

# Epsom & Ewell MP presses government on firearm licensing safeguards

29 January 2026



Epsom & Ewell's MP **Helen Maguire** led a Westminster Hall debate on 28 January calling for tighter safeguards in the firearms licensing system, with a particular focus on making *medical markers* on GP records mandatory for gun licence holders.

Opening the debate, Ms Maguire set out the case for reform by referencing a series of fatal incidents where legally held firearms were used, including cases with direct relevance to Epsom & Ewell. She told MPs that the issue was not about restricting lawful gun ownership, but about closing gaps in safeguarding where warning signs were missed.

"This is a missed opportunity to save lives," she said. "A missed opportunity to safeguard vulnerable adults with access to firearms and protect public safety."

## Local tragedy cited in Parliament

In a powerful and emotional passage, Ms Maguire referred to the double murder and suicide connected to **Epsom College**, a case that attracted national attention in 2023. She told the House:

"Gemma and her daughter Letty Patterson, who lived in my constituency, were shot and killed by Gemma's husband almost three years ago, before he turned the gun on himself... If they had [been able to intervene], maybe Gemma would still be working at Epsom College and Letty might have celebrated her 10th birthday this year."

Ms Maguire argued that the perpetrator's use of online medical services meant that neither his GP nor the police were aware of changes in his mental health when his shotgun licence was renewed.

## Case for mandatory medical markers

Medical markers are digital flags on GP systems indicating that a patient holds a firearm or shotgun licence. They are intended to prompt doctors to consider whether changes in a patient's mental or physical health should be shared with police firearms units.

Although such markers are now available, their use by GPs remains voluntary. Ms Maguire said that this undermined their effectiveness:

"There is currently no obligation on GPs to use this marker. Their use is left to best endeavours... This cannot be allowed to happen again."

She cited support for mandatory markers from a wide range of bodies, including the British Medical Association, the Royal College of GPs, shooting organisations and police representatives. Quoting survey evidence, she added that "87% of existing certificate holders believe GPs should inform the police if they become aware of a change of health which could impact a certificate holder's ability to safely own a gun."

## Balancing safety and rural life

Anticipating concerns from rural MPs, Ms Maguire stressed that her proposals were not an attack on shooting sports or countryside livelihoods.

"Our country is home to proud rural communities and individuals who rely on gun ownership for their work," she said. "This debate is in no way about firearm ownership... Today's discussion is on how we can ensure medical professionals have the information required to best support the individuals they serve."

She pointed to other licensing regimes, such as driving licences, where medical fitness is routinely monitored in the public interest.

## Government response

Responding for the government, the Minister acknowledged the tragedy at Epsom College and confirmed that thousands of digital medical markers are already being applied each year. However, he stopped short of committing to make them mandatory, arguing that existing data suggested most GPs were using the system appropriately.

Ms Maguire challenged that position directly in the debate, asking: "If we're saying there's no additional cost to it, then

I'm struggling to understand why it's difficult to change the position."

In her closing remarks, she expressed disappointment at the government's stance and warned against complacency: "I do not want to be here again talking about another incident. And I truly hope the Minister will go away and really consider this."

The debate concluded with broad cross-party support for the principle of stronger safeguards, even as ministers resisted calls for immediate legislative change.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Helen Maguire MP speaking in the Westminster Hall debate. Parliament TV

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## Royal visit to Surrey University

29 January 2026



On 28 January, HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh and the University of Surrey's Chancellor, HRH The Duke of Kent, visited Surrey to celebrate the University's innovation, research and hands on learning. During their visit, they met students and staff from across campus, gaining insight into Surrey's multidisciplinary approach to education.

Medical students at the first and only medical school in Surrey met The Duchess of Edinburgh to demonstrate the collaborative training that will shape their careers in the NHS. The Duchess returned to the University of Surrey's Kate Granger Building six years after she opened it as the home of its School of Health Sciences. Her Royal Highness met some of the University's first cohort of UK government-funded medical students who began their studies in September 2025.

The Duchess also met medical, nursing, midwifery and paramedic students learning together in the collaborative training wards before joining a virtual reality anatomy teaching session.

The University's Chancellor, The Duke of Kent, joined her Royal Highness at the Surrey Space Centre, where they visited labs to see a student-designed satellite deploy pod which will push a payload from a rocket into space.

At the Space Centre, The Duchess visited the satellite clean room toured by Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1998. In the clean room, Her Royal Highness helped to fit a panel engraved with Their Royal Highnesses' Royal Cyphers to Jovian-1, a satellite which Surrey students helped develop.

Schoolchildren who took part in the University's widening participation summer schools returned to campus to show off the hands-on STEM projects they enjoyed last year, with The Duke and Duchess joining in. Students from the University's Engineering Design Centre also had the opportunity to show His Royal Highness a range of projects, including rocket designs and Formula E racing cars.

Professor Stephen Jarvis, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Surrey, said:

*"Training medical students alongside nursing, midwifery and paramedic students reflects how the NHS operates in practice. Our students graduate already equipped to work effectively in multidisciplinary teams, rather than having to learn this solely once they enter the workplace. The Duchess saw this first-hand in our training wards, where students from different disciplines learn together in realistic clinical settings.*

*"Her Royal Highness also saw our engineering students working on satellites they have designed and built themselves - hardware that will ultimately be launched into orbit. That combination of world-class research and practical, employer-ready skills lies at the heart of what we do. For our students, whether still studying or already well into their careers, having two members of the Royal Family witness this work first-hand is an experience they will long remember. It was a truly memorable day for our entire community."*

The visit marked a return to sites with strong royal connections. Queen Elizabeth II visited the University's Guildford

campus three times during her 70-year reign: in 1992, where she inaugurated the University's Centre for Satellite Engineering Research; 1998, when she once again paid a visit to the Surrey Space Centre; and in 2015, when she opened Surrey's School of Veterinary Medicine.

Patrick Degg, Vice-President, Global at the University of Surrey, said:

*"We thank both The Duchess of Edinburgh and The Duke of Kent for their continued support for Surrey. The Duke has served as our Chancellor since June 1976. To have him return in this 50th year of his Chancellorship alongside The Duchess, and for them both to see the breadth of the research and teaching Surrey delivers has been a moment of collective pride.*

*"A programme that took in our pioneering space engineering, our new medical school and other aspects of our multidisciplinary research and teaching, spoke to the transformation The Duke has witnessed and championed throughout his tenure. His presence continues to inspire our community and affirm the values at the heart of this institution."*

### **About Surrey Space Centre**

Since its founding in 1979, the Surrey Space Centre has been a leading space engineering hub and is widely seen as the birthplace of the small satellite revolution. Professor Sir Martin Sweeting spun out Surrey Satellite Technologies Limited from his work at the Centre, and its recent missions have included RemoveDEBRIS, which demonstrated ways to capture debris in orbit.

The University recently announced the creation of the Surrey Space Institute, which brings together expertise across engineering, law, biosciences and artificial intelligence to build skills, partnerships and future space missions - with a particular focus on protecting Earth's resources and critical orbital infrastructure.

Surrey University



HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh looking at a picture of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at the University of Surrey.  
Credit Surrey University

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## **Heathrow 3rd runway green-light by 2029?**

29 January 2026



Heathrow Airport has begun working on its third runway planning application with the aim of getting the green light by 2029.

Last November, the Government indicated that the West London hub's plan, which involves re-routing and tunnelling the M25, would be the preferred basis for expansion.

A second, less disruptive, option that featured a smaller runway put forward by Arora was rejected.

Now, Heathrow has announced it will begin getting its blueprints in order - in what it has called a significant step forward for the UK's most important growth project.

The Government will still need to push through regulatory and policy decisions this year that will determine whether the £33billion 3,500m long runway project can proceed.

If built, it would increase the number of flights at Heathrow to 756,000 a year, with 150million people expected to use the airport. In 2024, the airport handled 83.9 million passengers while operating at 99 per cent of its annual flight capacity of 480,000.

Heathrow CEO Thomas Woldbye said: "Expansion is taking another significant step forward today as our board greenlights starting work on the planning application.

"This decision means we are on track to secure planning permission by 2029 and reflects Ministers' renewed commitment to expansion and progress made to speed up delivery of the project to boost UK economic growth.

"Heathrow expansion is a critical national project and a central part of our journey to make Heathrow an extraordinary airport, fit for the future. Maintaining momentum will mean the CAA and Ministers remain focussed on securing the benefits of the project by meeting vital milestones in 2026 that are essential to enabling the next phase of delivery."

Heathrow argues expansion would drive long-term economic growth and see billions invested into the UK while strengthening airline networks and enhancing the UK's global trading links.

Critics slam the plans for the devastating impact it would have on the environment and challenge the financial benefits saying they are both overstated - and with many of extra passengers being transit, the benefits would be felt elsewhere.

Others believe the airport is already too close to London and Surrey and the added noise would blight millions of lives.

The Government believes the project can be delivered while meeting national environmental targets.

The timetable for the complex project has the runway coming into operation by 2039.

Key dates to look out for before then include Spring 2026 when the Civil Aviation Authority is expected to provide clarity on early stage project costs.

In the summer the Department for Transport is scheduled to publish its draft Airports National Policy Statement.

In the autumn, Parliament will decide on the project's planning framework.

Chris Caulfield LDRS

3rd Runway Plans (image Heathrow)

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## Surrey Police's AI powered face recognition cameras in the spotlight

29 January 2026



Surrey Police will continue to use AI-powered surveillance vans to scan thousands of people's faces in public locations despite fears over ethnic bias, said councillors calling for their use to be put on hold.

The Home Office is funding the use of new artificial intelligence powered cameras in Surrey to scan the faces of anybody who crosses their path.

On November 26 last year, the police brought the technology to Woking and recorded 7,686 people over a five-hour recording period - to cross reference them against known suspects.

The force has said the system was safe following a 2023 study that found previous bias in the system had been coded out - but more recent testing by the National Physical Laboratory suggests false positives are still happening too frequently among ethnic minorities.

The report read: "At the operational setting used by police, the testing identified that in a limited set of circumstances the algorithm is more likely to incorrectly include some demographic groups in its search results."

The Home Office has said will act on the findings and that a "new algorithm has been procured and independently tested, which can be used at settings with no significant demographic variation in performance.

The new algorithm is due to be operationally tested early next year and will be subject to evaluation."

It has led to calls from Woking Borough Councillors for the system to be mothballed until it has been thoroughly tested - something which Surrey Police has so far refused to do.

Speaking at a Tuesday, December 20, meeting of the borough's communities and housing scrutiny committee, Surrey Police Chief Inspector Andy Hill described the system as having the support of the Home Office and said it was a valuable tool "to keep Surrey safe."

He said: "It's a safe place but if we've got the opportunity to use the latest technology then we want to make sure that we are doing that." Early versions of the software created false alerts at a disproportionate rate among ethnic groups.

In London the Met Police is facing a High Court challenge after an anti-knife crime activist said he was misidentified and threatened with arrest. Surrey Police said it was confident in the system and that people are only arrested under

suspicion, it does not mean guilt.

The technology is used in high footfall areas and is said to have a chilling effect on crime with notable falls in the following weeks after its deployment.

Any images that do not match those on its wanted list are instantly deleted. Matched faces are deleted at the end of the day. If the system thinks it has found a face on the police's wanted database officers at the scene are notified and it is up to them how to proceed.

Committee chair Cllr Tom Bonsundy-O'Bryan said: "I have very serious concerns about the proportionality of this. Are the pros, which feels pretty limited in one of the safest town centres in the UK, worth the cost of 7,000 free citizens having their faces scanned by this technology?"

"This doesn't feel like targeted policing, it doesn't feel like proportionate policing. It starts to feel like something more Orwellian in a kind of mass surveillance. With everything that you've said, all the facts about data not being stored, data not being used to train models

"It still feels like an overreach into people's privacy, people's rights fundamentally. Is there a point when it's not proportionate, how many faces should we scan? To me it already feels vastly disproportionate."

Chief Insp Hill said: "We are in the view that it is proportionate and it is appropriate and it is technology available to us. We don't feel like we are reaching into a technology space. The van is funded by the Home Office, it's why we want to continue using it but also keep it under review."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

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[Live facial recognition policing comes to Surrey](#)

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## Goldman sacks the Epsom and Ewell Residents Association

29 January 2026



A councillor representing Nonsuch ward has become the latest member of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to change political alignment mid-term, with **Shanice Goldman** joining the Conservative group.

Cllr Goldman, first elected in May 2023, said her decision was based on where she believed she could be "most effective" in achieving practical outcomes for residents, rather than on ideology or internal party politics. She cited concerns about governance, the Local Plan and the council's approach to parish councils as key factors influencing her move.

Her defection comes amid a period of visible political flux at **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**, which is currently controlled by the Residents' Associations (RAs). In recent months, College ward councillor **Julie Morris** left the Liberal Democrats to sit as an Independent, while **Alex Coley** departed the RA group, also choosing to continue as an Independent councillor.

In a statement explaining her decision, Cllr Goldman said she had found it increasingly difficult to support an administration she felt was not sufficiently focused on delivery or long-term outcomes. She said her priorities were better aligned with the Conservatives' approach to accountability, governance and service delivery, adding that any local government reform should be "resident-focused, evidence-led, and driven by improved service delivery rather than structural change for its own sake".

She also pointed to Conservative positions on safety, the Green Belt and scrutiny of council decision-making as factors in her decision, while stressing that her core priorities for residents had not changed.

The move was welcomed by local Conservative officers, who used the announcement to criticise the Residents' Association-led administration's record on council management, the Local Plan and parish council proposals. They said Cllr Goldman's arrival strengthened their group's capacity to challenge the council on behalf of residents.

Cllr Goldman said she would continue to focus on improving safety, quality of life and transparency in decision-making for residents of Nonsuch ward.

Her change of affiliation does not alter the overall control of the council, but it adds to a growing pattern of councillors stepping away from their original party groupings during the current term, raising wider questions about cohesion, governance and political direction at the borough council.

Though Conservative controlled Reigate and Banstead Borough Council has the lowest per capita debt of the 11 Surrey districts councils the three super-league mass indebted Councils were or are run by Conservatives at the relevant period of debt accumulation. See today's Epsom and Ewell Times editorial: Process matters — but so does the balance sheet.

Sam Jones - Reporter

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## Another Epsom and Ewell Borough Council cover-up of criticism?

29 January 2026



Following closely behind the storm over the secrecy around the apparent failure of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to maintain over 20 years an adequate landlord's oversight of The Rainbow Leisure Centre [see Epsom and Ewell Times and the BBC's LDRS report: Cllr Dallen accused of £1/2 m Epsom & Ewell Council cover-up], Independent Councillor for Ruxley Ward (former RA representative) Mr. Alex Coley has written to the Epsom and Ewell Times about the non-disclosure of a report concerning another Council asset: Bourne Hall in Ewell Village.

His letter is published here: [A Decision Not Fully Bourne Out?](#)

In view of the technicalities and jargon involved Epsom and Ewell Times provides this explainer:

When Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Community & Wellbeing Committee met on 13th January, it voted unanimously for greater investment ("Option 2") for the future of Bourne Hall Museum. On the surface, this appeared to be a clear decision to invest in the museum rather than let it drift or close it. See Epsom and Ewell Times report here: [Ewell's "UFO" shaped Bourne Hall to take off anew](#)

However, Cllr Coley explains in his letter to the Epsom & Ewell Times, the decision sits on top of a missing report, an unresolved funding question, and wider concerns about transparency in the decision-making process.

### The three options - in plain English

The committee report presented councillors with three choices for the museum.

Option 1 was to do nothing. This would mean keeping the museum running as it is, within existing budgets, with no major changes or new investment. Officers warned that this approach would slowly reduce visitor numbers, weaken the wider Bourne Hall business plan, and leave the museum vulnerable as local government is reorganised.

Option 2, which the committee chose, was to invest in improvement. This would involve spending money in the short term to modernise displays, improve accessibility, strengthen community engagement, collect better visitor data, and develop a long-term plan. The report presents this option as a stepping stone towards a future where the museum could eventually move to a trust or community-based model.

Option 3 was to close the museum. This would involve shutting it to the public and beginning the lengthy and costly process of disposing of or transferring the collection, a process expected to take many years and carry significant reputational risk.

### What "Option 2" actually commits the council to

This is where the language becomes technical, and where misunderstanding can easily arise.

By choosing Option 2, the committee did not approve spending the money. Instead, it agreed that officers should submit a funding request to the Strategy & Resources Committee in March 2026.

The report estimates that Option 2 would cost around £359,000 per year in the first two years, compared with around £236,000 for simply carrying on as now. The difference reflects a proposed investment phase intended to "turn the museum around".

Crucially, the committee resolution includes a fallback position. If Strategy & Resources does not approve the funding, the council will revert to doing nothing and carry on with business as usual.

In other words, the January vote was not the final decision. The key financial decision still lies ahead.

## Why Cllr Coley says the process matters

Cllr Coley's concern is not about whether the museum should improve, but about how the decision was framed and what information councillors and the public were not shown.

He refers to an LGA Cultural Peer Challenge carried out in August 2025. This is a standard Local Government Association review process intended to provide independent scrutiny and learning, and such reports are normally published in full.

In this case, the full peer challenge report was not included in the committee papers. Instead, only a high-level executive summary was incorporated into the options report.

Cllr Coley says he repeatedly asked when the full report would be published and was told it would appear with the January committee papers. It did not. After the committee vote, he was informed that a decision had been taken to rely on a summary instead.

At the meeting itself, the committee chair accepted that, in hindsight, the full report should have been included after this was challenged by opposition councillors. As of now, it has still not been published.

## What the missing report is said to contain

Cllr Coley states that, internally, the peer challenge report is understood to contain findings that are critical of the council's handling of the museum. These are said to include confusion and mixed messaging about the museum's closure, the exclusion of stewardship and governance questions from scope, failure to act on recommendations made in a 2023 review, recharge costs that may not reflect the true cost of running the museum, difficulty accessing detailed financial information, and fragmented staffing structures affecting communication and opportunity.

These issues matter because Option 2 is explicitly justified as being based on the service review and peer challenge findings. Without access to the full peer challenge report, councillors and the public cannot independently assess whether the proposed investment properly addresses those criticisms.

## Why this matters before March

The Strategy & Resources Committee will be asked in March to approve, or refuse, the additional funding required for Option 2.

Cllr Coley's central question is whether councillors should be asked to commit hundreds of thousands of pounds without having seen the full independent review that underpins the case for spending it. That is why he has submitted a Freedom of Information request and is pressing for the report's publication before the funding decision is taken.

## In short

The January vote did not approve spending. It authorised a future funding request. A key independent report cited as evidence has not been published. One councillor argues this undermines informed decision-making. The decisive moment will come in March, when councillors decide whether to fund the plan, potentially without seeing the full peer challenge findings unless they are released.

Sam Jones - Reporter



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# Ashtead Tennis Club gets set to expand

29 January 2026



Sport in Mole Valley is set to get a boost after plans for a new clubhouse, that will allow Ashtead Tennis Club to offer more to the community, was approved. The new larger facility will replace the existing block and will include accessible toilets, changing facilities and a larger social area.

The club plans to build its new Ashtead Recreation Ground headquarters with matching materials as its current block.

Officers at Mole Valley District Council’s January 7 development committee said it would not harm the or overly impact the neighbourhood. The plans were widely praised as being good for Ashtead with the only real objections being three windows that faced a neighbouring property. The committee, however, heard these would be masked by fencing and trees

Councillor Chris Hunt: (Independent: Ashtead Lanes & Common ) said: “ The tennis club have obviously put an awful lot of work into this application. This is positive.” He added: “Use of this new proposed clubhouse is an improvement to their current structure and most people will be looking towards the tennis courts rather than to the fence.

Cllr Phil Hammond (Liberal Democrat: Fetcham) said “Ashtead is a lovely place...so I’m sure the neighbours can resolve their issues. We give a lot of support to football, bowls, cricket and tennis clubs. We do a lot through our neighbourhood CIL. Updating their facilities is a challenge, getting accessible toilets and changing.

“The demographic of sports, the involvement of young people, women’s sport; It’s always changing and evolving and I think it’s good that this council can support that. It’s a good place, it’s a busy place and I’ve seen what they do in terms of developing the sport but they also extend the sport with things like pickleball or easier forms of tennis. It’s the sort of thing we need in our community.”

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Ashtead Tennis Club (image Google)

## **Ewell’s “UFO” shaped Bourne Hall to take off anew**

29 January 2026



A Surrey museum is set to get a long-awaited boost to make the tired building come to life again. Epsom and Ewell Borough council unanimously backed plans to invest in improving the Bourne Hall Museum rather than close it down or let it stay as it is.

The decision means the museum will get more funding and support it needs to become more engaging, relevant and sustainable for the local community. If the funding is not approved by the council’s Strategy & Resources Committee in March, the museum will continue as it is for now, costing the council around £236k a year. Up to £396k could be thrown at regenerating the museum. But it could be cheaper to run in the long-term, according to the report.

Councillors at agreed the museum needs a fresh identity and a clear vision for the future at a Community and Wellbeing Committee meeting on January 13. Cllr Clive Woodbridge said the museum “needs to reflect and be relevant to local communities now and the future” . He said the council needs to be more forward-thinking in this area.

Plans for the investment include:

- Updating displays to make them shorter and easier to read
- Creating interactive exhibits and themed trails connecting the museum with the library and other parts of Bourne Hall.
- Reaching out to local schools, community groups and universities with workshops, tours and loan boxes.
- Launching a modern marketing push, including social media, better signage to raise awareness of what the

museum has to offer.

The investment is also seen as a chance to future-proof the museum ahead of local government changes in 2027, ensuring it can continue to serve the community under whichever new governance model comes into place.

Councillors highlighted the museum's untapped potential, from local history and famous residents to unique collections that could inspire events and projects for all ages.

The council emphasised that closing the museum would be costly (approximately £280k), slow, and damaging to the community, while doing nothing would let the museum slowly lose its relevance. Instead, the investment approach is designed to make the museum vibrant, interactive, and a real community hub.

Emily Dalton LDRS

View of Bourne Hall and Museum, Spring Street, Ewell. (Credit: Google Street View)

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[Ewell History Day returns to Bourne Hall](#)

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## Surrey businesses benefit from County grants

29 January 2026



Greentech innovators and gourmet food producers are among businesses benefiting from a further £1 million investment into the county's economy by Surrey County Council.

Nearly 30 companies and entrepreneurs are receiving individual grants of up to £75,000 in the latest round of funding.

The investment, which is largely made up of UK Shared Prosperity Funding from government, will unlock millions of pounds of match funding while creating dozens of local jobs.

Among the recipients are Mantisonix, a University of Surrey spinout in Guildford, which has developed ultrasonic technology to sustainably destroy "forever chemicals". The new facility will reinforce Surrey's position as a leader in environmental innovation.

MS Venison will create a new butchery facility in Oxted while family-run catering business Afromufasa will purchase a new food truck, creating up to eight jobs in Weybridge.

Godalming-based DIY Her Way will look to provide online training for 100 women to become electricians, helping address Surrey's shortage of skilled tradespeople.

Councillor Matt Furniss, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said: "This investment represents another significant step in strengthening and growing Surrey's economy.

"The quality and breadth of the bids within the hundreds of applications that we received is testament to the vibrancy of the business community across the county.

"I'm delighted we have been able to support close to 30 companies with their innovative ideas to grow and look forward to seeing them delivering benefits to our people and places over the months to come."

Surrey County Council launched the Economic Growth Fund in April with a focus on supporting ideas to accelerate growth, boost innovation and create new employment opportunities.

About £2 million was distributed when the first round of grants was announced in September.

With a further £1 million awarded in round two, the total invested locally this year now stands at more than £3 million.

Among those to benefit include Rhevia (formerly known as Streetwise Technology) in Reigate. The firm uses hardware and AI to make highways safer for pedestrians while improving vehicle flow.

Dorian Isaacson, of Rhevia, said: "Being selected for funding by Surrey County Council was a huge vote of confidence for us at a critical stage of our growth.

"The grant has been genuinely transformational, it enabled us to recruit two new team members and significantly advance our technology, making our product more sophisticated and commercially viable.

“That progress has directly helped us win new customers and accelerate our growth. As we scale, we expect this to translate into high-value jobs, continued innovation, and a growing contribution to the Surrey economy.”

The Economic Growth Fund is one of several ways the council supports businesses and a growing Surrey economy.

For further details and to register for fully-funded support to start and grow a business visit [www.businesssurrey.co.uk](http://www.businesssurrey.co.uk).

The businesses to win funding in round two of the Surrey Economic Growth Fund are:

Afromufasa  
Aqua Broadcast Limited  
Batts Hill Distillers  
BecDan Limited (DIY Her Way)  
Carpet Ease Limited  
Carry on Coffee  
Charlie and Ginger LTD  
DigiKind Ltd (Kathy Kyle)  
Fit with Frank  
Hurtwood Events CIC  
Kampyro Ltd t/a Emovement  
Lesh  
MS Venison Ltd  
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The Nourishment Academy (t/a Strength & Bloom LTD)  
West Fisher Winery  
  
Surrey County Council



Photo: Dorian Isaacson, of Rhevia, received funding from the Surrey Economic Growth Fund

## Surrey Uni powering hydrogen and low carbon energy

29 January 2026



A new partnership between the University of Surrey and leading clean energy technology company Ceres aims to speed up the development of next-generation clean power systems and hydrogen production – supporting the UK’s net zero ambitions and helping address a growing skills gap in electrochemical energy technologies.

The collaboration brings together Ceres’ expertise in solid oxide fuel cells (SOFC) and solid oxide electrolysis (SOEC) with Surrey’s research strengths in electrochemical energy systems, digital and multiscale modelling, and advanced materials characterisation. Solid oxide electrolysis allows for highly efficient hydrogen production using electricity and heat, while solid oxide fuel cells can generate low carbon power for applications ranging from industrial processes to data centres.

Under the partnership, the teams will focus on improving the efficiency, durability and performance of these technologies, using advanced modelling and mechanistic insights to help translate fundamental research into real-world systems more

quickly. Together, they will pursue joint research projects, collaborative funding bids and new training and placement opportunities for students.

Professor Qiong Cai, Professor in Sustainable Energy and Materials at the University of Surrey, and academic co-lead, said:

*“Solid oxide electrolysis and fuel cells have huge potential to underpin the UK’s future energy systems, from large-scale hydrogen production to low-carbon power for industry. But real progress depends on improving efficiency, durability and performance so these systems can operate reliably in the real world. This partnership gives us the opportunity to tackle those challenges head-on, combining fundamental science with a clear route to application.”*

Professor Jin Xuan, Associate Dean of Research and Innovation for the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences, who is also a co-lead at Surrey, said:

*“There is a growing skills gap in hydrogen and electrochemical energy technologies, at a time when demand for these capabilities is increasing rapidly. Working together with Ceres, we aim to help train the next generation of engineers and scientists in these fields through placements and hands-on research, ensuring the UK has the expertise it needs to support a net zero economy.”*

The partnership is outlined by a three-year Heads of Terms agreement and will see the teams work together to develop a pipeline of joint research projects and funding bids.

A symbolic signing ceremony, which took place at the University of Surrey on 14 January 2026, formally marked the start of the collaboration and provided an opportunity for both parties to set out priorities for the work ahead.

Dr Subhasish Mukerjee is Chief Scientific Officer at Ceres and was recently appointed a Visiting Professor within Surrey’s School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering. He said:

*“We are delighted to expand our collaboration with the University of Surrey across fundamental electrochemistry research, modelling and digitalisation, and strategic testing to develop the next generation of clean energy technology. This collaboration strengthens our leadership in the solid oxide field and supports the UK’s drive toward achieving its net zero targets.”*

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Surrey University

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## A Surrey Police career goes to pot

29 January 2026



A former Surrey Police officer has been banned from policing for life after she smoked cannabis and then lied about it, a misconduct panel ruled.

Zara Ali was dismissed following a hearing at Surrey Police Headquarters on December 15. Although she had already quit the force and did not attend, the panel said she would have been sacked if she were still serving. She has now been added to the national barred list, meaning she can never work as a police officer again.

The panel found Ms Ali had smoked cannabis while off duty during a trip to the New Forest in May 2024. Ms Ali said she did not knowingly participate in taking any controlled drug substance and denied her conduct breached the Standards of Professional Behaviour identified.

Days later she was ordered to take a “with cause” drugs test, meaning a manager believed she could be under the influence of drugs. Before giving a urine sample, she was asked directly if she had taken any drugs but she did not admit to smoking cannabis.

The panel said this was a deliberate lie and criticised her for trying to dodge responsibility. Members said the public would be “appalled” that a police officer failed to answer honestly when questioned during a drug test.

Afterwards, Ms Ali told her supervisor, Sergeant Scott Legge, that she had taken “one puff” of a cannabis joint while camping with her boyfriend and his friends. She later told the same story to colleague PC Annalise Ware.

In the oral and written evidence of the incident, PC Ware said: “At this point, I did not think Zara had any involvement with controlled substances, her behaviour is erratic, she is loud and she struggles with focusing on one task at a time, but I was aware she has a formal diagnosis of ADHD and these are traits of her diagnosis.”

Members rejected claims that colleagues had misunderstood her because of her ADHD, saying there was no medical evidence and it was unlikely two officers would make the same mistake independently.

But when she spoke to senior officers, she changed her version of events. Instead, she claimed she had asked a stranger for a cigarette, taken one drag, thought it tasted odd and threw it away, suggesting she did not realise it might contain drugs.

The panel ruled this second version was untrue and was an attempt to make herself look less guilty. They said she had changed her story to avoid the consequences of her actions.

While the panel said it was right that she initially told colleagues about the cannabis use, they ruled she seriously damaged public trust by lying during the testing process. They said her behaviour was criminal, deliberate and dishonest, and posed a serious risk to public confidence in policing.

The panel concluded her actions amounted to gross misconduct, the most serious category, and said she could not have stayed in the job. They ruled that anything less than dismissal would not have been strong enough to protect the reputation of Surrey Police.

As a result, Ms Ali has been placed on the national barred list, preventing her from ever working in policing again. She has the right to appeal within 10 working days.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Surrey Police ethics print on wall at Mount Browne HQ. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

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## Epsom Dance Group in World Championship

29 January 2026



An Epsom-based dance competition team is preparing to take to the international stage after being selected to represent Team England at the Dance World Cup 2026 in Dublin next summer.

CMDC (Charmille Dance Collective) received the news just before Christmas that one of its groups and two solo dancers had been chosen for the prestigious world finals, following national qualifying rounds.

Founder Charlotte Liddle said:

“We are thrilled that one of our groups and two solo dancers have been selected to represent Team England at the Dance World Cup in Dublin next year.”

The Dance World Cup is an annual, large-scale international competition focused on children and young adults, typically aged between five and 25. Dancers qualify through national competitions or video selection before reaching the world finals, making selection highly competitive.

The 2026 finals will take place at the Convention Centre Dublin from Wednesday 8 to Saturday 18 July 2026. Organisers expect more than 120,000 competitors from over 70 countries, competing across a wide range of styles including classical, contemporary, street, hip hop and theatrical dance. The event is widely regarded as one of the largest all-genre youth dance competitions in the world and a major milestone for young dancers.

Charmille Dance Collective was founded by sisters Charlotte and Millie Liddle, both graduates of the Laine Theatre of Arts. Despite being a relatively new team, CMDC has already built a strong competitive record, including a second-place finish at the All England finals in 2024.

Co-founder Millie Liddle said:

“We are so proud of the girls and how far they have come in such a short time. Their dedication and hard work have been incredible, and they truly deserve this opportunity.”

Before heading to Dublin, the team will be balancing intensive training with fund-raising activities to help cover travel and competition costs, as they look to give themselves the best chance of building on Team England’s previous successes at the event.

Charmille Dance Collective is a community dance team based in Epsom. Founded by sisters Charlotte and Millie Liddle, former students at Epsom’s Laine Theatre Arts, the group competes at regional and national dance competitions across the UK.

Charlotte and Millie welcome help to fund the trip:

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/charmille-dance-world-cup>

Sam Jones - Reporter



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## Council’s refusal leaves Esher’s Marquis of Granby derelict

29 January 2026



The owners of the Marquis of Granby in Esher have hit back at Elmbridge Borough Council after it refused to recognise the venue as a restaurant. They said the decision they say is “wrong” and “based on a misunderstanding”.

Greene King, which owns the site on Portsmouth Road, has now submitted a fresh planning application asking for a Certificate of Lawful Existing Use. They want official confirmation that the Marquis of Granby should be classed as a restaurant, not a pub.

They argue the council made a “fundamentally flawed” decision last year when it rejected their original application in November 2023.

According to Greene King, the venue has operated primarily as a restaurant since 1994, with alcohol sales playing a secondary role. In simple terms: most people went there to eat, not just to drink.

Elmbridge council, however, ruled that the premises looked more like a “drinking establishment with expanded food”, a specific planning category used for pubs that also serve meals. The classification puts it outside the normal restaurant category and limits what the building can be used for in future.

Although 77.8 per cent of its sales come from food, officers said in their 2023 report, this is typical for modern pubs, which commonly serve meals, and pointed to industry data showing similar patterns nationwide. They also highlighted pub-style features including a large bar area, self-seating, multiple beer taps, a cellar stocked with kegs, gambling machines, event nights with DJs, and the venue’s own website branding itself as a “local pub”. The council found these characteristics outweighed the presence of a restaurant area and concluded the premises more closely resembles a pub, not a restaurant, leading them to refuse the certificate.

But Greene King strongly disagrees. They say the council has misunderstood the planning rules and how they apply to the site. Their planning consultants argue:

- The Marquis of Granby has never been a drinking-led pub, so it cannot suddenly be classed as one.
- Planning rules do not allow a restaurant to automatically change into a “drinking establishment with expanded

food” without permission.

- The business was still food-led even after its carvery deck was removed in 2020.
- Features like a bar, beer taps and a garden do not automatically make somewhere a pub and many restaurants have these too.

They also say the council relied too heavily on a trade magazine article about pub food and drink sales, which they describe as “meaningless” evidence.

Greene King points out that it successfully secured the same certificate for six similar venues elsewhere, with no objections from councils. The Marquis of Granby is the only one that has been refused.

Since closing, the building has become run down, with heavy graffiti, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Greene King says the lack of a certificate is “sterilising” the site and stopping it from being reused and that it is now a potential fire risk.

A spokesperson said the evidence clearly shows the venue was laid out for dining, with large kitchen facilities, menus focused on meals, tables set with cutlery and condiments and most of the space is dedicated to seated customers. They argued this proves food was the main attraction.

Greene King is now asking the council to reconsider and approve the certificate without delay. If granted, it would officially confirm the Marquis of Granby as a restaurant, making it easier to bring the site back into use.

The council has not yet commented on the new application.

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Emily Dalton LDRS

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Marquis of Granby pub on Portsmouth Road, Esher. (Credit: Google Street View)

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## Cllr Dallen accused of £1/2 m Epsom & Ewell Council cover-up

29 January 2026



BBC LDRS reports: A Surrey council [Epsom and Ewell] must pay out up to £500,000 after failing to properly check the condition of a major leisure centre before handing it over to a new operator. Poor ventilation, damp and ‘possible roof cracks’ were cited as some of the problems related to the “fabric” of the building.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has agreed to cover the costs of urgent repairs at Rainbow Leisure Centre after the new contractors took over the site and uncovered a long list of issues, some relating to the structure and fabric of the building. Places Leisure took over the contract on October 1, 2025, but has not yet signed on the dotted line, the LDRS understands.

The pay out was approved via a confidential urgent decision, seen by the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS), after Places Leisure said it should not be responsible for fixing the issues.

An urgent decision is when a council cannot wait until the usual decision-making committee process as it could harm the public or council interests.

Some of the problems relate to the fabric of the building, for which the council is responsible, the LDRS understands. This is despite the council previously insisting it had carried out such checks.

In a public report dated June 2025, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council said it had commissioned a stock condition report to make sure the building was handed over in good nick.

As the LDRS understands, council officers believed the centre would be handed back in good condition. An external

consultant was used, but their inspection was not invasive, meaning hidden problems may not have been picked up. But just six months later, the authority is now facing a bill of up to £500k to fix problems that either were missed or not properly dealt with because the council did not know about them.

When Places took over, it found issues it believed the previous operator should have fixed. Some of the problems raised include:

- Fire alarm faults
- Lift issues
- Broken seating
- Damaged glazing
- Faulty toilets
- Poor ventilation
- Damp
- Possible roof cracks
- Machinery at “end of life”

Some were flagged as health and safety risks, meaning urgent action was needed to keep the centre safe and open.

The council has now agreed to let Places carry out the repairs and reclaim the costs by reducing the management fee it pays back to the council. Officers said this is the “most cost-effective” option, but it effectively means residents are picking up the tab.

#### **Why is the council paying?**

Under the contract, some repairs fall to the council as landlord responsibilities. Others may be recoverable from former operator GLL, but legal experts warn the council is unlikely to claw back the full amount. GLL has been contacted for comment. [See below for additional reporting.]

The authority plans to dip into its ‘dilapidation’ reserve, a pot of money set aside for building repairs, to cover the shortfall. Officers admit the final cost is still being worked out, but estimate it could reach up to £500,000.

#### **Opposition fury**

Councillors have slammed the council for not knowing the state of its own properties.

Cllr **Alex Coley**, member of the Independent group (Ruxley), said: “I’d have hoped that the council as landlord would understand the condition of the leisure centre to establish its potential liability.”

Labour group leader, Cllr **Kate Chinn**, (Court) hit out at the ruling Residents’ Association (RA), calling the situation a “shocking scandal”.

She said: “This secrecy wasn’t about keeping the costs involved from the parties to the negotiations as they already know them. It was about preventing the public from learning how incompetent the RA are.”

She added: “Cllr **Neil Dallen** (RA Town) has rightly owned this fiasco, but without realising that his ‘nothing to see’ attitude that council tax payers should expect to be routinely stuck with bills on this scale shows how complacent he is with their money.”

She accused the ruling group of being distracted: “The RA have clearly taken their eye off the ball as they focus on a self-serving attempt to create new parish councils and new roles for themselves.”

Cllr **James Lawrence**, leader of the Liberal Democrat group (College), said the situation shows “the importance of maintaining key properties so they are in good working condition and ensuring the status of our properties is communicated to both councillors and residents in good time.”

#### **Council response**

Council leaders defended the decision, saying negotiations are normal during handovers. Councillors Neil Dallen and **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) said: “Rainbow Leisure Centre transferred to a new operator, Places Leisure, on 1 October 2025. Since then, we’ve been pleased to see a number of improvements at the centre.

“This marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for the leisure centre... including significant investment to upgrade the gym, studios, swimming changing rooms and more, which are already underway.”

They added: “With any handover, it is normal practice for there to be negotiations around works to be carried out which form part of the contract finalisation.”

However, they refused to release further information, saying: “Details relating to terms and financial arrangements are commercially sensitive and therefore not in the public domain.”

#### **Places Leisure**

A spokesperson said: “Places Leisure took over the operation and management of Rainbow Leisure Centre in partnership with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council on 1st October 2025. We are excited to work closely with the Council to implement changes and significant investment at the centre to make a positive impact for the local community.”

Emily Dalton LDRS - the BBC’s Local Democracy Reporting Service

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### **Additional reporting from Epsom and Ewell Times:**

In a further twist GLL has supplied Epsom and Ewell Times a response to the issues: *“GLL was proud to partner with Epsom and Ewell Council on the design and opening of Rainbow Leisure Centre over 20 years ago. This innovative and award-winning centre has been extremely successful over the 20 years of GLL’s tenure, engaging millions of local residents in activity, improving their health and wellbeing.*

*“GLL is unaware of any legal claim that the Council is looking to bring in relation to the standard of the building on handover, especially as there are set protocols to deal with building handovers prior to any instigation of legal action. As background, the Council undertook, via specialist contractors, a full survey of the building prior to GLL exiting. As is normal in all leisure transfers, items that were identified for [repair or rectification] in that survey for GLL were all completed prior to handover and signed off by the specialist contractors on behalf of the Council. GLL handed the building over to the standard required by the Council and under the contract.”*

It is normal practice for Councils as landlords to have rights of periodic entry and inspection of premises it engages contractors to manage. Either the Council was negligent in failing to insert such rights in the contract with GLL or the Council has been negligent over an extended period of years in failing to carry out inspections or to carry out inspections properly.

The Council has made fully public announcements that Places commenced its contract on 1st October 2025. See Epsom and Ewell Times report: Epsom’s Rainbow Leisure Centre Places new operators. The Information Commissioner has made plain that Council’s cannot evade accountability by claims of ongoing contractual negotiations. The tender process having ended for both GLL and Places means there is little if any financially sensitive information to protect justifying a confidential label on information that exposes probable Council incompetence.

Epsom and Ewell Times asked Epsom and Ewell Borough Council a series of questions about these issues and received the same “nothing to see here” response from Cllr Dallen as obtained by the BBC’s Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) reporter Emily Dalton, as above. The Epsom and Ewell Times has thus submitted to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council formal Freedom of Information Act demands for relevant information.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Related reports:

[Epsom’s Rainbow Leisure Centre Places new operators](#)

[Gold star at the end of the Rainbow](#)

[Pot of gold for Rainbow?](#)

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## **From the Cosmos to Commerce: University of Surrey Leads the Way**

29 January 2026



The University of Surrey has been showcasing a remarkable breadth of achievement in recent weeks, with major advances announced across fundamental science, international collaboration, digital trade policy and lifetime academic excellence.

From unlocking the origins of the universe’s rarest elements, to shaping the future of UK trade infrastructure and celebrating world-leading research careers, the University’s latest announcements underline its growing national and international impact.

### **Unlocking the universe’s rarest elements**

Surrey scientists are leading a new £215,100 international research project that aims to transform understanding of how chemical elements are formed during extreme cosmic events such as supernovae, neutron-star collisions and X-ray bursts.

Funded by the Royal Society's International Science Partnership Fund, the three-year project brings together researchers from Surrey, Kyushu University and Japan's world-leading RIKEN laboratory. The team will develop and deploy cutting-edge instruments capable of measuring some of the rarest and most unstable atomic nuclei ever studied.

These exotic isotopes do not exist naturally on Earth and can only be created briefly in advanced physics laboratories. By measuring their mass and decay rates for the first time, researchers hope to refine theoretical models of nuclear structure and gain new insight into how the heaviest elements in the universe are formed.

Experiments will take place at RIKEN's Rare-Radioactive Isotope Ring, a unique facility that allows repeated observation of these short-lived nuclei. Surrey researchers will play a central role, leading the design and testing of advanced detector and data-acquisition systems in the UK ahead of the experimental programme in Japan.

The collaboration is also expected to strengthen scientific ties between the UK and Japan and reinforce the UK's position at the forefront of nuclear physics research.

### **Warning over UK digital trade and border fragmentation**

In a very different field, new research from Surrey Business School and the Centre for the Decentralised Digital Economy has issued a stark warning that the UK risks falling behind global competitors in digital trade unless urgent action is taken.

The study argues that the UK's digital border initiatives are fragmented, with no single organisation responsible for coordinating legislation, technology platforms and end-to-end border processes. As a result, businesses face repeated data requests, delays and uncertainty, increasing costs rather than reducing friction.

Researchers examined UK trade and border policies since 2017, including the 2025 UK Border Strategy, recent digital trade legislation and multiple government pilot projects. Drawing on international case studies and academic research, the team proposes a collaborative governance framework to guide reform.

The report calls for the government to give one body a clear mandate to orchestrate policy, digital platforms and data standards across departments. It argues that, with the right leadership, the UK has a window of opportunity to create a new digital "silk road" for trade, enabling trusted data sharing that benefits smaller firms as well as multinationals.

### **Lifetime achievement recognised in materials science**

Surrey's excellence in research was further highlighted by the announcement that Professor Joseph Keddie, Professor of Soft Matter Physics, has been awarded the 2026 Sir Eric Rideal Award for lifetime achievement in colloid and interface science.

Jointly awarded by the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Society of Chemical Industry, the prestigious honour recognises sustained and distinguished contributions to the field. Professor Keddie is internationally known for pioneering work on polymer colloids, sustainable materials and so-called "living materials", with applications ranging from coatings and adhesives to wastewater treatment and bioremediation.

Over a career spanning more than three decades, he has authored more than 150 academic publications, holds multiple patents and co-authored the influential book *Fundamentals of Latex Film Formation*. His work at Surrey has previously been recognised by major awards from both the Institute of Physics and the Royal Society of Chemistry.

Professor Keddie will deliver the Rideal Lecture, titled *More than Watching Paint Dry*, on 8 April 2026, presenting highlights from his research including self-layering coatings and carbon-storing "living paints".

### **A university with global reach**

Taken together, the announcements paint a picture of a university operating at the cutting edge across disciplines: advancing fundamental science on a global stage, influencing national policy debates, and nurturing research careers with lasting international impact.

For Surrey residents, the achievements reinforce the University of Surrey's role not only as a local institution, but as a centre of innovation and expertise with reach far beyond Guildford.

Sam Jones - Reporter



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## **Epsom and Ewell lags Surrey's recycling front-runners, new tracker shows**

29 January 2026



### Surrey’s self-assessment - and what sits behind it

A new “Surrey Waste Tracker” published by the Surrey Environment Partnership (SEP) claims Surrey is one of the best performing areas in England for recycling and low landfill. The tracker uses data for the 2023-24 year and compares Surrey County Council with 28 “similar” waste authorities across England.

SEP reports that 54.5% of Surrey’s total household waste is recycled, reused or composted, placing Surrey joint second out of 29 comparable authorities. Surrey households produced around 445kg of rubbish per home, said to be eighth out of 29 and better than an England average of around 511kg. Just 0.2% of Surrey’s household waste went to landfill, compared with an England average of 5.5%, and 85% of Surrey’s waste is processed in the UK rather than exported.

The tracker does not spell out which 28 other authorities Surrey is being measured against, nor does it cite the exact national datasets used for those comparisons.

### How independent national data stacks up

Provisional government waste statistics for 2023-24 show that, across England as a whole, the household recycling rate is around 44%. The same official release reports that 5.5% of local authority-collected waste in England was sent to landfill.

Taken together, these independent figures broadly support SEP’s central message: Surrey’s recycling rate is around ten percentage points higher than the England average, Surrey sends a much smaller share of its waste to landfill than the country as a whole, and Surrey households appear to be producing less residual rubbish than the average English household.

However, the 42.3% “England average” recycling figure quoted on the Surrey Waste Tracker is slightly lower than the 44% national rate reported by government, suggesting SEP may be using a different measure or earlier cut of the same data.

### Where Epsom and Ewell sits in the Surrey league

The tracker also breaks down performance by each of Surrey’s 11 district and borough councils, including Epsom and Ewell. For each area it publishes annual rubbish per household (in kg), the proportion of household waste recycled, reused or composted, and the proportion of recycling processed within the UK.

On those measures, **Epsom and Ewell** is a low performer within Surrey, but well behind the best-performing districts.

Recycling rate: Epsom and Ewell recycles, reuses or composts 52.1% of its household waste. This places it ninth out of the 11 Surrey districts and boroughs on the recycling measure, while Surrey Heath leads the county on 58.9%, with Guildford and Tandridge close behind.

Rubbish per household: Epsom and Ewell households produce 402.3kg of rubbish per year. That is better than Elmbridge and Spelthorne, but still ninth out of 11 when ranked from lowest to highest residual waste. Surrey Heath again tops this table with 341.2kg per household.

How much recycling stays in the UK: Only 63.7% of Epsom and Ewell’s collected recycling is processed within the UK, the lowest share in Surrey. Several councils send a much higher proportion of recyclables to UK facilities, including Reigate and Banstead, Guildford and Tandridge.

### Surrey district and borough waste league table, 2023-24

Based on the Surrey Waste Tracker’s published data, the picture across the 11 local areas is as follows, ranked by recycling rate from highest to lowest:

Rank (recycling)	District / Borough	Rubbish per household (kg)	Proportion recycled / reused / composted (%)	Proportion of recycling processed in UK (%)
1	Surrey Heath	341.2	58.9	76.8
2	Guildford	347.5	57.9	84.6
3	Tandridge	361.5	57.8	84.2
4	Waverley	350.0	57.0	75.3



<b>Rank (recycling)</b>	<b>District / Borough</b>	<b>Rubbish per household (kg)</b>	<b>Proportion recycled / reused / composted (%)</b>	<b>Proportion of recycling processed in UK (%)</b>
5	Mole Valley	362.1	56.4	72.2
6	Woking	348.1	56.4	73.1
7	Elmbridge	407.5	54.2	72.6
8	Reigate and Banstead	381.2	54.2	96.2
9	Epsom and Ewell	402.3	52.1	63.7
10	Runnymede	386.4	46.8	71.5
11	Spelthorne	439.3	44.5	70.7

On this reading, Epsom and Ewell recycles a larger share of its waste than the national average, but less than eight of its ten Surrey neighbours, produces more rubbish per household than most Surrey areas, and sends the smallest proportion of its recycling to UK plants.

### Who owns the Surrey Environment Partnership?

The Surrey Waste Tracker is published by the Surrey Environment Partnership, which is a partnership between Surrey County Council and the 11 district and borough councils. SEP is therefore not an external watchdog but a joint project of the councils whose performance it reports on.

The tracker draws on data that councils are legally required to report to central government through the WasteDataFlow system, which the government then uses to produce national statistics. However, it does not identify the 28 “similar areas” Surrey is compared with, nor the criteria for including them, and it does not explicitly reference the government publications from which national averages appear to be taken.

For residents in Epsom and Ewell, the Surrey Waste Tracker offers a useful snapshot of local performance within a strong-performing county, while also raising questions of transparency and comparability. The extent to which the borough can close the gap with Surrey’s recycling leaders, and keep more of its recycling treatment within the UK, is likely to remain a live policy issue for years ahead.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Image: Landfill site in UK by M J Richardson CC BY-SA 2.0

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Since publication of the above report the Surrey Environmental Partnership has issued the following helpful clarification:

Unfortunately, there was an error in the number of authorities that we compared Surrey with. The report originally listed that there were 29 similar authorities, when in fact it was 27. This has now been amended on our website - Surrey Environment Partnership - Surrey Waste Tracker. The authorities that Surrey compares to are the other waste disposal authorities in England.

The article also mentions a discrepancy between the figure of 42.3% that we used for England’s recycling rate compared to the figure of 44.0%. Just to clarify that 44.0% is England’s recycling rate for the calendar year of 2023 whereas 42.3% is England’s recycling rate for 2023-24, which is the period that our report covers.

Finally, with regard to the source of the data, the source is Defra’s publicly available data, which can be found here - Local authority collected waste management - annual results - GOV.UK.

We have made a note to include the above level of detail in Surrey Waste Tracker reports from hereon.

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