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

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Epsom March crime and safety round-up

2 April 2026



Policing activity across Epsom and Ewell in March 2026 saw a mix of enforcement successes, court outcomes and continued concern around acquisitive crime, drugs and community safety.

30th March an unexploded ordnance was handed in to the police counter in the Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom. The area was cordoned off until experts gave the all-clear.

Drug crime crackdown sees cash seizures in Epsom

A significant policing outcome during March was the seizure of more than £12,000 linked to criminal activity following a proactive stop by officers in Epsom. The funds, recovered under the Proceeds of Crime Act, are set to be reinvested into policing.
Local police social media updates suggest this forms part of wider activity targeting drug-related offending and organised crime in the borough, with officers using stop-and-search powers and intelligence-led patrols to disrupt offenders.

Targeted operations lead to arrests across offence types

Neighbourhood policing teams reported intensive enforcement weeks during which more than 20 arrests were made across a range of offences including burglary, theft, drugs and weapons possession. (Facebook)
These operations reflect a continued emphasis on “visible policing” and proactive interventions in hotspot areas.

Burglary and vehicle crime remain priorities

Across Surrey, two burglars were jailed in March after targeting homes to steal car keys and vehicles in early-morning break-ins.
While not limited to Epsom and Ewell, such offences remain a key policing priority locally, with residents repeatedly advised to secure vehicles and keys.

Domestic abuse and sexual offences prosecutions

March also saw several significant court outcomes across the county, including custodial sentences for domestic abuse, coercive behaviour and serious sexual offences.
Police continue to highlight safeguarding and victim support as central to their work, alongside encouraging reporting and use of protective measures such as Clare’s Law disclosures.

Community engagement and policing visibility

Residents are being invited to participate in upcoming “Policing Your Community” roadshows, aimed at gathering local concerns and shaping neighbourhood priorities.
This follows ongoing efforts in Epsom and Ewell to strengthen engagement between officers and the public.

Ongoing concerns around public safety incidents

Although outside the March reporting window, earlier incidents such as the January report of a teenage girl being approached by two men in Court Recreation Ground continue to frame community concerns about safety in public spaces. (The Sun)
Police have maintained increased visibility patrols in such areas in response.

Overall picture

Data and operational updates suggest that policing in Epsom and Ewell during March has been characterised by: targeted enforcement against drugs and organised crime; continued focus on burglary and vehicle theft; strong emphasis on safeguarding in domestic abuse and sexual offence cases; ongoing community engagement initiatives.
While Surrey remains a relatively low-crime area overall, the persistence of acquisitive crime and anti-social behaviour continues to shape local policing priorities.

Sam Jones – Reporter

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Box Hill’s Zig Zag Road Leads to Straight Ban on Antisocial Riding

2 April 2026



Motorcyclists near Box Hill are being targeted despite the “vast majority” who visit the Surrey beauty spot being “considerate people who behave respectfully”. A Public Spaces Protection Order is being introduced around the National Trust site following efforts from residents in Mickleham and Westhumble over what they said was excessive noise and acts of anti-social behaviour. Mole Valley District Council then carried out consultation on whether to make certain behaviour an offence within the defined area.

This includes, revving engines, keeping engines idling, speeding, stunts, driving in a convoy, exhaust popping or backfiring, racing, for sudden or rapid acceleration. The area covered includes the world famous Zig Zag road and the roundabout near Denbies wine estate.

The decision was taken by the council’s March executive committee after 603 people, 62 per cent of those who took part in the consultation, backed the measures – compared with 29 per cent who were against and nine per cent who were undecided. It will remain in place for three years unless renewed with the council estimating it will come into effect this summer once necessary signage is installed.

Councillor Caroline Joseph (Liberal Democrat: Fetcham) said: “The consultation revealed a polarised view about whether a PSPO should be introduced ranging from citing behaviour that it disrupts residents’ lives and threatening safety to viewing it as unenforceable and being harmful to local businesses and long-standing biker traditions. “Motorcycle riding at Boxhill and the surrounding area dates back to at least the 1920s from early racing and trials, and the Surrey Hills area remains a popular destination. “It is important to recognise that the vast majority of motorcyclists in this area are considerate people who behave respectfully.”

Bike groups are concerned it will impact their long-standing enjoyment of the area and groups. She added: “It’s not aimed at spoiling those traditions but it’s meant to encourage less antisocial behaviour by those who don’t respect the traditional activity of bikers in the area. “The purpose of the order is only to prohibit the behaviours that cause a public nuisance.” “The introduction of the PSPO will benefit visitors to the local area and those residents and businesses whose quality of life has been affected by vehicle noise all while not affecting responsible and considerate drivers and riders who use Mole Valley’s roads.” The council said it was open to extending the order’s coverage but would require further consultation – which would need to be done outside the upcoming election period.

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Zig Zag Road (image Google)

Epsom and Ewell February crime and safety round-up

2 April 2026

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Epsom and Ewell Times does not normally report individual crime incidents. However, as part of a trial we are publishing a monthly round-up of crime and community safety developments affecting the borough, drawing on information released by Surrey Police and local authorities.

Police operation in West Ewell results in three arrests

A police operation targeting antisocial behaviour and suspected drug activity in **West Ewell** led to **three arrests** during February.

Officers from the **Epsom & Ewell Safer Neighbourhood Team**, supported by the East Surrey Neighbourhood Enforcement Team and Special Constabulary, carried out patrols around the **Watersedge estate**. During the evening operation officers conducted **11 stop-searches and two vehicle stops**, while gathering intelligence relating to drug use, drug dealing and antisocial behaviour in the area.

Police said the activity formed part of ongoing efforts to disrupt criminal activity in neighbourhood “hotspot” locations.

(Source: Surrey Police neighbourhood updates)

Missing Epsom man located safe and well

Surrey Police issued an appeal during February to help locate **Lee, a 63-year-old man reported missing from Epsom**.

Police later confirmed that he had been **found safe**, allowing the appeal to be cancelled.

(Source: Surrey Police)

Prolific thief targeting local businesses identified

Surrey Police also reported action against a **prolific offender who targeted businesses across Epsom and neighbouring areas**, including Sutton, Wallington, Cheam and Burgh Heath.

Police said the offender entered several premises and stole items including mobile phones during incidents affecting local traders.

(Source: Surrey Police neighbourhood update)

Safer Epsom & Ewell programme continues

The **Safer Epsom & Ewell** programme — a joint initiative between Surrey Police, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and partner agencies — continued to develop during February.

The scheme focuses on areas including **Epsom town centre, Watersedge and Longmead**, using the Home Office **“Clear, Hold, Build”** approach to tackle organised crime, drug supply, acquisitive crime and antisocial behaviour. (democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk)

The programme combines targeted police enforcement with longer-term work involving the council and community partners to address underlying causes of crime.

(Source: Epsom & Ewell Borough Council / Surrey Police)

Crime trends in the borough

Police data for the area indicates that the **most commonly reported offences locally include violence and sexual offences, shoplifting, criminal damage and vehicle crime**. (surrey.police.uk)

Retail crime and antisocial vehicle use remain key policing priorities, with neighbourhood teams carrying out targeted patrols and working with businesses and community groups to address concerns.

(Source: Surrey Police neighbourhood statistics)

Community engagement and policing events

Neighbourhood officers continued their **“Meet the Beat”** programme during February, providing opportunities for residents to speak directly with police about local issues.

Sessions were held at locations including **Epsom Library at the Ebbisham Centre**, where residents were invited to raise concerns about crime, antisocial behaviour and community safety.

(Source: Surrey Police)

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How to contact Surrey Police

- **Emergency (crime in progress or immediate danger): call 999**
- **Non-emergency police matters: call 101**
- **Online reporting and advice:** https://www.surrey.police.uk/contact/
- **Crimestoppers (anonymous information): 0800 555 111**

Residents are encouraged to report suspicious activity or information that may assist police investigations.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

January crime and safety round-up

Surrey armed officers in fatal shooting to remain anonymous?

2 April 2026



A coroner will soon decide whether armed police officers involved in a fatal shooting in Surrey will have their names kept out of the public eye.

At a pre-inquest review today (February 23), Surrey's senior coroner Richard Travers said he would take "a couple of weeks" to rule on a Surrey Police application for anonymity for the firearms officers who shot 29-year-old Joel Stenning.

Mr Stenning died after being shot in the early hours of August 11, 2024, in Nursery Road, Knaphill, near Woking.

He had reportedly pointed an air rifle at officers who were called to his home following reports of a man with a gun. Mr Stenning died shortly after 7.30am on August 15 in a London hospital from "complications of a gunshot wound to the abdomen".

Mr Stenning was born in Chertsey, lived in Woking and worked as a roofer. He was remembered by the coroner, who opened proceedings by offering condolences to his parents, who were present in court.

Surrey Police, backed by the Chief Constable, applied for nine firearms officers to remain unnamed. Chief Superintendent (CSI) Justin Berkenshaw told the court that firearms officers are highly trained, voluntary specialists who deal with the "most dangerous and lethal criminals".

Naming them, he argued, could put them and their families at risk from organised crime groups and damage future careers.

"If someone gets named it cannot be undone," he said, adding that officers have faced threats and harassment in other cases nationally. He said anonymity would help officers give their "best evidence" without fear of becoming headlines.

BBC Surrey said that giving evidence is stressful for everyone in court and, given the circumstances, would expect police officers to give the best evidence possible.

CSI Berkenshaw said, due to the specialist and technical nature of highly-trained armed police officers, they are not easily replaced. He raised concerns that if the officers' names were put into the public domain, not only could it undermine their role as armed officers, it could discourage new recruits from going into armed operations and persuade current officers to give up their weapons.

CSI Berkenshaw said: "My team works extremely hard with my firearms officers to prevent knowledge of their role…this is because of the risk to the officers and their families..and to maintain an effective firearms unit."

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He said he was worried naming the officers could risk Surrey Police's capability for an armed officer unit.

But lawyers for the Stenning family and BBC Surrey (on behalf of the media) opposed the move. The family's representative said there was no evidence of any threat linked to Mr Stenning's relatives or associates and warned against a "blanket" approach simply because officers were armed.

They argued open justice should not be side-lined by general policy concerns.

The family's legal representative said: "It sets an entirely new precedent setting approach in which the mere fact of the status of a firearms officer should give rise to anonymity across the board without assessment of conditions of the case."

Mr Travers noted the force's arguments were not specific to this case but could apply to any firearms incident. He will now weigh privacy and safety concerns against the principle of open justice before deciding whether the officers will be named when the full inquest begins.

The inquest, expected to be heard over four weeks in early 2027, will examine the circumstances surrounding Mr Stenning's death.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Image – purely illustration and not related in any way to this incident.

Is it a fair cop for Surrey Police to evict its tenants for no fault?

2 April 2026



A pregnant mum facing eviction from her police-owned home has said Surrey Police's latest concessions 'do not go far enough' and are "insulting", despite the force extending the moving deadline and halving rents.

Around 21 families living in properties owned by Surrey Police were served 'no fault' eviction notices, known as Section 21 notices, at the end of January. The notices gave families just 12 weeks to leave homes many believed they could stay in for the duration of their service.

In a press statement, Ms Townsend said she must ensure the force's limited housing stock is used "in the fairest way possible" across more than 4,000 officers and staff. She said her ambition is to ensure new recruits can access affordable housing so they are not deterred from joining Surrey Police.

Following criticism from tenants and politicians, Surrey Police confirmed last week that affected families will now be allowed to remain in their homes until 18 July. The force also announced a 50 per cent rent reduction until tenants move out, described as a "gesture of goodwill" from Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Lisa Townsend.

However, the pregnant mum, who asked to remain anonymous, said the changes fail to address the core issue of affordability. She said describing the rent cut as a goodwill gesture was "insulting", adding that even with reduced rent her family still needs to find around £5,500 upfront for a deposit and first month's rent, followed by monthly payments of an extra £1,500.

"We feel as if the rug has been pulled out from under our feet," she said, explaining that the family had always felt fortunate to live in police accommodation and had believed their housing situation was secure.

She said families had previously been told there were no plans to change their housing arrangements, including during refurbishment works in December 2024, when tenants were even asked to help design renovations. She added that had families been given more warning, they could have saved towards a move. "We're not sitting on pots of money," she said.

While she accepted that her household does not meet the new eligibility criteria for subsidised accommodation, which includes a joint income threshold of £80,000, she argued the policy fails to consider the retention of experienced officers. She said police officers are underpaid for being the "ones who run towards danger when everyone else runs away".

The mum said extending the deadline was better than nothing but warned the fundamental problem remains money. She said the decision risks forcing long-serving officers out of the force because they simply cannot afford to leave Surrey. She also raised concerns about the possibility of emergency temporary accommodation, warning it could split her family up and may not be safe.

She added that prioritising subsidised housing for new recruits "does not make housing in Surrey more affordable" and said the force could face the same retention problems in the future. The mum said she did not know any new officers who were homeless, while her own family now faces the prospect of sofa surfing after her baby is born.

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Liberal Democrat MPs in Surrey have urged the PCC to reconsider the approach. Guildford MP Zoe Franklin said there was no “legal cliff edge” requiring evictions ahead of the introduction of the Renters’ Rights law and argued police forces would still be able to recover service-linked accommodation where genuinely needed. Ms Townsend has said she has taken legal advice on the issue.

Families affected by the decision say they are now urgently searching for alternative homes and fear they will be priced out of the communities where they live and work.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Related report

Paradox of Protection policy for tenants: triggers Surrey police evictions

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Surrey Police precept rising

2 April 2026



The average household in Surrey could pay more than £350 a year towards policing after a £15 council tax hike was given the go-ahead. The police precept – the portion of council tax that funds Surrey Police – will rise from £338 to £352 a year for the average Band D home from April 2026, a 4.4 per cent increase from last year.

The rise was backed by the Surrey Police and Crime Panel on February 4, despite a sharp debate over whether residents can afford it. Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Lisa Townsend said the increase was needed to prevent services from deteriorating, warning that without the full rise people could face slower answers to 999 calls, longer waits for officers to attend incidents, and delays in forensic investigations.

“For every £1 on the precept, about £0.5 million goes into the Force,” she told the panel. “That equates to around 15 police staff or officers.” Ms Townsend said Surrey Police has become “one of the most improved forces in the country” in recent years, with more visible neighbourhood policing and better performance on crimes such as burglary and vehicle theft, but rising demand and increasing costs mean those improvements are at risk.

She said: “Improvements we are seeing today have only been possible because of previous decisions to increase the policing precept. Those decisions have allowed SP to invest in officers, staff, systems and technology that are now delivering results on the ground.” According to the PCC, on an average day the force handles almost 1,700 contacts from the public and sends vehicles to almost 250 incidents. Each day 216 crimes are recorded, 33 relate to violence against women and girls, 56 are assault, and armed response officers are called out 16 times a week.

She added: “The improvements achieved so far simply cannot be sustained” without further funding.

Some councillors challenged the move. Cllr Richard Wilson said many residents in his area are struggling to afford food, heating and rent, questioned whether it was the right time to increase bills, and asked whether Surrey, as a relatively low-crime county, could manage with a smaller force.

Kelvin Menon, chief finance officer for the PCC’s office, said Surrey receives one of the lowest levels of government grant in England, making it more reliant on council tax, and warned that cutting funding would mean difficult choices about which services to scale back. He argued that although Surrey may be a ‘low-crime’ area, it is the police keeping it that way, asking: “What level of crime are people willing to accept?” He added: “The level of poverty in the country is possibly not the fault of the police precept.”

The PCC repeatedly assured the panel that Surrey Police has already delivered about £90m in savings over the past decade. Even with the tax rise, the force still needs to find £5.5m in further savings this year and more in the years ahead, with an overspend of around £1m this year driven largely by overtime costs.

A public consultation found 57 per cent of respondents supported a £14 increase, the maximum allowed at the time. More than 2,400 people took part, although this was highlighted as a small proportion of Surrey’s 1.3m residents.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Surrey Police and Crime Officer, Lisa Townsend, at the Surrey Police and Crime panel. (Credit: Surrey County Council webcam)

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When is attempted suicide anti-social? A Surrey police dilemma

2 April 2026



A woman has criticised Surrey Police for giving her an anti-social behaviour warning after officers intervened while she considered taking her own life. She has claimed the move left her feeling “ashamed” and too scared to call for help if she experiences the same struggles again.

The 40-year-old, who asked to remain anonymous, said she was issued with a Community Protection Warning (CPW) in October 2025 after officers intervened when she was at risk of suicide in Guildford town centre late at night. The supermarket worker said she later received a second warning in December, despite claiming she had not breached the first.

CPWs are normally used to tackle anti-social behaviour that harms or causes disturbance to the community. This could include harassment, vandalism or persistent nuisance. However, the Guildford resident said these anti-social behaviour powers are being wrongly used against vulnerable people rather than preventing crime.

A Surrey Police spokesperson said the warnings are to set “behavioural boundaries” and are “not about criminalising behaviour”. The Force uses a national framework ‘Right Care, Right Person’ to ensure health-related incidents are handled by specialists (NHS, social care) rather than the police.

The woman said the notice, which warns of potential consequences such as arrest or £100 fines if the behaviour continues, has had a chilling effect on her and has left her “too ashamed” to tell her close friends and family what happened. “It’s made me less safe,” she said. “If anyone had concerns about me they couldn’t call the emergency services because if I survived [there would be] consequences. And that puts my friends and me in a horrible position.”

The Guildford resident explained she did everything to avoid disrupting the public and was not being attention-seeking, as she fears some people may label her. “They are completely mis-using something designed to protect communities from things like youths carrying knives,” she said. “We are giving them money and power to tackle anti-social behaviour and that is not what they are doing.”

The woman described how officers initially spoke calmly with her, telling her she was not in any trouble and persuaded her to come to safety. However, she said the atmosphere “completely changed” as soon as she was safe. “When I say that I try to get help and say there isn’t any, the [police] sort of imply that I’m not trying hard enough.” The woman said she feels “failed” by mental health services and wants the police to recognise the pressure on this sector.

The 40-year-old said she was sent the first warning to her home address and the second warning was given in her workplace, in front of colleagues, which she said was humiliating. Although she made a complaint to Surrey Police, the woman said she was told no action would be taken. A police spokesperson has said they cannot comment on individual cases when a complaint is subject to review and an ongoing investigation.

The woman raised concerns about something called SIM (serenity integrated mentoring): a controversial model that once linked police with mental health services. In some areas around 2022, this was used against those who frequently sought emergency services help in a crisis. But Surrey Police said it is committed to delivering ‘Right Care, Right Person’ in making sure health-related incidents are dealt by specialists.

A Surrey Police spokesman said: “An initiative is underway in Surrey, based on similar models elsewhere in the UK, which is aimed at supporting the policing response to individuals who frequently present to police with suicidal behaviour which could put them at risk of danger. The response focuses on the core policing duties outlined under Right Care, Right Person to set boundaries and provide a consistent response from front line officers.

“The project involves working with partner agencies, such as health and social care colleagues, to signpost risk and vulnerability to the most suitable agency. Where necessary police interventions, such as community protection warnings, will be considered as part of the approach to reduce disproportionate demand and set behavioural boundaries. These would not be issued without the support of the relevant partner agencies.

“Setting these behavioural boundaries is not about criminalising suicidal behaviour – they are put in place to ensure that these individuals are accessing the right service to provide them with the support they need.”

Anyone can contact Samaritans FREE any time from any phone on 116 123, even a mobile without credit. This number won’t show up on your phone bill. Or you can jo@samaritans.org or visit www.samaritans.org.

Whatever you are going through, you don’t have to face it alone. Call Samaritans for free on 116 123, email jo@samaritans.org or visit www.samaritans.org for more information.

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Emily Dalton LDRS

Image – purely an illustration and not real.

January crime and safety round-up

2 April 2026



Epsom and Ewell Times does not normally report individual crime incidents. However, as a trial, we are publishing a monthly round-up of crime and community safety matters with a local connection, drawing on information released by Surrey Police and partner agencies.

Safer Epsom & Ewell partnership – early impact

Surrey Police and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council have continued to roll out the **Safer Epsom & Ewell** partnership during January, aimed at tackling persistent offending, organised crime, antisocial behaviour and theft across the borough.

According to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the initiative has already resulted in more than **150 arrests**, targeting prolific offenders, shoplifting, drug supply and county-lines activity. Police report the disruption of multiple county-lines gangs, seizures of Class A drugs and cash, and the removal of knives from circulation.

The partnership builds on high-visibility policing activity over the Christmas and New Year period and is intended to provide a sustained, joined-up approach to community safety involving the police, the borough council, housing providers and other local partners.

(Source: Surrey Police / Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner)

Witness appeal after approach in Court Recreation Ground, Epsom

Surrey Police have issued an appeal for information following an incident reported on **Monday 26 January** in **Court Recreation Ground, Epsom**.

Police say a **13-year-old girl walking to school** was approached by two men, one of whom reached out towards her. The girl was able to run away and was not injured.

One suspect is described as a **tall white man of slim build with dark hair**, wearing a **dark jumper**. Police have asked anyone who was in the area at the time, or who saw anything suspicious, to contact them.

Robbery in Ash Court, Epsom – police seek witnesses

Earlier in the month, Surrey Police appealed for witnesses following a **robbery in Ash Court, Epsom**, reported late on **Friday 9 January**.

The incident is believed to have taken place between **approximately 11.50pm and 11.56pm**. Officers have asked residents and motorists in the area at the time to check **CCTV, doorbell or dash-cam footage** and contact police if they have information that may assist enquiries.

Police have not released further public details about the victim or property taken.

Missing child appeal cancelled after positive outcome

Surrey Police also confirmed this month that a **13-year-old girl reported missing from Epsom** was later **found safe and well**, and that an earlier public appeal was stood down.

Community engagement – ‘Meet the Beat’ sessions

Throughout January, Surrey Police neighbourhood teams held a series of **“Meet the Beat”** drop-in sessions across Epsom and Ewell.

The sessions allowed residents to speak directly with local officers about issues such as antisocial behaviour, shoplifting, speeding and general community safety concerns. Locations included areas such as Epsom town centre, Waterloo Road, Long Grove and local shopping parades.

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Further sessions are scheduled into February.

Local policing priorities

Surrey Police have continued to highlight neighbourhood priorities for Epsom and Ewell, including action against **antisocial use of motorbikes and e-bikes**, and a **zero-tolerance approach to retail crime** in the town centre.

Police say this includes targeted patrols, enforcement activity and work with local businesses and CCTV operators.

How to contact Surrey Police

- **In an emergency (immediate danger or a crime in progress):** call **999**
- **Non-emergency matters:** call **101**
- **Online reporting and advice:** use the Surrey Police website reporting tools
- **Crimestoppers (anonymous information): 0800 555 111**

Residents are encouraged to report concerns, suspicious behaviour or relevant information promptly to assist local policing and community safety.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Penchant for porn on Surrey police computer leads to ban

2 April 2026



A Surrey Police officer was dismissed for watching porn, taking pictures of his genitals and buying cocaine on a work device. Former Detective Constable (DC) Luke Turner has also been given a lifetime ban from the Force.

An accelerated misconduct hearing on December 19 found that Mr Turner had used his police-issued mobile data terminal (MDT), a work device used to access police systems, for explicit and unprofessional purposes.

The hearing concluded Mr Turner used it to help buy cocaine on four occasions between July and August 2025, searched and watched porn, took photos of his genitals and engaged in sexual messages with another individual.

Chair Sarah Grahame rules that his actions seriously damaged public trust and breached multiple police standards. Mr Turner was immediately dismissed without notice and placed in the national barred list.

The chair said: “I believe that the public of Surrey would be rightly appalled if they knew that this officer was engaging in this behaviour.” They said such behaviour would discredit the police service and damage its reputation.

Mr Turner denied and disputed the allegation that he used the work device to buy Class A drugs as well as sending or receiving sexual messages on it.

He did not contest allegations that he watched porn and took pictures of his genitals on his work device but argued they did not amount to gross misconduct.

But Assistant Chief Constable Grahame said she reviewed all the evidence and decided, on balance, that the behaviour had taken place. She said his actions broke two professional standards: discreditable conduct and failing to follow force policies and rules.

Under updated police conduct rules introduced in 2025, there is now a presumption that officers found guilty of gross misconduct will be dismissed unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The chair said there were not mitigating factors strong enough to justify a lesser punishment.

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She said: “I do not believe that DC Turner could remain with Surrey Police given the seriousness of the behaviour found on duty.”

Emily Dalton LDRS

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

Paradox of Protection policy for tenants: triggers Surrey police evictions

2 April 2026



A pregnant mum says families have been left facing a “very real prospect of being homeless” after being told to leave Surrey Police subsidised housing.

At least 15 households living in homes owned by the force have been served Section 21 ‘no fault’ eviction notices and told they must move out within 12 weeks.

The Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner’s (PCC) office owns a number of properties, which are rented to officers at subsidised rates to help ensure high housing costs are not a barrier to joining the force.

However, up to 15 families say they have now been told they must leave after building their lives in police-owned homes. Some of the officers affected have served with the force for several years, if not decades.

‘Very real prospect of being homeless’

One woman, who is due to give birth in five weeks and asked not to be named to protect her identity, said: “I don’t sleep at night. I wake up in the middle of the night and my brain is just ticking over. What are we gonna do?” She added: “We face a very real prospect of being homeless.”

She said families are being pushed into Surrey’s expensive private rental market with little time and no savings for upfront costs. She told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) that families did not make a down payment when moving into the subsidised housing. The 34-year-old said: “What we’ve now got to do is go out into a private rented sector […] vastly more expensive than what we’re paying now […] and 12 weeks in which to gather enough money to find a deposit.”

She explained that if the force had given more notice of its intention to sell or repurpose the properties, families could have built up savings.

‘We have been totally abandoned’

Beyond the financial pressure, she said families feel unsupported. “There has been a total lack of support,” she said. “There’s no consideration for welfare, there’s no referrals or anything. They’re not keeping check on anybody.” She added: “We have been totally abandoned.”

‘Very tough decision’

Lisa Townsend, PCC, told the Local Democracy Reporting Service: “The imminent introduction of the Renters Rights Act has given us little choice but to take these steps now.” She said the “very tough decision” was motivated by a desire to do right by “the Surrey taxpayer and for the wider workforce at Surrey Police”.

The PCC added: “I appreciate the impact this will have on those current tenants and we have given them the longest notice period we were able to.”

Officers and their families have been told they must find alternative accommodation by May 1 — the same day the Renters’ Rights Act is due to come into force. The Act is designed to give greater protection to tenants, including banning no-fault evictions.

Plans change?

The 34-year-old mum questioned the explanation that legal changes forced the timing. “To say to somebody who’s got decades of service with this force, and you turn around and say to them, you need to leave because we want somebody who’s new in service […] there’s kind of an age discrimination there,” she said.

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She explained that because of the eviction, her partner is considering quitting the force. “If this is how you treat people so badly, why on earth would [he] want to stay?” she said. She added that the force appeared to be casting out long-serving officers in favour of “newbies”.

Families say they were previously told there were no plans to change their housing situation, including during refurbishment works in 2024. The tenant said: “We were told any future eligibility changes wouldn’t affect current tenants.”

A Surrey Police spokesperson said that in December 2024 the PCC and Surrey Police advised all tenants they could be required “to give up possession of the property in the future for several reasons, including earnings exceeding the eligibility criteria”.

What Surrey Police say

Surrey Police said the move is part of a long-term plan to prioritise housing for newer staff. A force spokesperson said: “It is the ambition of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Force to provide, and potentially grow, the temporary and subsidised housing stock available for employees who are early in their service and meet our eligibility criteria.”

The force said new rules mean applicants “must have been in Force less than three years” and must meet income limits, among other conditions. It confirmed: “Surrey Police has informed all serving police officers and their families currently residing in force-owned accommodation that they will be required to vacate their homes to make way for new recruits.”

It added: “This has been a very difficult decision to make, however, to meet the ambition of our future housing strategy, we must ensure we are utilising our housing stock in the fairest way possible for all colleagues within Surrey Police.”

Surrey Police said affected tenants have been offered meetings with senior leaders.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Epsom & Ewell MP presses government on firearm licensing safeguards

2 April 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.

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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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Surrey Police’s AI powered face recognition cameras in the spotlight

2 April 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.

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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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Woking up to Surrey face recognition cameras

Live facial recognition policing comes to Surrey

A Surrey Police career goes to pot

2 April 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

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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)

East Surrey gets new Police Station

2 April 2026



Surrey Police's near two-year hunt for a replacement to its shut, dangerous, crumbly concrete riddled Reigate station is over – with people only needing to walk travel miles to the new one. The new base for the Reigate and Banstead area will give the force a permanent presence and front counter for the public, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) said after securing a building at Perrywood Business Park in Honeycrock Lane in Salfords. It comes after the 2023 closure of its Reigate Station that left officers and staff stationed in Mole Valley and Caterham Police Station.

Commissioner Lisa Townsend hailed the purchase as great for policing presence in East Surrey and follows what she described as an extensive search in the Reigate and Banstead area. The new building was considered to be the only suitable site in the area and will be funded by selling Reigate Police Station. This station will run alongside the force's new eastern division headquarters in Leatherhead, which was granted planning permission earlier this year. The PCC and senior officers wanted to find a secondary site in the Reigate and Banstead area specifically for a police station and front counter service for residents.

Surrey Police maintain a counter service during office hours in the Town Hall, The Parade. Epsom.

The Perrywood Business Park keeps the trend of police sites in industrial sites and will be just a three minute drive from

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the Surrey Custody Centre in Salbrook Road. Lisa Townsend said: “I know how much residents value their local policing presence so this is really fantastic news for our communities in the area. The discovery of RAAC and subsequent closure of Reigate Police Station has meant it has been a disruptive time for our hard-working teams in East Surrey. I want to pay tribute to their continued patience, professionalism and resilience in challenging circumstances. The search for a site in the Reigate and Banstead area has been extensive and Perrywood was the only building which met our needs so I am delighted that we have been able to secure the purchase. I believe that together with the progress being made on our new Eastern Division HQ in Leatherhead, this heralds a bright future for policing in East Surrey.”

Deputy Chief Constable of Surrey Police Mark McEwan said: “We believe this new building will provide sufficient space and facilities for our teams, be fit for purpose and enable us to continue delivering the high levels of service our residents expect. Whilst we are still at the very early stages, considerations continue into where individual teams across the Eastern division will be based in the future and we will provide updates as and when we have them. The safety of our communities remains our priority and there will be no change to officers.”

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Reigate Police Station (Image Google)

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Woking up to Surrey face recognition cameras

2 April 2026



Formal protests have been lodged against Surrey Police’s use of facial recognition technology that scans the faces of every adult and child in a bid to identify known suspects. Surrey Police was given two live facial recognition vans from the Home Office in November and has since put them to use in Redhill and Woking. The surveillance cameras record the images of everyone who walks across their paths to see if they are a match for people on their watchlist. The force says it deletes anybody who does not match to “minimise the impact on their human rights”, with watchlist images deleted within 24 hours. The police said there were known issues in the past with facial recognition technology, including potential gender and ethnic bias, but that developments and new AI-driven algorithms have reduced this.

Now, a group of 25 cross-party Woking Borough Councillors have written to the force demanding the cameras are mothballed until meaningful consultation with residents and their elected representatives takes place over how, or whether, they are used. The letter says that fundamental questions of governance and human rights should have been resolved before any decision was made – including accountability for wrongful stops or arrests from misidentification, whether cameras record continuously or selectively, and how and when data is processed, shared, stored and deleted. A resolution has also been passed by Woking Borough Council’s Communities and Housing Scrutiny Committee calling on Surrey Police and the Crime Commissioner to join its January 20 meeting to answer questions about the use of live facial recognition cameras in Woking. In the meantime, councillors want the cameras’ usage suspended immediately, pending full consultation with residents, with a focus on young people and those from ethnic minority backgrounds and community groups, as well as a full independently led equality and human rights impact assessment.

Chairing the Tuesday, December 2 committee was Councillor Tom Bonsundy-O’Bryan. He said: “They were deployed in Woking on November 26 and in Redhill on November 13. They scanned the faces of more than 8,000 members of public; 99.9 per cent of those scanned were not arrested. Of the individuals explicitly flagged as alerts by the technology in Redhill, 60 per cent were ultimately not arrested; only two arrests were made. There are serious questions about the proportionality of this. Imagine the police standing down the road, and asking to see everyone’s passport, checking their ID, just in case they are a criminal. It would be a ludicrous thing, we wouldn’t stand for it, it would be outrageous, and that is effectively what this technology is doing. It scans the face of anyone, child or adult, walking down the street and compares it to a watch list. Everyone wants the police to stop criminals, to find and arrest the people responsible for crime, but is this technology really proportionate in being deployed here in Woking?”

A spokesperson for Surrey Police said: “The introduction of live facial recognition technology, which is already being used successfully by other forces in the UK, is a vital tool to help us investigate crime thoroughly and relentlessly pursue criminals. We meticulously planned the rollout of the technology to ensure our use is appropriate, proportionate, and that we are operating with transparency. As part of this, we appropriately engaged with a wide variety of stakeholders and have ensured all information, documentation and policies are publicly available on our website. Since the launch on

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November 13, we have successfully completed a deployment in Redhill where officers arrested a 69-year-old man for breaching his sexual risk order and conducted condition checks for a sexual harm prevention order and a stalking protection order. On a further deployment in Woking, a 29-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of rape and shoplifting and two women were issued community resolutions for shoplifting."

Police added that the technology has been extensively tested by the National Physical Laboratory and that the algorithm used "shows no statistical bias towards gender or ethnicity (as tested nationally)". They said officers are briefed before each deployment regarding any potential disparity relating to race, age and gender, and that "extra corroboration" is required before any action is taken. "It is our responsibility to use every tactic and innovation available to us to keep the public safe, deter criminal behaviour, protect people from harm, and locate the most serious of offenders – and the live facial recognition technology has helped us to do exactly that."

Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend said: "I want to make sure our communities are as safe as possible for Surrey residents which is why our police officers must have every tool at their disposal to track down criminals operating in our midst. I do understand that people may have concerns which is why it is important that the debate on policing technology reflects the facts, the safeguards in place and the clear benefits to public safety. These vans will be used proportionately and it is important to stress that law-abiding members of the Surrey public going about their daily business have nothing to fear by their use. The cameras will help our policing teams identify and detain those on a pre-determined watchlist such as violent criminals and sex offenders."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

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Live facial recognition policing comes to Surrey

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