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Crime and Safety Round-Up: April and May 2026

5 June 2026



April and May proved to be unusually busy months for Surrey Police and community safety partners in Epsom and Ewell, with a mixture of high-profile investigations, anti-social behaviour enforcement, retail crime initiatives and public engagement events.

The most significant policing story of the period centred on a reported serious sexual assault in Epsom during the early hours of 11 April. Surrey Police launched a major investigation following a report that a woman in her twenties had been assaulted after leaving a town centre nightclub. Extensive enquiries were carried out, including CCTV examination, witness interviews, forensic work and house-to-house enquiries. By mid-April, Assistant Chief Constable Sarah Grahame stated that investigators had not found evidence to support the offence as originally reported, although enquiries remained ongoing. The case attracted national media attention and prompted public demonstrations in Epsom town centre. Surrey Police repeatedly appealed for witnesses and urged the public not to speculate while investigations continued. (The Guardian)

The incident also led to a substantial police presence in the town as officers dealt with protests and concerns regarding public disorder. Local community leaders and elected representatives called for calm and urged residents to allow the investigation to proceed without interference. (The Guardian)

Away from the headlines, Surrey Police continued its borough-wide campaign against anti-social behaviour and organised criminality under the “Safer Epsom and Ewell” initiative launched earlier this year. The partnership between Surrey Police and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has focused on tackling anti-social behaviour, serious organised crime and repeat offending in known hotspot locations. (Epsom and Ewell Borough Council)

Police teams also continued operations targeting nuisance and criminal use of motorcycles. According to local policing priorities published during the spring, officers have been using specialist teams, covert tactics, anti-social behaviour powers and multi-agency interventions to tackle riders involved in criminality and public nuisance. The strategy includes cooperation with housing providers and the use of borough-wide Public Space Protection Order powers. (Surrey Police)

Retail crime remained a major priority throughout April and May. Surrey Police’s Epsom Safer Neighbourhood Team reported that its zero-tolerance approach to shoplifting and offences against retailers was continuing to produce results. The initiative includes rapid investigation of known offenders, direct cooperation with retailers and remote CCTV operators, and proactive arrests aimed at reducing repeat offending in the town centre. (Surrey Police)

The wider “Safer Epsom and Ewell” operation reported notable results during the spring period. Police indicated that the partnership had led to more than 150 arrests, over 90 charges and the closure of ten county-lines drug networks, highlighting the continuing focus on organised criminal activity affecting local communities. (Facebook)

Community engagement remained a significant feature of local policing. Officers held a series of “Meet the Beat” events during April and May, including sessions in Epsom town centre, Ruxley Lane and at Epsom Hospital, giving residents opportunities to discuss local concerns directly with neighbourhood officers. Police also conducted public engagement work connected with violence against women and girls in the Ashley Centre area. (Surrey Police)

Latest published neighbourhood crime statistics continue to show violence and sexual offences, shoplifting and anti-social behaviour among the most frequently reported categories in parts of the borough. In Epsom & Ewell East, violence and sexual offences and shoplifting remained the most commonly recorded offences during March, the latest month for which detailed neighbourhood figures are available. (Police.uk)

Residents wishing to report crime can contact Surrey Police via 101 for non-emergencies or 999 in an emergency. Information can also be passed anonymously through Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

The Epsom and Ewell Times will continue to monitor local crime trends, policing initiatives and community safety developments throughout the summer.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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University of Surrey Staff Member Seriously Injured in Alleged Crossbow Attack

5 June 2026



A member of staff at the University of Surrey has been seriously injured following an incident on the University's Manor Park campus in Guildford.

The University confirmed that the incident occurred at approximately 9.50am on Thursday morning. Surrey Police attended the scene and arrested a man shortly afterwards.

In a statement provided to the Epsom and Ewell Times, a University spokesperson said:

"At approximately 9.50 am this morning, an incident took place on our Manor Park campus. Police attended and a man was arrested. A member of our campus safety team was seriously injured and is receiving medical care. The police are not looking for anyone else in connection with this incident. Surrey Police are leading the investigation and we are giving them our full support."

Subsequent statements issued by Surrey Police and national media reports indicate that the injured man, who is in his 50s, is a member of the University's campus safety team. He was taken to hospital with serious injuries following what police describe as a crossbow shooting. A 21-year-old former University of Surrey student was arrested at the scene on suspicion of attempted murder and remains in police custody.

Chief Superintendent Jon Groenen of Surrey Police said officers were not seeking anyone else in connection with the incident and that a full investigation is under way. Police have appealed for witnesses or anyone with relevant information to come forward.

The incident took place at the University's Manor Park campus, which includes student accommodation, teaching facilities and the Surrey Sports Park. Despite a significant emergency services presence, the University campus remained open during the police response.

The condition of the injured staff member has not been updated beyond police confirming that his injuries are serious. The University has said it is providing full support to the police investigation.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Surrey Police quoting reference PR/45260065706 or to contact Crimestoppers anonymously.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Updated release from Surrey University: *We have been informed that our colleague is now in a stable condition and our entire community is relieved to hear this news. We wish him a full and speedy recovery.*

"We also want to take this opportunity to thank our Campus Safety team. They responded with professionalism and courage to this incident, and their commitment to keeping this community safe is something we are deeply proud of. Our thoughts are with all of them

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LibDem vote kept RA's Dalton in power — but Cllr Freeman faces questions over his own political past

5 June 2026

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The two Liberal Democrat councillors at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council appear to have played the decisive role in keeping Residents' Association leader Cllr **Hannah Dalton** in her Council leadership role despite the dramatic collapse of the RA's electoral position in the new East Surrey Unitary Council elections.

At the Borough Council's annual meeting, Dalton survived a leadership challenge from former Residents' Association councillor, now Independent, **Alex Coley**, by the narrowest possible margin — **15 votes to 14**.

The arithmetic of the vote suggests that at least two RA councillors backed Coley against their own group leader. Equally significant, had just one of the two Liberal Democrat councillors voted with the wider opposition bloc, Coley would have been elected leader.

The Liberal Democrat councillors, College Ward councillor **Julian Freeman** and Stamford Ward councillor **Alison Kelly**, backed Dalton.

Their decision has attracted attention because the Residents' Association's dominant local position has been severely weakened following the East Surrey Unitary Council elections, in which the RA was effectively wiped out, retaining only two successful candidates.

Asked by Epsom and Ewell Times why he supported Dalton, Cllr Freeman said he objected to politicians leaving the group under whose banner they were elected.

He stated: *"I do not support people who are elected as a representative of one political group and then decide to turn their back on those that voted for them. This is something that is happening with increasing regularity on the council at present."*

However, that explanation prompted questions about Freeman's own political history.

Material reviewed by Epsom and Ewell Times records that in 2006, while a councillor in the London Borough of Sutton, Freeman resigned from the Liberal Democrat group and sat as an Independent councillor. A published council decision notice recorded: *"Resolved: To note that Councillor Julian Freeman has resigned as a member of the Liberal Democrat Group and will sit as an Independent Councillor."*

When asked to explain the apparent inconsistency, Freeman disputed the comparison.

He replied that there was an "important distinction", stating: *"I was not approved as a candidate at the time due to an internal dispute with a ward colleague and stood as an independent at the following election. At no point did I willingly decide to change parties as this was not my decision."* He added: *"Your facts are wrong as I did not leave during my term of office."*

After EET provided him with evidence of the Sutton council record showing him resigning from the Liberal Democrat group and continuing as an Independent councillor, Freeman refined his position, replying: *"You can see that this was towards the end of my term of office and for just one full council meeting following deselection as a future candidate."*

Freeman also told EET that the decision to support Dalton was taken jointly between himself and Cllr Kelly. Kelly separately confirmed that account, stating that the leadership vote position followed discussions between the two councillors.

In a further explanation of his thinking, Freeman said he felt *"some sympathy for Hannah (Dalton) and Clive (Woodbridge) in losing their seats"* and argued that removing Dalton with just ten months left as leader would amount to *"rubbing salt in the wound and would achieve nothing of substance."*

The narrow vote leaves unresolved questions about the future direction of politics at EEBC. Since the last Borough Elections there have been seven councillors who have changed their party or group affiliation. The Residents Association losing five councillors and the Liberal Democrats two out of four and those two both having been leaders of the LibDem Group on the Council.

Dalton remains leader — but only just. The voting numbers suggest a council chamber in which party loyalties and traditional group boundaries are under strain, with dissension inside the Residents' Association itself and two Liberal Democrat votes proving decisive to the survival of an administration whose wider electoral base has been sharply diminished.

Sam Jones – Reporter

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

5 June 2026



On one of the hottest days of the year, with councillors and guests in Epsom Town Hall using agenda papers as improvised fans, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council held what was in effect the beginning of its final chapter — the Annual Council meeting that will oversee the borough’s last year before abolition under local government reorganisation.

The evening of 26th May combined civic ceremony, nostalgia, political tension and procedural wrangling, culminating in a knife-edge vote for Council leadership and a heated row over the Council’s constitution.

Councillor **Lucy McIntyre** (RA) was elected Mayor for what will be the borough’s final mayoral year, with veteran Independent councillor **Julie Morris** chosen as Deputy Mayor.

McIntyre, among the younger and longer-serving members of the chamber, described the appointment as “particularly special because this borough really has always been my home”, speaking movingly of family ties, her late brothers, and the borough’s impending disappearance into the new East Surrey Council.

“This will be the final mayoral year of Epsom and Ewell in its current form, as we know it,” she said. “It makes it even more of an honour and a privilege to serve you all.”

Her chosen charities include Fab for Epsom & Ewell, Girlguiding Epsom District and Sunnybank Trust, with ten principal events planned during the roughly ten months remaining before the borough’s end. “The countdown has already begun,” she told the chamber, “because after all, it’s the final countdown — so let’s make it unforgettable.”

Outgoing Mayor Councillor **Robert Leach** offered a characteristically humorous farewell, reflecting on a year that took him from the Derby and Buckingham Palace to community groups, Ukrainian refugees, disability charities and opening Primark.

“It has been a great honour to be the mayor of the borough for the last year,” he said. “This was a position I had not expected and… not one that I sought.” He praised the borough’s “more than 100 charities and voluntary groups”, remarking that a mayoral visit “means so much to the people”, and expressed hope that some civic role might survive local government reorganisation.

But the political temperature rose sharply when councillors turned to the appointment of Council Leader.

Councillor **Hannah Dalton** (RA), the incumbent leader, was nominated by Councillors **Liz Frost** and **Christine Cleveland**. Frost urged members to back continuity in the borough’s final year.

“This… is going to be the last year of the council,” she said. “It is really, really important that we all pull together… and leave the council in a good position.”

Cleveland praised Dalton’s work through “very turbulent times” in local government and added: “It would be really nice to end our time in Epsom with a female leader of the council as well.”

The challenge came from Independent councillor **Alex Coley**, once a prominent Residents’ Association figure before breaking away from the ruling group.

Nominating Coley, Councillor **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) launched a stinging critique of the outgoing year.

“Last year this council agreed strategic priorities,” she said. “It’s safe to say these did not go according to plan.”

She referred to “a committee meeting where the leader of the council [was] absent from a vote to fund a strategic priority” and another where “an RA CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) bid was proposed and not voted through by the RA members.”

“If the leader stays the same, these priorities will not be worth the paper they are written on,” she argued. “We need a new leader… one who will deliver and work across all political groups… As long as this ship is still afloat, we must look after it. But it’s time for a new captain.”

The most striking intervention came from RA Councillor **Kim Spickett.**

Visibly framing her choice as a painful one, she revealed the intensity of lobbying behind the scenes.

“The choice today… has been very difficult for me,” she said. “I’ve had a lot of calls, I’ve had a lot of messages, and I’ve had a lot of pressure put on me. I’m not happy about it. It’s made me very sad.”

Declaring pride in the borough and its people, she nevertheless backed Coley as the person to steer the authority through

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its closing months.

“We need the proven leadership of a councillor who’s dedicated to delivery and puts outcomes first… somebody I’m proud to call my friend.”

“Delivery is what we need to set this community up for success… and I believe Alex will deliver.”

The vote that followed demonstrated just how finely balanced the chamber had become.

Dalton survived — but only narrowly.

The official tally: **15 votes for Hannah Dalton, 14 for Alex Coley.**

Having retained the leadership by a single vote, Dalton struck a conciliatory note.

“Being leader is never easy, and you’re not going to take everybody with you all of the time,” she said. “I’d say the last year to 18 months has been the hardest it has ever been.”

She acknowledged the challenge of leading a Residents’ Association group that, she insisted, operates without a formal whip: “Whatever they do say, they do not have a political whip, and they discuss everything.”

In remarks that reflected the strains of both local government reorganisation and evident political divisions inside the chamber, she appealed for unity.

“We’ve got to deliver a lot. We need stability. We need to get to the end of next March in one piece, without ripping each other apart, or leaving this council in a really bad way.”

“We’ve been here for 90 years, we’ve done an incredible job together. Let’s keep it together, just for the last ten months.”

If the leadership contest exposed the chamber’s political fault-lines, the next item — approval of the Council’s constitution — produced a procedural clash that left tempers noticeably frayed in the overheated room.

Mayor McIntyre announced that a late proposal concerning the constitution would not be accepted, ruling that substantive constitutional changes required proper routing through the Standards and Constitution Committee, officers, or a formal motion process.

Councillor **Chris Ames** (Labour) objected fiercely.

“As might have been predicted, the administration has sought to close down debate about this,” he said.

“We’re going to be asked to agree a constitution that we should know is defective.”

Denying that he had proposed a constitutional amendment, Ames said he had merely sought to highlight concerns. “The usual procedural shenanigans that we get here doesn’t surprise me one bit,” he said. “It’s absolutely disgraceful. It’s the typical corruption of this administration.”

Councillor **James Lawrence** (Independent) followed with his own criticism, citing what he said were deficiencies in the complaints process as described across the Council’s constitution, operating framework and website.

He argued that a councillor complaints procedure was either missing or unclear, describing a complaint against him that had remained unresolved for months.

But when Lawrence attempted to continue, the Mayor curtailed him.

“The meeting this evening is for a civic event,” she said, directing him instead toward the processes set out elsewhere in the Council framework.

Lawrence pushed back, asking: “Can you point in the constitution why I can’t speak?”

The exchange carried a certain irony: debate was being restricted on the basis of the meeting’s civic character while the approval of the constitution itself remained a formal agenda item before members.

When the vote finally came, the constitution was approved **15 votes to 9**.

The meeting then moved on to committee appointments and other routine business without further fireworks.

Yet for a council entering its final year of existence, the evening had already revealed much: pride in civic tradition, uncertainty about the future, visible political strains — and a leadership retained by the narrowest of margins in a chamber made short-tempered by heat, history and the approaching end of the borough council era.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Image: Cllr Kim Spickett addresses the Council – Epsom and Ewell Borough Council YouTube

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Epsom pensioners lost £148,000 in fraud as laundering network sentenced

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Two elderly Epsom siblings lost around £148,000 after being repeatedly pressured into paying for unnecessary home repair work, as members of a criminal money-laundering network were sentenced at Guildford Crown Court.

The Epsom victims were among those targeted in a wider operation spanning Surrey, Essex and London between February and September 2019, according to Trading Standards investigators.

The case concluded this week with sentences being handed down to five defendants following a lengthy investigation involving Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards, Essex Police and the National Trading Standards Regional Investigations Team. Authorities said the network laundered a total of £331,223 taken from victims.

At the centre of the operation was Lee Cross, 54, originally from Romford, who was convicted of fraud and money laundering offences. Prosecutors said Cross provided banking infrastructure used to move and conceal criminal proceeds through numerous business accounts operating under different trading names, including “A-Z Repairs”.

Cross was sentenced to eight years and seven months’ imprisonment.

Others sentenced were:

• Sorise Richardson, 45, Romford – 12-month community order with rehabilitation activity requirement
• Zoe Hoskyn, 40, Hornchurch – two-year suspended sentence and 12-month rehabilitation order
• Jason Walker, 35, Blackburn – two-year suspended sentence and 180 hours’ unpaid work
• Pauline Walker, 70, Romford – 22-month suspended sentence

Trading Standards said victims were commonly approached by unsolicited callers claiming urgent repairs were needed to their properties. Homeowners were allegedly persuaded to pay substantial sums for unnecessary, poorly executed or uncompleted building works. Some were asked to fund equipment such as cranes and scaffolding that investigators said were never needed or supplied.

In Epsom, investigators said two elderly siblings were repeatedly pressured into paying for external works to their home that “didn’t need to be done”.

Amanda Poole, Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Assistant Director, said: “Today’s sentencing marks the final step in bringing these fraudsters to justice, and most importantly, means the man at the heart of this operation — Lee Cross — will be behind bars.”

She added: “Today’s sentences are also a testament to the vital, diligent work undertaken by our Trading Standards officers, and those of our partners, in protecting our residents from harm.”

Lord Michael Bichard, Chair of National Trading Standards, said the case showed how organised criminals exploited elderly and vulnerable people, sometimes extracting “life-changing” sums for unnecessary or poor-quality work.

He said: “The harm caused by this type of fraud goes far beyond the money stolen, often leaving victims robbed of their confidence, independence and peace of mind.”

Trading Standards advises residents to be cautious of unsolicited traders, avoid agreeing to work on the spot, obtain multiple written quotations, and avoid paying cash or large sums upfront for building work.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Epsom boxer Amelia, 12, wins National Schools title

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A 12-year-old boxer from Epsom has brought home the town's first National Schools boxing title in 15 years after a series of dominant performances at the England Boxing National Schools Championships.

Amelia O'Hagan, of Epsom Boxing Academy, claimed gold in the Class A 44kg category after progressing through Surrey, Southern Counties and the national finals.

Having qualified through the county and regional stages, Amelia faced London champion Davene Asabere of Newham's Fight for Peace club in the quarter-finals.

Coach Joe Harding described Amelia's performance as explosive from the outset. Starting at high tempo, she used fast attacks to head and body to control the bout, before forcing a stoppage early in the second round after a sustained assault left her opponent unable to continue.

The championships then took Amelia north to Newcastle for the semi-finals and finals weekend.

In the semi-final she met Midland Counties champion Hollie Browne of Black Country Boxing Club. Determined to improve on last year's runner-up finish, Amelia produced what her coaches described as a controlled and disciplined display.

Using speed, footwork and sharp combinations, she repeatedly caught the taller opponent with attacks to head and body before moving safely out of range. After three rounds of sustained pressure and tactical boxing, Amelia secured a unanimous 5-0 points victory to reach the final.

There she faced local favourite Imogen Paylor of Felling ABC, champion of Tyne, Tees and Wear and a boxer with significantly more competitive experience.

According to Epsom Boxing Academy, Amelia again began strongly, attacking with body-to-head combinations and forcing her taller opponent backwards. The second round saw more sustained exchanges, with Amelia's footwork and ring movement proving key.

Knowing the final round would bring an all-out response from her opponent, Amelia maintained the pace, countering effectively and finishing strongly. The judges awarded her a second unanimous 5-0 victory, crowning her National Schools Champion for 2026.

The success marks Epsom's first National Schools "Golden Gloves" champion since Charlie Eastwood, who won the title 15 years ago and later added further national honours.

The victory also secures Amelia a place on the England Boxing National Development Pathway.

Joe Harding, head coach at Epsom Boxing Academy, said: "This girl is an amazing talent and at 12 years old this is only the start. She is hard-working and determined and I'm certain she will go on to represent her country.

"We have come close several times since starting our new Epsom club four years ago, with several silver and bronze medals, so bringing home the Golden Gloves with Amelia was a little emotional, to say the least."

Epsom councillors handed key roles on East Surrey's new Shadow Council

5 June 2026

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The newly elected East Surrey Shadow Authority met for the first time on Wednesday 20 May, taking another formal step towards the creation of the new East Surrey Council due to replace existing county, borough and district councils on 1 April 2027.

The meeting marked the transition from the former East Surrey Joint Committee arrangements to the newly elected “shadow authority”, following this month’s elections to the new unitary council covering Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge.

With the Liberal Democrats holding a working majority on the 72-member authority after the May elections, councillors confirmed leadership and cabinet appointments that will oversee the transition year.

Councillor Steve Wotton was confirmed as Leader of the East Surrey Shadow Authority, with Councillor Kirsty Hewens appointed Deputy Leader.

Of particular local interest, two councillors representing Epsom & Ewell secured places in the shadow cabinet.

Councillor **David Buxton**, a Liberal Democrat councillor from Epsom & Ewell, was appointed Cabinet Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health — one of the most substantial service portfolios in local government, covering responsibilities that currently account for major areas of county council expenditure and public concern.

Councillor **Julian Freeman**, LibDem also from Epsom & Ewell, was appointed Cabinet Executive Member for Housing. The appointment places an Epsom representative at the centre of housing policy discussions as the new authority prepares to assume responsibilities from existing councils amid continuing pressures around affordability, development and future planning arrangements across East Surrey.

The full cabinet allocation agreed by the authority included:

- Steve Wotton – Transformation, Digital and People
- Kirsty Hewens – Economy and Regeneration
- Andrew Burton – Finance and Resources
- Ashley Tilling – Children’s Services and Education
- David Buxton – Adult Social Care and Health
- Andrew Matthews – Transport, Highways and Infrastructure
- Bradley Nelson – Strategic Planning and Growth
- Julian Freeman – Housing
- Abhiram Magesh – Leisure, Culture and Communities
- Claire Malcomson – Climate, Environment and Waste

The cabinet roles are presently shadow positions linked to the local government reorganisation programme and will operate in that form until the new authority formally assumes full powers in April 2027.

The meeting also approved governance arrangements for the shadow council, endorsed initial transition priorities, and designated interim statutory officers to steer the authority through its establishment phase.

Among the appointments, Adam Chalmers, currently Chief Executive of Elmbridge Borough Council, was designated Interim Head of Paid Service. Nikki O’Connor, Assistant Director of Finance (Corporate) at Surrey County Council, was appointed Interim Chief Finance Officer, while Daniel Bainbridge, Head of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) at Elmbridge, became Interim Monitoring Officer.

Speaking after his appointment, Cllr Steve Wotton said: “This is a significant moment as we work to bring services together under a single organisation. Our priority is to ensure residents see the benefits of the new East Surrey Council – one that is responsive, well run and able to deliver high-quality services from April 2027.”

He added: “We recognise the scale of the task ahead, but also the opportunity for a fresh start to shape a council that reflects and serves our communities.”

The new East Surrey Council forms part of Surrey’s wider local government reorganisation, under which the county’s existing councils are to be abolished and replaced by two large unitary authorities – East Surrey and West Surrey.

Until April 2027, existing county, borough and district councils will continue running day-to-day services. The shadow authority’s role is to prepare the structures, governance and leadership arrangements for the incoming council.

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Sam Jones – Reporter



Photo right to left: Julian Freeman and David Buxton

Epsom Council Rainbow Centre secrecy row deepens over “pre-election silence” advice

5 June 2026



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s attempt to justify refusing answers to Epsom and Ewell Times before May’s elections has itself become the subject of a fresh transparency dispute.

The Council has now disclosed, following a Freedom of Information request, that the decision to rely on Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 (prohibition on Council promotion of political parties) involved the Council’s Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, senior corporate and communications officers and Cllr Neil Dallen (RA Town), Chair of Strategy and Resources.

Yet the Council simultaneously claims it holds no legal advice, governance advice, briefing or equivalent guidance explaining why Section 2 supposedly prevented answers being given to press questions about the Rainbow Leisure Centre controversy.

The issue concerns Cllr Neil Dallen’s (RA Town Ward) refusal before the election to answer questions relating to the Rainbow Leisure Centre, where a confidential urgent decision warned of dilapidations potentially costing “up to £500k”.

He has *post-election* offered a response which is the subject of our report: No end to Epsom’s Rainbow Leisure Centre controversy

Guidance relied upon appears to undermine Council’s position

The Council disclosed a Surrey local government pre-election guidance document as the material relied upon. However, the guidance appears to say something rather different from the position adopted by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

The document emphasises political neutrality, impartiality and avoidance of electioneering by councils during election periods. But it also expressly states that councils may continue normal business and are allowed to “publish factual information to counteract misleading, controversial, or extreme information”.

It further stresses even-handed treatment of information requests and continuation of ordinary council business.

Epsom and Ewell Times’ questions to Cllr Dallen and others sought factual explanations of decisions already taken — not campaign material, political advocacy or commentary on electoral opponents.

“No advice held” raises further questions

The Council’s response identifies senior officers and a senior councillor as participants in the decision to invoke Section 2. However, when asked for legal advice, governance advice or internal briefing supporting the decision, the Council replied: “This information is not held by the Council.”

That response raises obvious questions. Was no legal or governance reasoning recorded despite involvement of the Monitoring Officer and senior management? Was advice given informally but not documented? Or has relevant information been withheld under another exemption?

The Council has separately relied on Section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act to refuse disclosure of internal communications concerning the decision-making process.

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Neutrality — or protection from scrutiny?

The controversy touches on a sensitive constitutional question.

Pre-election restrictions exist to prevent councils using public resources to influence elections or support political parties. They are designed to preserve political neutrality.

But critics may ask whether refusing factual answers on controversial matters involving the ruling administration risks producing the opposite perception — namely that council machinery is being used to shield politically damaging issues from scrutiny immediately before voters go to the polls. That concern is sharpened by the context.

The Rainbow controversy involved questions about a confidential urgent decision, possible dilapidations of up to half a million pounds, the Council's inspection responsibilities over a major public asset, and the role of the Chair of Strategy and Resources, Cllr Dallen, who was standing for election to the new East Surrey Council.

Whether the officers involved were properly protecting neutrality, or whether the interpretation adopted had the practical effect of protecting the ruling political group from uncomfortable questioning during an election campaign, is likely to remain contested.

Internal review sought

Epsom and Ewell Times has now requested an internal review by an officer independent of those involved in the original decision.

The review request challenges the Council's use of Freedom of Information exemptions, the apparent absence of recorded legal reasoning, and the interpretation of the very guidance relied upon to justify pre-election silence.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports

No end to Epsom's Rainbow Leisure Centre controversy

"It's my meeting": Cllr Dallen stops questions about his role in alleged Rainbow "cover-up"

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

Epsom's Rainbow Leisure Centre Places new operators

East Surrey Council leaders await anointment

5 June 2026



The Liberal Democrats who swept to power in the inaugural East Surrey Council elections have confirmed their leadership team for the new authority ahead of its first full council meeting on 20th May.

Cllr **Steve Wotton** has been elected Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, with Cllr **Kirsty Hewens** chosen as Deputy Leader following the party's commanding victory across the new council area, which stretches from Epsom and Reigate to Thames Ditton, Caterham and Horley.

As previously reported by Epsom and Ewell Times, the Liberal Democrats secured 40 of the 72 seats on the new authority — enough for a clear working majority — meaning attention will now turn to how the party intends to shape the politically and financially challenging transition to the new East Surrey unitary authority.

The new "shadow authority" will oversee preparations for the abolition of the existing borough and district councils as part of Surrey's Local Government Reorganisation programme, with the new unitary council expected to assume full powers in 2027.

In a statement following his election, Cllr Wotton said residents had voted for "a fresh start".

He said: "Our immediate responsibility is to build a strong, effective and financially sustainable new council that works for communities across East Surrey.

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“There is a significant amount of work ahead as part of Local Government Reorganisation; as part of the transition we are committed to establishing a culture that puts residents first, is compassionate and fights your corner.”

The Liberal Democrats said the new authority faces major pressures from the outset, including roads, social care, housing and special educational needs provision, as well as what they describe as an “up to £35 million shortfall awaiting the first budget”.

The party also signalled that it intends to distance the new authority from the culture of the former Conservative-led Surrey County Council, which governed the county for decades before local government reorganisation reshaped Surrey politics.

The Lib Dem victory was particularly striking in areas with Liberal Democrat parliamentary representation. The party claimed that in constituencies represented by Lib Dem MPs it won more than 75 per cent of available seats.

Cllr Hewens, who represents Walton South on Elmbridge Borough Council, has lived in Walton for more than 25 years and currently serves as Cabinet Member for Local Economy, Car Parking, Enterprise and Community Safety. The party said she had campaigned to support local businesses through free parking initiatives and had helped establish Business Improvement Districts across Elmbridge. She is also a long-standing food bank volunteer and recently became a trustee of a local arts charity.

Cllr Wotton lives in Horley and has a professional background in banking and financial services in London and Hong Kong. First elected to Horley Town Council in 2023 before joining Reigate and Banstead Borough Council the following year, he has campaigned on environmental and infrastructure concerns affecting Horley, including sewage flooding issues linked to the Horley treatment works.

The first meeting of the new council on 20th May is expected to formally establish the authority’s political leadership and governance arrangements as East Surrey begins one of the largest reorganisations of local government in Surrey for decades.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Left to right: Helen Maguire (MP for Epsom and Ewell); Steve Wotton (Leader and Cllr for Horley West, Salfords and Sidlow); Kirsty Hewens (Deputy Leader and Cllr for Walton South and Oatlands); Monica Harding (MP for Esher and Walton); Chris Coghlan (MP for Dorking and Horley)

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Epsom’s LibDem MP gags her Party’s new councillors in their moment of triumph

Lib Dems sweep up in East Surrey Unitary Council election for Epsom and Ewell

Locators looking for Surrey home seekers

5 June 2026



Channel 4’s long-running property programme Location, Location, Location is searching for Surrey house hunters to take part in its next series filming this June.

Fronted by property experts Kirstie Allsopp and Phil Spencer, the show has been a fixture on British television for more than 20 years, helping buyers across the UK find their ideal homes.

The programme makers are now looking for individuals, couples and families across Surrey who need help finding their next property — whether they are first-time buyers, upsizing, downsizing, relocating or searching for a “forever home”.

A spokesperson for Channel 4 said: “We are casting for the new series, and we are interested in hearing from chain-free (or SSTC) house hunters who would be ready to buy in June this year.

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“Applications are now open and we’re looking to spread the word to the community to encourage house hunters to apply and get the help they need.

“We are looking for individuals, families and couples who need Kirstie and Phil’s expertise to buy their dream home.

“Whether applicants are first-time buyers, looking for their next dream home, downsizing or relocating — whatever the reason they’re moving, we love to hear from them.”

The broadcaster said it strongly encourages applicants from all backgrounds and identities to apply as part of its commitment to greater inclusivity on screen.

LocaroApplications can be made through the programme’s official application page: Location, Location, Location applications

Applications will be handled by IWC Media, which will contact applicants directly if they wish to take the application further.

Photo: Presenters Phil Spencer and Kirstie Allsopp

Lib Dems sweep up in East Surrey Unitary Council election for Epsom and Ewell

5 June 2026



The results are in.

Of the 10 seats in Epsom and Ewell the Liberal Democrats dominate with the election of 8 of their candidates. The Residents Association took 2. None of the other parties gained any seats. See full results below.

Announced from the count by deputy returning officer and EEBC CEO Jackie King at Bourne Hall in Ewell on Friday 8th May.

You may need to refresh your browser during the results period for the updating to appear.

The top two in each division are elected.

Epsom Town & Downs

Epsom West

Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington

Ewell Village, Stoneleigh & Nonsuch

West Ewell

According to the Council the full results for the East Surrey Council will be published on the Future Surrey website.

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

Arrests from Epsom's April disorder

5 June 2026



Surrey Police have confirmed that **10 people have now been arrested** as part of an ongoing investigation into violent disorder in Epsom town centre earlier this month.

The arrests relate to incidents on **Wednesday 15 April and Monday 20 April**, when protests escalated into disorder in the town centre.

In a detailed update published on 5 May by Surrey Police, officers set out the ages and home areas of those arrested, showing a mix of local individuals and others from outside the immediate area.

The arrests were carried out over several days:

On 17 April, an 18-year-old man from Banstead was arrested on suspicion of public order offences.

On 20 April, a 23-year-old man from Richmond-upon-Thames was arrested on suspicion of public order offences and was further arrested on suspicion of criminal damage.

On 21 April:
• a 21-year-old man from Epsom was arrested on suspicion of public order offences
• a 20-year-old man of no fixed address was arrested on suspicion of public order offences
• a 15-year-old boy from Purley was arrested on suspicion of public order offences and further arrested on suspicion of criminal damage

On 23 April:
• a 12-year-old boy from Epsom was arrested on suspicion of public order offences
• a 12-year-old girl from Epsom was arrested on suspicion of public order offences
• an 11-year-old boy from Epsom was arrested on suspicion of public order offences

On 24 April, a 16-year-old boy from Leatherhead was arrested on suspicion of public order offences.

On 27 April, a 20-year-old man from Epsom was arrested on suspicion of public order offences.

Police confirmed that **all 10 individuals have been released on bail with conditions**, and that enquiries are continuing.

The latest update follows an earlier statement on 23 April in which five arrests were initially confirmed. At that stage, those detained were identified as a 15-year-old boy from Purley, an 18-year-old man from Banstead, a 20-year-old man of no fixed address, a 21-year-old man from Epsom, and a 23-year-old man from Richmond-upon-Thames.

Detective Chief Superintendent Jon Groenen said: "Whilst we support the right to lawful protest, we will investigate those suspected of committing criminal offences and causing damage, disruption, and disorder.

"We continue to review footage to identify those responsible and will take appropriate action against them."

The investigation remains ongoing, with officers continuing to examine CCTV, social media and body-worn video footage.

Sam Jones – Reporter

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Classroom to Cruise: Epsom Student Wins Luxury Family Trip

5 June 2026



A Nescot student has won a luxury seven-night family cruise after taking part in an innovative work experience programme that swaps the classroom for life at sea.

Travel and Tourism students from **North East Surrey College of Technology** (Nescot) in Epsom joined peers from Itchen College, Southampton, on a five-day river cruise through Germany and the Netherlands as part of the Cruise Career Springboard initiative. The programme brings together education and the cruise industry, giving students hands-on experience while promoting careers in the sector.

During the trip aboard the VIVA Enjoy, students were tasked with creating social media content, planning excursions, and developing marketing ideas aimed at attracting younger travellers. The experience combined practical learning with the realities of working in a fast-moving hospitality and tourism environment.

Among the group was 17-year-old **Jordyn Leyland McKenzie**, whose work stood out and ultimately secured her the programme’s top prize — an all-inclusive seven-night cruise for her family on the Rhine or Danube.

Jordyn said she had little idea what to expect when she first joined the programme.

“When I first joined the Cruise Career Springboard programme as part of our Travel and Tourism course, I had no idea I’d actually get the opportunity to go on a cruise. We found out later that a small group of us would get that chance by producing a presentation which impressed our tutors. I was over the moon when I found out I was one of the lucky ones.”

Reflecting on the trip itself, she described it as far more immersive than she had imagined.

“We went on a four-day cruise on the VIVA Enjoy. On the first day, we had to post snapshots of the cruise on our social media stories. We also made a small video showing the rooms and the excursions, which I ended up using in my final presentation. My personal highlights were definitely the beautiful three-course meals, the hot tub on the top deck, and going on a bike ride in Amsterdam using the bikes VIVA kept on the boat. We saw so much, it felt like we were there for ages — it was just amazing.”

After returning to the UK, students were invited to compete for the top prize through a second presentation. Jordyn took a creative approach, producing a TikTok-style promotional video aimed at younger audiences, alongside a quiz and a mock brand partnership idea.

“I adored the first experience so much, I was 100% up for the challenge,” she said. “I did a TikTok video in an ‘influencer style’ to show how they could promote the cruise to younger people. I also created a quiz and an example of a brand partnership that might work for the company.”

The result was announced during an online meeting at Nescot, with students gathered in a classroom and judges joining via video call.

“We had to wait a month to find out the results. We were all dressed smartly at college and the judges were on a Zoom call. When they eventually said my name, I didn’t even hear it at first until I saw everyone looking at me. I was lost for words. After the call, they filmed me ringing my mum who was so excited. I can’t even believe it’s real.”

She said the experience had a lasting impact on her confidence and ambitions.

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“The Cruise Career Springboard experience has pushed me out of my comfort zone and really boosted my confidence. It’s been incredible, and now I get to treat my family to a seven-night, all-inclusive trip. I’m just so grateful for the opportunity.”

Julie Kapsalis MBE, Principal and CEO of Nescot, said the programme demonstrates the value of giving students real-world opportunities beyond the classroom.

“We always work to give our students real-world experiences and swapping the classroom for a cruise must be one of the most exciting we’ve ever offered,” she said. “The programme develops confidence, self-belief and communication skills, while also giving the industry insight into how to attract a younger generation of customers.”

Industry representatives involved in judging also praised the quality of the students’ work. Michelle Daniels of VIVA Cruises said she took away ideas for her marketing team, while mentor Graham Sadler highlighted the transformation in students’ confidence and engagement over the course of the programme.

The Cruise Career Springboard initiative, founded by Matthew and Edwina Lonsdale, brings together education providers and cruise industry professionals, with nearly 100 individuals contributing their time to support young people considering careers at sea.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

Ewell students cruise to new careers

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Teacher banned after fake war-zone stories to Epsom and Ewell pupils

5 June 2026



A former Epsom and Ewell High School maths teacher has been banned from teaching after a professional conduct panel found she fabricated stories to pupils about being in the army, going to war zones and suffering serious combat injuries.

The Teaching Regulation Agency report, published by GOV.UK, says Alexandra Slay began work as a maths teacher at Epsom and Ewell High School in December 2016 and became Head of Year on 26 May 2023. Concerns were raised in August 2023 about her communications with a pupil, leading to referrals to the Local Authority Designated Officer and police. The police informed the school on 18 September 2023 that they would not be continuing their investigation. Miss Slay resigned on 9 November 2023 and was referred to the TRA in December 2023.

The panel found proved that, between 2019 and 2023, Miss Slay gave her personal mobile number or personal email address to one or more pupils, sent inappropriate or over-familiar messages, shared details of her personal life, and fabricated stories about “being in a conflict and/or war zone and/or sustaining injuries”.

The official report says Miss Slay “appeared to have fabricated a narrative to pupils which involved her having a role in the army, where she would often take trips to war zones, undertake training and/or be involved in conflict.” In her disciplinary interview, when asked about the messages, she said they were “all fabricated” and added: “I made up the lie to feel that I belong, was a part of the world.”

The Times reported that Miss Slay had falsely claimed to have served in the Australian army and had sent one pupil more

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than 2,500 emails and other messages. It also reported that messages from an invented “Lieutenant Danny Blackburn” described her supposed combat injuries.

The TRA decision records that messages said to be from “Lt. Danny Blackburn” included claims that “Cpt Slay’s body is at a weak stage” and that she was being put on oxygen. Other messages referred to gunshot wounds, “severe amounts of blood”, cardiac arrest and having “flatlined”. The panel found the fabricated injury messages had the potential to cause stress and alarm to pupils.

The panel also found Miss Slay had failed to maintain appropriate teacher-pupil relationships and had instead developed relationships “more akin to friendships”. It found she had breached the Teachers’ Standards, including the requirements to observe proper professional boundaries and safeguard pupils’ wellbeing.

In deciding sanction, the panel said prohibition was “both proportionate and appropriate”, noting that Miss Slay had developed inappropriate relationships with a number of children through “highly inappropriate and unprofessional communications” and had failed to report multiple safeguarding concerns. The Secretary of State’s decision-maker imposed a prohibition order.

The order prevents Miss Slay from teaching indefinitely in any school, sixth-form college, relevant youth accommodation or children’s home in England. She may apply for it to be set aside, but not until 21 April 2028.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Epsom and Ewell High School – Google street view

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Luxury spa and restaurant coming to Ockley

5 June 2026



A “beautiful” and “fantastic” high-end luxury hotel, spa and fine dining restaurant set in the Surrey countryside has been approved.

Gatton Manor and Country Club will be transformed as part of a £41 million project to demolish the closed hotel and failing golf course and replace them with 81 guest rooms, two restaurants, and a spa featuring indoor and wild swimming pools, a gym, and treatment and relaxation areas.

The 22-hectare site near Ockley is expected to generate around 290 construction jobs during the two-year build, followed by 145 permanent roles once the development is operational.

Planning officers told Mole Valley District Council’s April development committee that the proposal would create a destination venue in the borough and bring significant investment into the rural economy. They added: “It is such a beautiful site, it is such a large site, it has got woodland, open areas, it is really a lovely, lovely, rural area and because of its size and the amount of landscape it is more than capable of absorbing this amount of development.”

In addition to the hotel, new facilities will be open to the public, including a fine dining restaurant and gym. The scheme also includes two tennis courts and three padel courts, with up to 100 gym memberships offered at preferential rates to residents living within 3km of the site.

Access to the hotel and spa will be via Standon Lane, linking the A29 Stane Street with Horsham Road. The existing hotel closed in 2022, and its adjoining 18-hole golf course had already been earmarked for closure regardless of the planning outcome.

Officers noted the development would also support businesses further along the supply chain. However, some residents objected, raising concerns about the impact on the openness of the countryside and increased pressure on local roads.

Developers acknowledged the loss of the golf course was regrettable but said it had been operating at a loss for several years and was no longer viable.

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Councillor Roger Adams (Liberal Democrat, Bookham West) said: “With global warming and rising temperatures I suspect a lot of people seeking a holiday will no longer be heading to the Mediterranean but may well seek to have staycations, and where better to stay for a holiday than Surrey. We’ve got beautiful country here and we do need developments such as this. It will provide employment and enhance the visitor offer.”

Councillor Monica Weller (Liberal Democrat, Bookham West) added: “It really is quite fantastic as far as I’m concerned. A business like this has got to bring something really quite fantastic to our area and that is really to be welcomed.”

Plans for new hotel and spa in Ockley (MVDC)

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