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Surrey burglary figures spark row

13 September 2026



Helen Maguire MP has accused the Government of leaving Surrey families and businesses to “fend for themselves” after Liberal Democrat analysis suggested that fewer than one in 15 burglaries recorded by Surrey Police in 2025 resulted in somebody being charged or summoned.

However, Surrey Police and the county’s Police and Crime Commissioner have responded that burglary has been falling, detection rates are improving and officers attended almost 97% of reported residential burglaries during the latest financial year.

The Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom and Ewell said 3,045 burglaries were recorded across Surrey in 2025. According to figures supplied by her office, 6.4% resulted in a charge or summons, while 2,272 cases – 74.61% of the total – were closed without a suspect being identified.

Nationally, the party said 223,194 burglaries were recorded in England and Wales during the same calendar year. Of these, 13,936 – 6.24% – resulted in a charge or summons, while no suspect was identified in 160,396 cases, or 71.86%.

The figures were described as having been drawn from Home Office crime outcome statistics and analysed by the Liberal Democrats.

Mrs Maguire said: “It is unacceptable that families and businesses across Surrey are being left terrified as the vast majority of burglaries go unsolved. The Government has been asleep at the wheel; a persistent lack of support for community policing has left our streets vulnerable.

“In 93.6% of burglary cases in Surrey, the victims never see someone charged – this has to change. Surrey Police work tirelessly, but they require the proper resources and mandate from central government to ensure every single case is rigorously investigated.

“That’s why I’m demanding urgent action from the Prime Minister to restore neighbourhood policing and to back our calls for an investigation guarantee for all burglaries in Surrey.”

The Liberal Democrats are calling for what they describe as a “Burglary Response Guarantee”, backed by legislation requiring the police to attend and properly investigate every domestic burglary.

Police points to higher ‘solved’ rates

Surrey Police said the figures needed to be placed in context, particularly because the classification of burglary offences changed in April 2023. Burglaries are now divided into residential and business offences.

Detective Chief Inspector Jo Horner, the force lead for burglary, acknowledged that further improvement was required.

She said: “We know there is more to do to improve burglary detection rates, but it is also important to provide context to the data which has been used.”

Between April 2025 and March 2026, Surrey Police attended 96.9% of reported residential burglaries, according to the force.

Over the same period, it recorded a “solved rate” of 10.44% for residential burglary and 12.18% for business burglary.

A solved outcome is not necessarily the same as a charge or summons. It can include other recognised outcomes, so the police percentages cannot be compared directly with the 6.4% charge-or-summons figure quoted by the Liberal Democrats. The figures also cover different periods: calendar year 2025 in the MP’s release and the 2025/26 financial year in the police response.

DCI Horner said burglary remained “an area of continued focus and priority” for the force.

She highlighted an investigation that led to five offenders admitting a series of car-key burglaries, attempted burglaries and vehicle thefts across Surrey, Sussex and Kent. Investigators linked the group to more than 20 stolen vehicles with a combined value of £337,100.

A separate East Surrey operation resulted in six men being charged with nearly 80 offences, including burglary, motor vehicle theft and vehicle interference. Five of the men are now serving prison sentences.

Surrey Police said each of its two divisions has a proactive team monitoring burglary patterns, identifying hotspots and targeting prolific offenders and organised criminal networks.

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PCC says burglary is falling

Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend said domestic burglary was “deeply invasive” and could have a profound effect on its victims, while acknowledging that improving detection remained a challenge for police forces nationally.

She said: “The good news is that Surrey Police is one of the fastest improving forces in the country and burglary rates across the county have been consistently falling.

“According to figures available on my Data Hub, the number of domestic burglaries fell by over 15% between 2023 and 2025. And more recent provisional data shows that in April and June this year, we saw the lowest monthly rates of domestic burglary in the latest three years.”

Mrs Townsend said the force’s burglary solved rate between April 2025 and March 2026 was more than 10%, which she described as considerably higher than the national average.

She added: “Surrey Police is already committed to deploying to every residential burglary reported in the county and each policing division has its own proactive team which identifies trends and ‘hotspot’ areas and targets offenders.

“The force has made great strides in tackling burglary over the last two years and this will be an area I will continue to scrutinise performance on to ensure they maintain that trajectory going forward.”

What the figures do – and do not – show

The competing statements measure several different things.

A 6.4% charge-or-summons rate does not necessarily mean that the offender “got away scot-free” in every other case. Cases may remain under investigation, be resolved through another recorded outcome or fail to proceed for evidential or other reasons. Nevertheless, the figures supplied by Mrs Maguire’s office indicate that no suspect was identified in almost three-quarters of Surrey’s recorded burglaries in 2025.

Conversely, attending a burglary does not mean that it will be solved. Surrey Police’s 96.9% attendance figure relates only to residential burglary and not to the business burglaries included in the MP’s overall total.

Neither side supplied Epsom and Ewell-specific figures, so the statistics in the exchange relate to the Surrey Police area as a whole.

Residents can report suspicious activity through Surrey Police’s website, by calling 101 or anonymously through Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. A crime in progress or an immediate danger should be reported by calling 999.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Ali G statue petition rejected

13 September 2026



A proposed attraction celebrating Ali G in Staines has been rejected by councillors after a petition backing the move gained enough signatures to be put forward for debate.

The petition, which was signed by more than 300 residents, called for a temporary landmark to tie in with the Sacha Baron Cohen character’s new film.

Staines famously changed its name to Staines-upon-Thames in 2012, which was widely believed to be linked to negative attention brought by the fictional resident’s 2002 hit film.

But speaking before a Spelthorne Borough Council committee, petition organiser Alex Balkan said: “I’m not asking you tonight to approve an Ali G statue. I’m asking you to explore an opportunity for Staines.”

He added: “Beneath the humour is a serious question about our town centre. Can an association Staines already has, be turned into more visitors, more footfall and more spending?”

Mr Balkan believes an Ali G attraction would bring an economic boost to the town, and cited Manchester’s Bee in the City

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installation from 2018 as a possible model for inspiration.

However, several councillors on the corporate policy and resources committee were dismayed at the proposal, pointing to the character's divisive legacy in Staines.

Councillor Howard Williams (Independent Spelthorne Group: Staines) said: "Every resident I have spoken to has given me very clear guidance that they do not support anything that promotes Ali G in this borough."

He added: "Ali G has consistently belittled every location he's ever visited. My view on this is it's a strong – no, no, no."

The petition also calls on the council to approach actor Sacha Baron Cohen to ask for his support on the potential project – and makes clear that it does not want the statue to be funded by residents' council tax.

While others praised Mr Balkan for taking time to organise a petition and inspiring the debate, many councillors felt the negative impression of Staines left by the original film made it hard to support an attraction.

However, some members of the committee were a little more positive about the proposals, and took Mr Balkan's point that Ali G had helped put Staines on the map.

Councillor Darren Clarke (Conservative: Laleham and Shepperton Green) told the committee: "There's something about a confident person being able to laugh at themselves.

"And this is a really important thing. If you are confident, you can laugh at yourself."

He added: "We have a real lack of confidence within Spelthorne, and this young man [Mr Balkan] is looking at ways of how we can build confidence. How can we make the high street a better place to be?"

But ultimately, committee members overwhelmingly voted against pursuing a temporary Ali G attraction as suggested by the petition.

Following the decision, Mr Balkan told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS): "What's clear is that no matter how strong the economic case, no matter how many local businesses supported it, none of that mattered to the majority of councillors – Ali G hurt their feelings.

"Spelthorne Council could not, after over 20 years, take the joke and allow the high street to benefit."

He added: "I hope we can push something that helps the high street next time which does have the council's support, and is less controversial.

"But life is a choice of what is right and what is easy – sometimes doing the right thing will upset people."

A Spelthorne Borough Council spokesperson said: "The petition was formally received and debated by the committee in line with the established process.

"After considering the proposal, the committee decided not to support it at this time, recognising the need to focus on other priorities – particularly protecting and delivering essential local services and preparing for the ongoing local government reorganisation."

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

Related report:

Staines Ali G fans hope for Massiv support for statue

Secret Legal Advice that leaves Surrey high and dry?

13 September 2026



The legal advice that forced the nationwide cancellation of local government reorganisation, with the single exception of Surrey because it was too far down the track, will be kept private, the secretary of state said.

It has led to fears the county has been 'thrown under the bus' with Surrey County Council and its 11 boroughs and districts set to dissolve and be merged into two mega authorities under shadowy legal circumstances.

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Last year the county was selected to be fast-tracked to undergo generational reorganising. Councils that had stood for more than half a century would be closed down and their services merged – with residents told it would save money.

It was then to be rolled out across the country but this week came the shock announcement the entire process, save for Surrey where elections had already taken place , would be put on ice.

Those who called to see the legal advice that caused the seismic u-turn were told it wasn't government policy to divulge such information.

West Surrey leader Councillor Paul Follows, writing to Angela Rayner, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities, and Local Government, said: "The change in approach to local government reorganisation (LGR) set out in your ministerial statement…has raised several questions about the process undertake in Surrey.

"Your statement referred to legal advice that has informed the position of the present administration of national government, to the effect that the LGR process to date was not sufficiently robust or legally sound."

He said understood Surrey's position, that legislation to create the East and West Surrey Councils had been passed and elections held, but called for the new legal position to be shared so Surrey could best understand its new landscape.

He added: "If that decision making process has been deemed legally faulty or otherwise unsound I would like to ask for the opportunity for my officer to asses the potential impact on West Surrey, and in particular the crucial matters of finance and inherited debt.

"Would it be possible to have a copy of the legal advice on which the government has based its decision to pause the next tranches of LGR.

"I ask this solely to help correct or compensate for any deficiencies now identified by your department and to ensure the residents of West Surrey are not adversely impacted."

Speaking in the House of Commons, Guildford MP Zoe Franklin echoed the call for the legal advice's publication so communities could understand what went wrong with the original process.

She added: "In my own area of Surrey, councils were forced down a reorganisation route that now appears to be effectively abandoned by the Government and questionable on a legal basis.

"Will the Secretary of State commit to meeting Surrey MPs and the new authority leaders to discuss how our county can avoid the risks and uncertainty that the Government say have prompted this decision elsewhere?"

MP Monica Harding, said: "My constituents in Esher and Walton, in Surrey, are left wondering whether they have been thrown under the bus by a Government who failed to be secure in the legal advice and the costs from the very beginning.

"This is incompetent.

"Will the Government release the legal advice? What are the legal implications for Surrey?

"What extra support will she give Surrey regarding the cost implications?"

Surrey Heath MP Al Pinkerton said: "One of the potential unintended consequences of today's announcement is to leave Surrey in the slightly discomfiting position of being in an experimental cohort with a sample size of one, the one county being reorganised under this legislation.

He added: "Do the legal concerns that the Secretary of State has expressed today also relate to Surrey?

"If Surrey is affected by those legal concerns, what faith should my residents have that this experiment is not going to come fully off the rails before April 1, 2027?"

The Secretary of State said she understood the strength of feeling but told the commons: "I considered the legal advice provided as part of the judicial review process, and the decision to withdraw the decision reflected updated legal clarity.

"It is a long-standing principle that the Government do not publish or comment on legal advice.

"I have been clear that I want to be able to review these decisions to ensure, as the new Secretary of State, that they are the right ones.

"We will consider the programme in the round in the light of the Government's priorities, as set out in "Rewiring the State", and Ministers will meet with Members of this House and will set out decisions at our earliest opportunity."

Asked after the debate whether it would publish the advice, the department reiterated the ministerial statements raised in the commons.

Chris Caulfield Local Democracy Reporter

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Related report:

The shake up of Epsom and Ewell's local government: was it all a waste of time as Rayner puts pause on LGR elsewhere?

A year in the life of Epsom's Citizens Advice Bureau

13 September 2026

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Citizens Advice helps nearly 3,900 borough residents

Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell (CAEE) has published its Annual Report for 2025/26 following its annual general meeting.

During the year, the charity helped 3,861 people across the Borough of Epsom and Ewell, addressing 11,312 issues.

A team of more than 50 volunteers, supported by 16 paid members of staff, provides the skills and knowledge needed to solve problems, offer reassurance, create stability and help clients towards independent lives.

Lisa Davis, chief executive of Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell, said: “Behind each of these numbers is a real person: someone struggling with energy debts whilst managing serious health conditions, someone rebuilding their life after domestic abuse, or someone working through decades of accumulated hardship.

“It is a privilege to stand alongside people at their most vulnerable and help them find a way forward.”

Linda’s story

Linda approached CAEE with a large energy debt after being unable to communicate with her energy company to resolve the problem.

She had experienced several health conditions over recent years, including cancer, diabetes, a stroke and mobility difficulties. These had affected her mental health and ability to work, leaving her feeling overwhelmed.

A CAEE energy adviser clarified the situation with the energy company and advised Linda on managing her Unreal finances and minimising her energy use. Linda now feels better able to cope in the future.

Fazia’s story

Fazia moved to the UK with her husband on a spousal visa with no recourse to public funds.

After experiencing domestic abuse, her husband was removed from the home by the police and she separated from him.

Fazia instructed a firm of solicitors to apply on her behalf for an independent visa and access to public funds under the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse concession. After receiving no response from the solicitors despite contacting them repeatedly, she approached CAEE.

The charity applied on her behalf and her application was resolved within a week.

An adviser also helped Fazia claim benefits, as she had been without funds for many months, and provided foodbank and Household Support Fund vouchers until she received her first Universal Credit payment.

Fazia is now working towards independently supporting herself and her child.

Clive’s story

Clive’s story is one of many missed opportunities to prevent someone falling into serious debt.

After losing his wife a few years ago, Clive struggled with bereavement and lost his well-paid job. While trying to provide for his children, he began accumulating credit card debt.

His life became harder still when he was the victim of a hit-and-run road accident and lost his son to Covid-19.

By the time he approached CAEE, he was living in his daughter’s flat with several significant health conditions, poor mental health and debts totalling more than £40,000 across nine financial institutions.

More than 12 months later, CAEE is still working with Clive to alleviate his circumstances. With considerable perseverance by both parties, most of his debt has been written off and Clive is on track to live an independent life, financially in control and debt-free.

Lisa Davis added: “CAEE gives people the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward – whoever they are and whatever the problem.”

Citizens Advice Epsom and Ewell

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Reigate to be “initial” HQ for new East Surrey Council

13 September 2026



Woodhatch Place in Reigate has been recommended as the preferred location for East Surrey Council’s main office building from 1 April 2027.

If approved by the East Surrey Shadow Executive on 14 September, this essential, short-term decision will help ensure the new council can operate effectively and maintain continuity of services for residents from the day it is established, as well as providing a flexible workspace for staff

The recommendation is intended to give East Surrey Council a suitable base from day one, while allowing time to develop longer-term plans for its offices and buildings across the area.

Continued access to local council services

Residents will continue to be able to visit existing local council offices across East Surrey to enquire about council services and seek support. Online and telephone services will also continue to be available, ensuring residents can access information and support in the way that works for them.

The proposal of Woodhatch as East Surrey’s initial headquarters, will not affect how residents access council services in their local communities.

Councillor Steve Wotton, Leader, East Surrey Shadow Council said: “This recommendation is about making sure East Surrey Council has the right facilities in place to operate effectively from day one and continue delivering services for residents without disruption. Woodhatch Place offers a practical and cost-effective base for the new council’s administrative functions, while giving us time to consider longer-term arrangements for council buildings across East Surrey. Importantly, residents will continue to be able to access services locally through existing council offices, as well as online and by telephone.”

How was the recommendation made?

A range of council-owned buildings across East Surrey were assessed against several criteria, including accessibility, transport links, office and council chamber capacity, value for money, IT infrastructure and parking provision.

The assessment identified Woodhatch Place as the location best able to meet the operational requirements of the new authority from 1 April 2027.

The recommendation does not determine future staffing structures or individual employee work locations. Any workforce changes will be considered separately after 1 April 2027 and would include staff engagement and consultation where required.

A report detailing proposals for civic functions will be considered at a later date and will include information about proposed meeting locations and times.

Surrey County Council

Epsom and Ewell Times adds:

East Surrey’s new council HQ: where is it and how do Epsom residents reach it?

Surrey County Council has confirmed that Woodhatch Place in Reigate will become the headquarters of the new East Surrey Council when the authority takes over local services on 1 April 2027.

The announcement did not, however, include the building’s full postal address. It is:

Woodhatch Place
11 Cockshot Hill
Reigate
Surrey
RH2 8EF

Woodhatch Place is not a new council building. Originally constructed as the headquarters of Canon UK, it was purchased

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by Surrey County Council in 2020 and became the County Council's principal administrative base in 2021. East Surrey Council will therefore inherit an established public-sector headquarters rather than commission a new one.

Epsom and Ewell will form part of the new East Surrey unitary authority. The location of its headquarters will consequently matter to residents, councillors, council employees and anyone required to attend a meeting or appointment in person.

Getting there from Epsom

The most straightforward public-transport journey from Epsom High Street is by bus.

Metrobus route 460 runs from **Epsom Clock Tower** through Tattenham Corner, Tadworth, Walton-on-the-Hill and Lower Kingswood to Reigate. During the main part of a weekday, buses generally leave Epsom hourly.

For example, the current published weekday timetable includes a 460 leaving Epsom Clock Tower at **9.18am** and reaching **Reigate, Bancroft Road at 10.07am** – a scheduled journey of 49 minutes. Other daytime departures are shown at 10.18am, 11.18am, 12.18pm and then hourly through much of the afternoon. Metrobus route 460 timetable

Woodhatch Place is south of Reigate town centre, rather than beside Reigate railway station or the principal town-centre bus stops. A passenger therefore has two main choices after reaching Reigate:

- Walk from the town centre to Woodhatch Place. The distance is approximately one to one-and-a-quarter miles and is likely to take around 20 to 25 minutes, depending upon the precise stopping point and the walker's pace.
- Change in Reigate to a local 430 or 435 bus serving South Park and Woodhatch. One example using the current timetable would be the 9.18am bus from Epsom, arriving at Bancroft Road at 10.07am, followed by a 435 at approximately 10.21am towards South Park and Woodhatch. It reaches the Hornbeam Road area at about 10.31am, followed by a short walk to Woodhatch Place. Metrobus routes 430 and 435

Allowing for the connection and final walk, a public-transport journey from Epsom High Street to the new headquarters is likely to take about **one hour and 15 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes**. Traffic through Tadworth, Reigate and surrounding roads can lengthen the journey.

A rail journey is possible but much less direct. Epsom and Reigate are not joined by a simple direct train service, so travelling by rail ordinarily involves changes and, depending upon the route chosen, a further bus or walk from Reigate station. For most passengers starting in Epsom town centre, the 460 is therefore likely to be the more practical option.

Residents should check a journey planner or the operator's live timetable before travelling, particularly once East Surrey Council begins operating, as routes and departure times may change before April 2027.

Although digital and telephone contact will undoubtedly account for most dealings with the new authority, the Reigate headquarters raises a practical question for Epsom and Ewell residents: whether a journey of potentially 90 minutes each way constitutes sufficiently convenient access to the administrative centre of their new council.

Conservative Mayoral hopeful seeks ULEZ review

13 September 2026



Surrey's Conservative shadow authority opposition leaders have thrown their weight behind a London mayoral candidate's pledge to review the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ).

Braintree MP Sir James Cleverly resigned from the Tory shadow cabinet at the end of August to stand for Mayor of London in 2028 – aiming to be the first Conservative to hold the office since Boris Johnson.

He told The Telegraph that he would conduct a full review of the London ULEZ if elected, vowing to end what he called Labour's "war on motorists".

The ULEZ requires drivers of high polluting vehicles to pay a daily fee of £12.50 to travel within its boundaries. It initially only covered London's inner boroughs, but was expanded to include the outer London suburbs in summer 2023.

But this expansion was met with fierce opposition in Surrey and the other Home Counties, where many commuters regularly drive into London and are forced to pay ULEZ charges.

Following Sir James' announcement, the Conservative opposition leaders on Surrey's two shadow councils told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) they fully support a review of the scheme.

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West Surrey's opposition leader Councillor Jane Austin (Conservative: Waverley Eastern Villages) said: "ULEZ does not stop at the London boundary in terms of its impact.

"Surrey residents travel into London every day for work, to run businesses, visit family and access services."

Advocates of the ULEZ argue the scheme is a vital programme to improve air quality in the capital, and have pointed to studies showing vast drops in pollution following its implementation.

However, critics argue it places punitive charges on owners of older cars, many of whom may not be able to afford greener alternatives. A scrappage scheme to replace older vehicles ran until September 2024, but this was only available to London residents.

Councillor Austin added: "At a time when households and businesses are already under considerable financial pressure, I think it is entirely reasonable to review the impact of the expanded scheme – including whether the claimed environmental benefits justify the financial burden being placed on residents and businesses outside London."

Surrey County Council opposed the 2023 expansion of ULEZ, and refused to allow Transport for London to install signage and cameras in the county related to the scheme.

East Surrey opposition leader Councillor David Lewis (Conservative: Cobham & Oxshott South) told the LDRS: "Surrey County Council opposed the ULEZ expansion from the outset because of the lack of support and the impact it would have on Surrey residents.

"We therefore welcome James Cleverly's commitment to look again at the scheme and properly examine its economic and environmental consequences."

Councillor Lewis also called on the West and East Surrey administrations, which will take responsibility for Surrey's highways next April, not to implement "blanket anti-motorist policies" in the county.

He said: "Whether it is blanket 20mph limits, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods or other restrictions, changes need to be evidence-led and take proper account of the needs of residents and local businesses."

East and West Surrey Shadow Authorities were contacted for comment. The Mayor of London's office also did not respond to requests for comment.

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

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Image: Sign for London ultra low emission zone (geograph 6183970) David Hawgood / Sign for London ultra low emission zone / CC BY-SA 2.0

Related reports

- ULEZ compliant taxis for Epsom and Ewell – 29 September 2023
- London Mayor confirms drive of ULEZ to Epsom border – ULEZ explainer – 28 July 2023
- ULEZ court challenge begins – 4 July 2023
- ULEZ driving old cars to Epsom market – 28 June 2023
- Challenge to ULEZ gaining grounds – 27 May 2023
- Many Surrey motorists will be paying the ULEZ charge – 25 April 2023
- ULEZ Court battle looming – 12 April 2023
- Surrey Council's ULEZ talks ongoing with TfL – 22 March 2023
- Can you beat the ULEZ charge? – 8 March 2023
- Will Me'lud halt ULEZ expansion to Epsom borders? – 16 February 2023
- A sign of no signs to come on ULEZ? – 2 February 2023
- ULEZ will come to Epsom and Ewell borders – 19 January 2023

Crime and Safety Round-Up: June to August 2026

13 September 2026

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

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

Eleven arrests during the Derby

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

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

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

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

Morning assault near Rosebery Park

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

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

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

Ewell murder trial ends in acquittals

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

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

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

Town-centre licensing restrictions rejected

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

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

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

Attempted motorcycle robbery on Ewell Bypass

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

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

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

Vehicle theft charge figures

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

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

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

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

Fatal collision on Christ Church Road

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

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

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

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

Retail crime remains a policing priority

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

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

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

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

Callers impersonating police officers

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

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

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

What the recorded figures show

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

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

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

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

Police engagement through the summer

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

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

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

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For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

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Sam Jones – Reporter



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Friendly finding puts Epsom and Ewell in England’s top fifth

13 September 2026



Epsom and Ewell has been ranked among the friendliest and most connected places in England in a new national index examining the strength of community life.

The borough placed 56th out of 296 local authority areas on the National Conversation’s Connection Barometer, giving it a score of 71.2 out of 100 and an “A” grade.

That puts Epsom and Ewell comfortably inside England’s top fifth and fourth highest among Surrey’s 11 boroughs and districts. Waverley was ranked 13th nationally, Mole Valley 21st and Elmbridge 23rd.

The results attracted national attention after The Guardian reported that the Isles of Scilly had been named England’s friendliest place. The islands were followed by South Hams, West Devon, Derbyshire Dales and the nearby London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

However, the description of the findings as a vote for England’s “friendliest” places needs some qualification. Residents were not simply asked to rate the friendliness of their towns and neighbours.

Instead, the barometer combines eight measures taken from the Government’s Community Life Survey 2024/25. Each council area was ranked against the other 295 areas on every measure, with those rankings averaged to produce a score out of 100.

The Epsom and Ewell figures were:

- 4.6% said they felt lonely often or always;
- 65.7% felt strongly that they belonged to their immediate neighbourhood;
- 48.4% believed many people in their neighbourhood could be trusted;
- 85.6% agreed that people from different backgrounds got on well together;
- 70.1% were proud to live in their local area;
- 69.1% chatted to their neighbours at least once a month;
- 20.1% undertook formal volunteering at least once a month; and
- 37.5% had participated in civic activities during the previous 12 months.

The borough performed particularly strongly on civic participation, volunteering, local pride and relations between people from different backgrounds. Its relatively low reported level of frequent loneliness also contributed positively to the overall score.

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The findings provide statistical support for the familiar picture of Epsom and Ewell as a borough sustained by residents' associations, charities, sports clubs, faith groups, heritage organisations and other voluntary bodies.

There are nevertheless reasons for treating precise league-table positions cautiously. The Government survey estimates come with margins of error, meaning small differences between neighbouring positions may not be statistically significant.

The barometer itself describes its score as a "rough guide, not a final measure". Its eight indicators are given equal weight and cannot capture every aspect of living in a particular community. The survey also covers the whole borough, so it does not reveal whether experiences differ between individual neighbourhoods.

The Community Life Survey questioned adults aged 16 and over between October 2024 and March 2025. A larger sample in 2023/24 and 2024/25 allowed the Government to publish meaningful estimates for individual local authority areas.

The index was produced by the secretariat of the Independent Commission on Community and Cohesion to support the wider National Conversation, a UK-wide exercise examining what connects and divides people.

The Commission is co-chaired by former Conservative Home Secretary Sir Sajid Javid and former Labour MP Jon Cruddas. It has brought together representatives from politics, academia, business, faith and civil society to consider growing concerns about social isolation, division and the weakening of community institutions.

The National Conversation explained that official statistics provide only part of the picture and that the index was intended to prompt discussion about whether the figures reflect people's lived experiences.

Its public survey closed on 31st August. The findings are expected to contribute to a report by the Independent Commission on Community and Cohesion later in 2026.

At the opposite end of the barometer, Barking and Dagenham ranked 296th, below Stoke-on-Trent, Ashfield, Mansfield and Ipswich.

For Epsom and Ewell, 56th place is not quite a claim to being England's single friendliest community. It does, however, provide encouraging evidence that neighbourliness, civic involvement and local pride remain notable strengths of the borough.

Lionel Blackman

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Idealised image

Surrey health literacy warning

13 September 2026



Nearly one in three working-age Surrey residents is not adequately health literate, a council committee report has warned.

The report, which is due to be considered at a joint meeting of Surrey's Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care Partnership next week, states that low levels of understanding of health information are a "significant barrier" to improving healthcare outcomes in the county.

It defines health literacy as "a person's ability to access, understand, evaluate, and use health information to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing".

But the document noted around 30 per cent of adults aged 16 to 65 in Surrey fall below the threshold for health literacy, rising to 37 per cent in the worst-performing borough, Spelthorne.

The countywide number rises to 49 per cent in areas where numeracy is required.

"This means many adults in Surrey are reading at, or below, the level of an average nine-year-old," the report reads, "This is a significant concern and highlights the need for continued focus and action to address health literacy across Surrey."

People with poor health literacy will struggle to read or understand health-related information and know what action to take based on it, the document says.

"Low health literacy is also closely linked to educational disadvantage, deprivation, disability and poorer health outcomes," it reads, "Improving the accessibility of health information and services is therefore an important lever for reducing health inequalities."

People with bad health literacy are also more likely to go to hospital more and have depression, the report adds.

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A health-literacy pilot programme called Clearer Care aims to combat this trend and help make health information and services clearer for Surrey residents.

It aims to achieve this through a mix of expert guidance and small grants to help Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations deliver their own health literacy pilots.

The report says: “This is a small-scale pilot programme aimed at introducing and embedding health literacy across Surrey. While limited funding and a VCSE-led delivery model may constrain its immediate impact on wider system change, the programme provides an important opportunity to test approaches, generate learning and demonstrate impact.

“Findings will help inform future development, potential scaling and opportunities to embed health literacy more systematically across the system.”

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

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A doctor stock image (Credit: Pixabay

Surrey campaigners seek independent appeal rights over new flight paths

13 September 2026



Surrey countryside campaigners have joined a national call for residents to be given an independent right of appeal when changes are proposed to flight paths over their homes.

CPRE Surrey is among 22 community and environmental organisations that have signed a letter delivered to 10 Downing Street warning that the Government’s aviation reforms could leave the Civil Aviation Authority as both the regulator making decisions on airspace changes and the body answering complaints about those decisions.

The letter, addressed to Prime Minister Andy Burnham, calls for the Civil Aviation (Consumer Protection and Regulatory Reform) Bill to be amended to establish an independent airspace ombudsman.

Campaigners say this would give residents somewhere outside the CAA to seek a review of decisions capable of concentrating aircraft noise over homes, schools and previously quieter areas.

The proposed legislation arrives as the Government begins the most extensive redesign of British airspace for decades. Although the Bill does not itself draw new flight paths or change airport operating hours, it would strengthen the machinery through which approved airspace changes can be implemented.

Its significance for Surrey arises particularly from the planned redesign of the highly congested airspace over London and the South East, involving Heathrow, Gatwick and other airports.

What the Bill would change

The Civil Aviation (Consumer Protection and Regulatory Reform) Bill is a wider aviation measure covering passenger rights, enforcement of consumer law, airport slots, safety regulation and airspace modernisation.

It completed its stages in the House of Lords on 20th July and received its formal first reading in the House of Commons on 1st September. A date for its Commons second reading has yet to be announced.

Under existing legislation, the Transport Secretary can direct an airport, air navigation provider or another organisation involved in airspace change to prepare and progress a proposal. Clause 4 of the new Bill would extend that power so a direction could also require an airspace change already approved by the CAA to be implemented.

The Government’s explanatory notes say this would make the direction-making power available at every stage of the process, including putting an approved design into operation and implementing alterations identified by a subsequent review.

The Government argues that Britain’s underlying airspace design has changed little since the 1950s and is increasingly unsuitable for modern aircraft and present-day traffic levels. It says redesigning routes could permit more direct journeys

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and improved climb and descent profiles, cutting delays, fuel use and emissions.

The Bill would also allow the CAA to make detailed rules covering aviation safety and operations. However, these general rule-making provisions are distinct from the CAA's function of deciding individual airspace change proposals. The measure does not expressly abolish consultation on individual proposals or create new flight paths by itself.

A new "guiding mind" for UK airspace

The broader reform centres on the new UK Airspace Design Service, known as UKADS. It is being provided by NATS En Route Ltd, the monopoly provider of en-route air traffic control services.

In its June 2025 announcement, the Government described UKADS as a single "guiding mind" capable of producing a coordinated design instead of relying upon airports to develop overlapping proposals separately.

The Government said UK airspace handled around 200,000 flights annually in the 1950s, compared with 2.47 million in 2024. Without modernisation, it estimated that one flight in five could experience disruption or delay by 2040.

The first priority for UKADS is the London airspace "cluster". This includes the routes serving Gatwick and Heathrow and would also encompass airspace alterations needed for a third runway at Heathrow.

For Surrey residents, modernisation could therefore determine not merely how many aircraft use the region's airports but where arriving and departing aircraft fly, at what heights and how noise is distributed.

Modern satellite navigation allows aircraft to follow routes much more accurately. That can reduce the total population affected by noise but may also concentrate flights over a narrower corridor, leaving households directly beneath it exposed more frequently.

How the public is consulted

Individual permanent flight-path changes must normally follow the CAA's CAP 1616 airspace change process. A proposal is generally sponsored by an airport or air navigation service provider, although UKADS will now take a coordinating role in the London region.

Depending on the scale and likely effects of a proposal, the process includes development of design options, environmental assessment, engagement and public consultation. Consultation responses and other documents are published through the CAA's Airspace Change Portal.

The portal allows residents to search by postcode or place name for proposals near them. The CAA says CAP 1616 is intended to provide a transparent, impartial and evidence-based assessment taking account of everyone affected.

When making a decision, the CAA must give priority to safety and then consider matters including efficient use of airspace, the needs of aircraft operators, environmental guidance and the interests of people on the ground.

The Government's revised 2026 air-navigation guidance also sets expectations for engagement and consultation with affected communities and for the assessment of noise and other environmental consequences.

Consultation, however, is not the same as a right of appeal. It allows people to comment before a decision is made but does not necessarily provide an independent tribunal to reconsider the eventual decision.

Existing routes of challenge are limited

Anyone may ask the Transport Secretary to "call in" an airspace proposal and decide it in place of the CAA. But the request must normally be made during a four-week window and satisfy restricted criteria.

According to the CAA's call-in guidance, a proposal must be of strategic national importance, have a potentially significant effect on UK economic growth, or meet a specified test involving both aircraft noise and its effects on health and quality of life.

The noise test requires a net increase of at least 10,000 people exposed to 54 decibels or more during the relevant 16-hour daytime period. Even if a proposal qualifies, the Secretary of State is not obliged to take it over.

Otherwise, a dissatisfied community may be left to pursue a complaint about whether the proper process was followed or consider judicial review. Judicial review is generally concerned with the lawfulness of a decision, rather than providing a complete reconsideration of whether a different route would have been fairer or less damaging. It can also be costly and procedurally demanding.

The Bill preserves an appeal against a ministerial direction for the person or organisation directed to carry out an airspace change. That is not an equivalent appeal for residents affected on the ground.

It is this gap that CPRE Surrey and the other signatories want an ombudsman to fill.

"Decisions made over their heads"

CPRE Surrey Chair Jennet Eyre said: "This Bill risks giving communities the worst of both worlds: more decisions made over their heads, with no independent way to review them.

"Residents deserve a process that is transparent, accountable and genuinely fair. If there can be independent oversight for passengers, consumers and proposed for the Clean Water Bill then there must also be independent oversight for the communities living under flight paths."

The campaigners say they are not opposed to airspace modernisation or aviation but believe the interests of the industry

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should not override the health, sleep and quality of life of affected communities.

Ms Eyre added: “Families on the ground should not be left to live with increased noise, sleep disruption, health impacts or loss of amenity from concentrated flight paths without a clear, independent way to challenge how those decisions are made.”

The Government maintains that modernisation can produce “quicker, quieter and cleaner” flights and says future airspace designs will remain subject to environmental assessment and community engagement.

The central dispute is consequently not whether the public will be consulted at all. It is what residents can do after consultation if they believe their evidence has been disregarded, the effects have been underestimated or the burden of aircraft noise has been distributed unfairly.

CPRE Surrey is now urging MPs to amend the Bill during its Commons stages to provide an independent review mechanism outside the CAA. Whether ministers accept that argument may determine how much confidence communities place in the consultations that accompany the coming redesign of the skies above Surrey.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Gatwick to get 2nd runway? – 13th July 2023

Heritage doors open across Epsom and Ewell

13 September 2026



Historic buildings, forgotten stories and rarely seen corners of Surrey will be brought to life when Heritage Open Days return from Friday 11th to Sunday 20th September.

The annual festival offers free access to historic places, guided walks, exhibitions and talks. This year’s theme, “Everyday Histories”, celebrates the lives, work and experiences of people whose stories may not always feature in traditional accounts of the past.

Among the many events taking place across Surrey are a dozen opportunities to explore the heritage of Epsom and Ewell, ranging from the history of the borough’s spa and racecourse to Ewell’s buildings, local currency and the lives of thousands of patients once treated in Epsom’s psychiatric hospitals.

Remembering the 9,000 at Horton Cemetery

A particular focus of the local programme will be Horton Cemetery – 9,000 People Remembered, taking place on Saturday 12th September from 10am to 4pm.

Around 9,000 former patients of Epsom’s cluster of five psychiatric hospitals were buried in Horton Cemetery between 1899 and 1955. Most lie in unmarked graves and, for decades, their individual identities and life stories were largely forgotten.

The Friends of Horton Cemetery have been working to restore those identities through historical and family research.

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Visitors will be able to meet researchers and volunteers, explore displays, listen to audio material and learn about some of the people buried there.

The event will be held on land adjacent to the cemetery in Hook Road. The cemetery itself remains inaccessible, but free parking will be available close to the event. Admission is free and advance booking is not required, although the organisers expect the site to become busier later in the day.

A linked event, The History of Horton Asylum and Horton Cemetery, will run at The Horton Arts Centre in Haven Way from 10am to 4pm on the same day.

The Grade II-listed arts centre occupies the former chapel of Horton Hospital. Its exhibitions, presentations and tours will examine the history of Epsom's five psychiatric hospitals and the lives of the patients and staff who lived and worked within them. Researchers will also be available to help visitors investigate possible family connections.

Local events across the ten days

The borough's programme begins on Friday 11th September, when St Martin of Tours Church in Church Street, Epsom, will open from 9.30am to 1pm. The parish church will also be open on most days during the festival:

- Saturday 12th September, 10am to 5pm
- Sunday 13th September, noon to 6pm
- Monday 14th to Friday 18th September, 9.30am to 1pm
- Sunday 20th September, noon to 6pm

On Sunday 13th September, a guided Epsom Salts and Spa Walk will leave the historic Assembly Rooms in the High Street at 11am. The walk will explore how Epsom's mineral waters transformed the town into a fashionable spa destination. Advance booking is required.

Ewell Court House, in Ewell Court Avenue, will welcome visitors between 10am and 2pm that day, offering an opportunity to discover more about the history and architecture of the house. No booking is required.

Also on Sunday, the Service Wing Museum at Nonsuch Park will open from noon until 4pm. The museum occupies part of the surviving service wing of the former Nonsuch Mansion and contains displays relating to the history of the estate and the lost Tudor Palace of Nonsuch. Admission is free without advance booking.

Bourne Hall will host Everyday Histories in Worcester Park from the Iron Age to the Computer Age at 2pm on Monday 14th September. The talk will follow the development of the area through archaeological discoveries, changing communities and more recent technological history. Booking is required.

On Tuesday 15th September, former professional jockey Caroline Baldock will lead Life on the Downs, a guided walk around the Derby course at Epsom Downs Racecourse. The walk begins at 10am and is expected to last approximately 90 minutes. Places are limited and must be booked in advance.

Lost Buildings of Epsom will be the subject of a talk at Bourne Hall at 2pm on Wednesday 16th September. It will recall notable local buildings that have disappeared through redevelopment, demolition or changing uses. Advance booking is required.

Two events follow on Thursday 17th September. Ewell Village, People and Places is a guided walk leaving Bourne Hall at 10am, while Token Coins in Ewell and Epsom, at Bourne Hall Museum at 2pm, will explore the tokens issued by local traders when official coinage was in short supply. Both events require booking.

The local programme concludes on Saturday 19th September when Ewell Castle School opens its doors to visitors from noon until 3pm. The school is celebrating its centenary, having been founded in 1926 when H R Budgell acquired the Castle and opened a school for an initial intake of 40 boys. Advance booking is required.

All Heritage Open Days events are free, but capacity is limited for several of the guided walks and talks. Visitors should book promptly where required and check the individual listings before travelling, as arrangements can change.

The full Surrey Heritage Open Days programme and event search provides details of events across the county, including opening times, accessibility information and booking arrangements.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Attic find fills gap in Epsom local asylum history

Petition to reclaim Horton Cemetery from property speculator

Bringing centuries of Surrey records into the 21st century

New vicar returns to his Epsom roots

13 September 2026



The Revd Tom Hill has returned to the church where he came to faith more than 25 years ago, following his institution as Vicar of Christ Church Epsom Common.

The service took place on Thursday 27th August and was led by the acting Bishop of Guildford, the Rt Revd Paul Davies, who instituted Mr Hill. He was subsequently inducted and installed by the Archdeacon of Dorking, the Ven Martin Breadmore.

Ordinarily, the appointment of a new vicar would involve a service of collation conducted by the diocesan bishop. However, the Diocese of Guildford currently has what is formally known as a “vacancy in see”, meaning that there is no serving diocesan bishop. As acting bishop, Bishop Paul institutes rather than collates a new incumbent.

The congregation included the Very Revd Bob Cooper, Dean of Guildford Cathedral, local clergy and representatives of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, schools, uniformed organisations and Churches Together in Epsom.

Official welcomes were offered by Dean Bob Cooper on behalf of Guildford Cathedral and the Revd John Marrow, Area Dean.

Others welcoming the new vicar included Louise Druce, headteacher of Stamford Green Primary School; Karl Nicholas, District Lead Volunteer for Epsom and Ewell Scout District, representing local uniformed organisations; churchwardens David Blacoe and Gill Glasspool; and Christ Church’s children and youth worker, Sofia Welsby. Young members of the Christ Church congregation also took part.

The service had particular personal significance for Mr Hill, who grew up in Epsom and first came to faith at Christ Church more than 25 years ago.

Before entering the ministry, he served for 13 years as an officer with the Metropolitan Police. He began training for ordination in 2016 and subsequently served as a curate at Holy Trinity Claygate and as Associate Minister at Leatherhead Parish Church.

Members of Christ Church were joined at the service by many of Mr Hill’s family and friends, as well as visitors from his former parish in Leatherhead. Mr Hill is married to Megan and the couple have four children.

The occasion also provided an opportunity for Christ Church to welcome two new curates, the Revd Patrick Corley and the Revd Rebecca Catterall.

A reception followed in the parish hall, where former churchwarden Fay Wedlake presented the new vicar with a cross carrying a long association with Christ Church. The cross has traditionally occupied a place in the vicarage study and has been passed down from one vicar to the next over many years.

Mr Hill said he was looking forward to a new season of growth at Christ Church, sharing the Christian message and getting to know more people throughout the local community.

His first Sunday service as Vicar of Christ Church Epsom Common will take place at 10am on Sunday 6th September. All are welcome.

Christ Church Epsom Common is in Christ Church Road, Epsom, KT19 8NE.

Lionel Blackman

Photo: From left to right:

Berwick Curtis Licensed Lay Minister at Christ Church

Revd Nico Ohlsson St Paul’s Howell Hill

Revd Harry Lamaison St Barnabus

Revd Sue Ayling, St Mary’s Ewell

Archdeacon The Ven. Martin Breadmore

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Revd James Wakefield, St Mark’s Tattenham Corner

Revd Rebecca Catterall curate Christ Church

Revd John Marrow All Saints West Ewell

Revd David Senior St Pauls Howell Hill

Revd Tom Hill vicar Christ Church

Revd Patrick Corley curate Christ Church

Acting Bishop of Guildford The Rt Revd Paul Davies.

Bringing centuries of Surrey records into the 21st century

13 September 2026



Residents, researchers and history enthusiasts will soon find it easier than ever to explore Surrey’s rich heritage thanks to a major investment in a new collections management system at the Surrey History Centre, by Surrey County Council.

Home to Surrey’s archives, Surrey History Centre, with accredited status by The National Archives, cares for an extraordinary collection spanning more than 900 years of history. Its six miles of shelving contain around six million documents, manuscripts and parchment records dating back to the Middle Ages.

The collection includes family and house history records such as parish registers, census returns, civil registration records, poor law records, electoral registers and manorial records. It also houses thousands of historic photographs, postcards, watercolours, engravings and archive films, alongside local history books, directories, newspapers, periodicals and historic maps.

Among its treasured special collections are records and papers connected to notable Surrey figures and businesses, including Lewis Carroll, renowned garden designer Gertrude Jekyll and the Broadwood piano family.

Managing and preserving such an extensive collection is a significant undertaking. The introduction of the new collections management system will transform how people discover and access Surrey’s archives, making searches faster, more intuitive and more comprehensive.

The improved online catalogue will be available Monday 14 September and provide an improved user experience, helping users quickly locate the records and documents they need. Documents can then be ordered up from home in advance of their visit to the Surrey History Centre.

Councillor Mark Nuti, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Health and Communities, said: “Our archives tell the story of Surrey and the people who have lived, worked and shaped our county over hundreds of years. By investing in modern technology, we are helping to ensure these invaluable records can continue to be discovered, explored and enjoyed by future generations.

“This is about investing in the future to gain access to the past. The new collections management system will make it easier for residents, family historians and researchers to explore Surrey’s rich heritage, with improved search functionality and the ability to request documents before visiting the Surrey History Centre. These improvements will help people plan their research more effectively and make the most of their time with us, while encouraging even more people to discover the fascinating stories held within Surrey’s archives.”

The investment forms part of Surrey County Council’s commitment to preserving the county’s heritage while making public services more accessible and user-friendly through digital innovation.

For more information about the Surrey History Centre and its collections, visit: Surrey History Centre – Surrey County Council

Surrey County Council

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

Image: John Speed – 1610 – Map of Surrey (including Nonsuch Palace) Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps, Inc.

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The young have their place in new Surrey governing

13 September 2026



Surrey’s youngest councillors want to see more young people get involved in local government – and not let growing hostility towards elected representatives deter them from standing.

Elections to Surrey’s two new unitary authorities in May saw several councillors under the age of 30 elected to the shadow council.

These new councils will formally assume all local government responsibilities from next April, at which point Surrey County Council and all 11 district councils will be abolished.

However, many younger councillors across the country face heightened online threats and abuse due to their age – with a 2024 Local Government Association (LGA) survey finding that seven in 10 councillors had received abuse or intimidation in the past 12 months.

The LGA’s findings added that younger councillors will often report heightened abuse “suggesting they were too inexperienced” due to their age.

But several of the new shadow councillors told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) they are determined not to let this stand in the way of doing their jobs – or deter them from standing for office.

Councillor Harleen Boparai (Liberal Democrats: Staines South and Ashford West) said: “Yes, we are faced with online abuse but young people are more aware than any other generation.

“We know how to ignore comments from bad faith actors and stay focused on getting things done for our communities.”

In a July meeting of the East Surrey Shadow Authority, councillors of all ages shared examples of the threats and intimidation they had received from residents and voters – which included threats of violence and inappropriate messages.

“This behaviour discourages good people from standing for public office,” Councillor Kirsty Hewens (Liberal Democrats: Walton South & Oatlands) told councillors at the meeting.

Despite the online abuse and intimidation faced by younger councillors, many of those elected have said they want to use their office to address the issues facing young people in Surrey.

Councillor Bradley Nelson (Liberal Democrats: Dorking) said “As councillors in our twenties, we also know how difficult it is to afford a home, get around without a car or find thriving town centres that offer opportunities for younger people.

“Rather than complain about those challenges, we’ve chosen to try do something about it.”

He pointed to the startlingly high cost of housing in Surrey, which is among the highest in the country outside of London, as a key issue affecting younger people in the county.

He added that balancing his council duties alongside his early career helps bring a useful perspective to the council.

Councillor Josh Lambert (Liberal Democrats: Walton North) added: “Being a councillor shouldn’t be restricted to those with surplus time or money. It’s vital that young working people are represented in local government.

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

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