations posing as legitimate businesses, advertising cheap waste clearance on platforms such as Facebook Marketplace and Gumtree.

“These aren’t just one-off chancers,” said John Roberts, Chief Security Officer at Kingdom Local Authority Support. “We’re talking about well-organised groups using the same tactics repeatedly — setting up fake firms, offering cheap deals online, and then vanishing before anyone can hold them accountable.”

How the Scams Work

According to Roberts, gangs offer low-cost rubbish removal services, load the waste into tipper trucks, and illegally dump it on green spaces, bridleways, industrial estates or roadside laybys — often under cover of darkness.

“They can disappear in a matter of hours. There’s virtually no trace, no formal business records, and no accountability,” he warned.

What many people don’t realise is that residents who unknowingly use these services can still be fined — up to £1,000 in fixed penalties, or face unlimited fines if prosecuted — if they fail to obtain a Waste Transfer Note, which proves the waste was handed to a licensed carrier.

Fly-Tipping in Epsom & Ewell: A Local Problem

While the national picture is alarming, Epsom & Ewell Borough has seen its own troubling rise in fly-tipping.

In February 2024, a man was prosecuted for multiple fly-tipping offences across the borough, including in the World’s End area. The Borough Council reported he was fined more than £2,300 after their investigations, using CCTV and physical evidence, successfully traced the waste back to him.

In 2023, the Council launched a targeted campaign to tackle what it described as “persistent” fly-tipping hotspots, including:

- Old London Road
- Hook Road
- Christ Church Road

Measures included surveillance cameras, warning signage, and public appeals.

A prior incident in 2021, covered by the Surrey Comet, showed men caught on camera dumping waste from a van near Horton Country Park — prompting public outrage and renewed calls for enforcement.

How to Avoid Illegal Waste Carriers

To avoid being scammed — and fined — residents are urged to take the following precautions:

- Check if the waste carrier is licensed with the Environment Agency: www.gov.uk/check-waste-carrier-registration
- Ask for a Waste Transfer Note. This document proves you handed over the waste legally.
- Avoid cash-in-hand deals and suspiciously low prices. Legitimate services charge based on volume and type of waste and hold valid permits.

How to Report Fly-Tipping in Epsom

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council encourages residents to report fly-tipping using the following methods:

Online: www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/fly-tipping
Phone: 01372 732000

Include details such as the time and date, exact location, vehicle registration (if known), and photos if safe to capture.

A Shared Responsibility

“People often don’t realise that even if they’ve paid someone to take the waste, they’re still legally responsible for what happens to it,” John Roberts said. “You’ve got to get that paperwork.”

The message is clear: fly-tipping isn’t just a public nuisance — it’s a criminal offence, and everyone has a role in tackling it.

If you’re clearing garden waste, disposing of old furniture, or hiring a skip, make sure you’ve checked who’s collecting it.

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King’s Award for Epsom based business

24 July 2025



Penta Consulting, an Epsom-based provider of global technology talent and managed solutions, has been awarded the King’s Award for Enterprise in International Trade 2025, one of the most distinguished honours for UK businesses.

The award recognises Penta’s exceptional growth in international markets and its proven ability to deliver secure, compliant, and scalable solutions across the globe. This prestigious recognition places Penta among a select group of British companies demonstrating innovation, resilience, and commercial success on the international stage. Winners of the award were invited to a royal reception at Windsor Castle and gain the right to use the official award emblem for five years.

“This award is a testament to our people, our partnerships, and our passion for delivering results for our clients,” said Paul Clark, Executive Chairman and Founder of Penta Consulting. *“It reflects our team’s dedication to delivering with expertise, integrity, and a global outlook.”*

Penta Consulting CEO Aminash Patel added:

“This has been our best year on record and we’re in a great position to keep this momentum. We’re proud of being recognised for our international business, but we also do everything we can to make an impact locally. We support Epsom Pantry, a local food bank, the Jigsaw Trust, and many other local causes. We’re on an exciting trajectory, so we’d encourage anyone interested in technology job opportunities to continue to check our website.”

The King’s Award win comes as the latest recognition in an incredibly successful year for the Surrey business. Penta Consulting has also been recognised with several other accolades in the first half of 2025:

- **Sunday Times Top 100** – recognising Britain’s fastest-growing companies
- **Sunday Times Best Places to Work** – medium-sized business category
- **London Chamber of Commerce and Industry SME Business Awards** – Best International Business and Overall Winner

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About the King’s Awards

The King’s Awards for Enterprise were previously known as The Queen’s Awards for Enterprise, and were renamed two years ago to reflect His Majesty The King’s desire to continue the legacy of HM Queen Elizabeth II by recognising outstanding UK businesses.

About Penta Consulting

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Image: Paul Clark, Founder and Executive Chairman of Penta Consulting meeting His Majesty the King at Windsor Castle

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Epsom Hospital workers to strike for equality?

24 July 2025

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More than 200 essential hospital cleaners and porters could strike over NHS equality at a Surrey Hospital Trust. Approximately 258 NHS facilities workers at St Helier and Epsom Hospital Trust will vote whether to go on strike as they demand full equality with their hospital colleagues. The ballot will open today (July 1) and close on August 12, with potential strike dates to be announced in mid August. The workers, most of whom are from migrant and minority ethnic backgrounds, are NHS employees but are allegedly denied the NHS's national pay system, terms and conditions. United Voices of the World (UVW), a campaigning trade union, is representing the group.

Dennis Gyamfi, a cleaner at Epsom Hospital and UVW member, said: "I've cleaned this hospital for seven years. My fellow cleaners, porters and caterers do essential work — yet we've never been treated with the same dignity as other NHS staff." Key workers such as cleaners, porters and caterers were brought in-house in 2021 and released from private contracts. Campaigners and UVW claim they were not given the standard NHS contracts and remain on inferior terms. The union states workers get lower pay and also miss out on key benefits such as paid sick leave from day one, enhanced nights and weekend pay as well as lower pension contributions and are stuck on 24 days' holiday, with no increase for length of service. The trade union argued the pay has been frozen and they are now formally moving toward strike action after the CEO and Board of Trustees refused to enter negotiations.

Mr Gyamfi added: "We are the pillars of this hospital — if we don't clean, transport people around or serve food, patients and their families suffer. The board knows this. It's time they gave us the respect we deserve. Change our contracts. Give us equality, dignity, and the recognition every NHS worker should have." But Epsom and St Helier Hospital claim those on the London Living Wage have seen annual increases in the last three years which is well ahead of staff on the standard NHS contracts. The Hospital Trust also said staff have recently had a pay rise between 3–5.3 per cent was effective from April 1

"This is not just disappointing — it's outrageous," said Farrokh, a porter at St Helier Hospital and UVW member. "It is deeply troubling that a publicly-run organisation – whose duty should be to uphold fairness and protect its employees – appears to be taking steps that deprive its lowest-paid workers of rights and benefits long established by the NHS, government and unions." Frustration has also deepened at St Helier Hospital, where staff reportedly contend with unsafe, degrading conditions, said to be impacting the wellbeing of both patients and hospital staff.

Around £60 million has been spent in the past five years improving facilities across the hospitals. But the ageing hospitals are deteriorating faster than the NHS can fix them, and bosses have accepted staff and patients deserve better. Through the New Hospital Programme, the government has committed to investing in plans to build a new hospital in Sutton and upgrade the existing hospitals, but construction will begin later than originally planned.

Petros Elia, UVW General Secretary, said: "These workers are as much a part of the NHS as any doctor, nurse, or administrator. They kept our hospitals running during the pandemic, yet in 2025 they're still treated as second-class NHS employees. This two-tier system is degrading, demoralising and discriminatory. It sends a message that their labour matters less, and their lives matter less. And it must end." An Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals spokesperson said: "Our porters and cleaners and everyone who works in our trusts are hugely valued and respected colleagues, and we were pleased to recently announce a pay rise of up to 5.3 per cent effective from 1st April. When colleagues were brought in-house in 2021 they received improved pay and conditions compared to their private contracts, including the London Living Wage. We understand their concerns and remain open to engaging with our colleagues and their Unions."

Workers at Epsom and St Helier Hospitals to vote on strike action. (Credit: United Voices of the World)

Are paper bottles the solution asks Surrey Uni

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There are few excuses left for polluting our environment with plastics – and the UK can lead the charge towards a more circular future, say researchers from the University of Surrey. The comments come as the Surrey team get ready to showcase three projects tackling plastic pollution at this week's Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition in London (1-6 July).

Surrey's interactive display will present various themes – from replacing petroleum-based packaging, to capturing microplastics before they enter our rivers and seas, to recycling mixed plastic waste that would otherwise end up in landfill.

One such project is SustaPack – a collaboration aiming to reduce the 1.9 billion plastic bottles produced globally every day by developing next generation paper-based alternatives. Backed by a £1 million EPSRC grant, the project is a partnership between Surrey and sustainable packaging company Pulpex Ltd. It combines AI, thermal imaging and advanced computer modelling to improve production processes, create a new biodegradable lining, reduce energy use, and extend product shelf life – bringing low-carbon, fully recyclable packaging closer to large-scale commercialisation.

Professor Joseph Keddie, Professor of Soft Matter Physics and Royal Society Industry Fellow, said:

"The high carbon footprint of plastic and glass packaging materials demands urgent change. This collaboration is about more than simply replacing plastic – it's about designing sustainable packaging that is truly recyclable, scalable, and with a low carbon footprint. It's a powerful example of how science and industry can join forces to address the urgent challenge of the environmental impacts of plastic."

Another project on display is addressing the recovery of plastic particles from our water systems. Some products such as sunscreens, cosmetics and disposable wipes can release microplastics, with the UK government considering restrictions or bans on certain items to reduce this form of pollution. On average, 50% of microplastics found in the world's wastewater treatment plants are fibres, mainly coming from laundry. If not captured, these tiny plastics can adsorb and carry pollutants circulating in the wastewater plant that are then ingested by marine life and ultimately enter the human food chain.

Surrey engineers are developing advanced membrane filtration technology designed to recover microplastics before treated wastewater is released into rivers and seas. By optimising membrane coatings and filtration conditions, the team is working to reduce clogging and improve long-term efficiency, paving the way for cleaner water and healthier ecosystems.

Professor Judy Lee, Professor in Chemical and Process Engineering, said:

"Microplastics are a serious and growing threat to water quality and human health. These tiny particles are difficult to remove once they're in the environment and can carry harmful pollutants. Our research focuses on practical solutions that can be deployed in wastewater treatment plants to stop these pollutants at the source."

To address the challenge of recycling plastics mixed with other materials, such as carbon fibre composites, engineers at Surrey are working to make the process more viable and commercially attractive. These composites are essential across various industries, including aerospace, transport and construction due to their lightweight, strong and versatile properties, but they are notoriously difficult to recycle.

Surrey's research focuses on developing new manufacturing routes and enhancing the thermal, electrical and mechanical properties of recycled carbon fibre, making second-life applications practical and commercially appealing. Reducing waste and using reclaimed materials also help to lower the demand for raw resources.

Dr Iman Mohagheghian, Associate Professor (Reader) in Mechanics of Materials at the University of Surrey, and EPSRC researcher in residence fellow of the National Composites Centre, said:

"Our goal is to make recycled composites a reliable, high-value option for industry. Enhancing their performance and reducing manufacturing waste is an important step towards building a truly circular economy for advanced plastics, supporting the wider journey towards net zero."

At the Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition, visitors can discover Plastic Alchemy – an outreach theme led by the University of Surrey's Circular Economy Group and Fellows from the Institute for Sustainability.

Will the doomed Epsom and Ewell Borough Council rise from the ashes in other forms?

24 July 2025



Epsom, 26 June 2025 — Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has taken a significant step towards reshaping local

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governance in response to the wider reorganisation of local government in Surrey, voting to launch a consultation on the possible creation of a Community Council for the borough.

At a specially convened full Council meeting on 26 June, members debated a proposal introduced by Cllr John Beckett (RA Auriol), who set out the case for consulting residents on the potential establishment of a Community Council as a means of protecting local voices once Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is abolished under the forthcoming unitary council arrangements.

Opening the meeting, the Mayor's Chaplain prayed for "wisdom as we look at conflicting interests, confidence in what is good and fitting, and the ability to work together in harmony even when there is honest disagreement."

Cllr **Robert Leach** (Mayor) (RA Nonsuch) explained the urgency of the debate, stating: *"This item requires a proposal and a seconder… I would ask for you all to exercise some self-restraint… and keep your comments concise."*

Cllr Beckett formally introduced the motion, drawing on the Council's agreed strategic priorities for 2025–2027: *"Tonight, we have in front of us a report which follows on from the agreed strategic priorities… to explore the future local governance in the borough of Epsom and Ewell."*

He described how the Government's plans to create either two or three new unitary councils in Surrey — abolishing the twelve existing borough and district councils as well as Surrey County Council — had left many residents "extremely vocal in stating that they have had no real voice in the pre-decision-making process."

Cllr Beckett continued: *"These changes are about centralisation of power and money at the expense of local democracy for our residents. This decision… gives the residents a choice. It gives the residents a voice."*

Explaining why a Community Council could matter, he said: *"Community Councils provide a vital link between residents and larger proposed unitary authorities… They also aim to enhance local representation by providing a direct route for voices of residents and local communities on local issues and decision-making."*

The meeting heard considerable debate about how the proposed consultation, budgeted at £300,000 from reserves, would work.

Cllr Julian Freeman (LibDem College) asked pointedly: *"Will we be using TikTok, Instagram, Snapper Chat… or are we just putting out bits of paper in various libraries and council buildings… And also have we set a threshold as to what would constitute adequate consultation?"*

Cllr Beckett responded that the Council's communications plan meeting the following day would consider "all options," including social media and traditional methods. He acknowledged concerns about digital exclusion, stating: *"We will be taking all options, both electronic and paper format, as to meet the needs of all of our residents."*

Concerns over the financial implications were repeatedly raised. Cllr **Alison Kelly** (LibDem College) asked: *"Will we make it clear that there could be an extra level of tax required… and have we got any evidence that shows that the county council can't run an allotment or all these other things any better than the new unitary authority?"*

Cllr Beckett emphasised that the £300,000 would be drawn from reserves and could be returned if the consultation failed to show support for a Community Council: *"If we don't get to consultation two, those will go back into reserves because we won't need them."*

Several members, including Cllr **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) and Cllr **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington), expressed scepticism about whether residents would genuinely engage with the consultation, and whether enough information was available to make an informed decision.

Cllr **Freeman** was forthright, describing the proposal as "a complete waste of time, money, officers' time and effort, when we've got other priorities that are being neglected."

Others robustly defended the initiative. Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) argued: *"It's only right that while this Labour government talks about empowering local communities and devolution, we actually say to them, 'we are going to practice what you preach.'"*

Cllr **Hannah Dalton** (RA Stoneleigh) similarly supported proceeding, while acknowledging: *"So much is going on in local government that our residents aren't really getting any opportunity to input on… We've got to at least ask our residents."*

The meeting closed with Cllr Beckett reminding colleagues that the evening's decision was only about launching the consultation, saying: *"Several of our colleagues seem to be jumping the gun… This is more than what LGR and other local authorities have done with our residents in the past."*

The first recommendation — to approve a community governance review — was carried by 19 votes to 0, with seven abstentions. The second recommendation, authorising the Chief Executive and Head of Legal to finalise consultation materials and take necessary steps to progress the review, was carried by 16 votes to six, with four abstentions.

An Epsom & Ewell Borough Council spokesperson confirmed afterwards that consultation with residents will start in July, with further details to be published on the Council's website.

In a press release following the meeting, Cllr Beckett said: *"We believe that parish councils would provide an essential link between Epsom & Ewell residents and a new unitary council… ensuring that resident and community voices in Epsom & Ewell are heard and considered by decision-makers in local government in the future."*

The Council is expected to finalise the consultation questions imminently, with public engagement running through the summer.

Related reports:

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Epsom and Ewell parents taking on the child smartphone challenge

24 July 2025



Local parents are joining a national movement to delay children's exposure to smartphones, with a sold-out event next week highlighting local concerns.

Epsom & Ewell's Smartphone Free Childhood (SFC) group is hosting *The Hidden Impact of Smartphones on our Children* on Wednesday 3 July, 7.30–9pm, at St Martin's Junior School on Ashley Road. The event will feature contributions from local headteachers, youth speakers, and safeguarding experts.

The movement, which has already attracted nearly 150,000 signatories to its "Parent Pact" across the UK, encourages families to hold off giving children smartphones before age 14. Surrey parents have been among the strongest supporters of the initiative, which aims to reduce the mental health and online safety risks faced by children in a hyper-connected world.

Laura Baker, from Epsom & Ewell's SFC group, said:

"It's all about strength in numbers — if your child knows that other kids in their class won't be getting a smartphone for a few years either, the peer pressure instantly dissolves."

The event's speaker line-up includes:

- Mrs Donna Dove, Health and Wellbeing Lead and teacher at St Martin's, Epsom
- Mr Joe Hordley, Assistant Headteacher at St Andrew's, Leatherhead
- Mrs Rachel Hall, Associate Headteacher at Glyn School
- Health Professionals for Safer Screens
- Advisors from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, addressing online safety and child protection
- Young people aged 13, 18, and 24 sharing personal perspectives on growing up in a digital age

Local MP Helen Maguire is expected to attend, and educators from more than ten primary and secondary schools across Epsom and Ewell are anticipated, reflecting the growing concern among school communities.

The organisers say school policies on smartphone use vary widely across Surrey, as staff attempt to manage the impacts of cyberbullying, mental health pressures, misogyny, and distraction in class.

Parents behind the initiative argue that urgent action is needed to protect children's wellbeing, rather than waiting for government regulation of Big Tech. The cultural conversation around children and screens has been driven by hard-hitting documentaries such as *Swiped* and dramas like *Adolescence*, adding momentum to calls for change.

Epsom & Ewell SFC hope the borough could follow in the footsteps of St Albans, Bromley, and Southwark in developing a "smartphone free childhood" community.

The event is free to attend, but places must be booked in advance. After an initial sell-out, a limited number of extra tickets have now been released.

Booking and further information:
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