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

Current
ISSN 2753-2771

Surrey Police HQ development dogged by flood risks

11 September 2025

Plans to redevelop Surrey Police's Mount Browne headquarters in Guildford — including a new dog training school — have been green-lit for a second time despite fresh flood risk modelling showing "pockets of high surface water flooding" across the site.

Guildford Borough Council's Planning Committee approved the scheme in November 2024, but since then national planning rules have changed and the Environment Agency has issued new flood maps.

As a result, Surrey Police and the council agreed to bring the scheme back to committee.

The updated modelling shows parts of the site, including the former bowling green earmarked for the new dog school, face a high risk of surface water flooding.

Councillors raised concerns about what that actually means in practice at another planning committee meeting on September 9.

"On one hand we say there's a high risk of flooding — and then we say the infrastructure will support that regardless," Cllr Stephen Hives said. "So I'm a bit confused: is there a danger to welfare or not?"

Planning officers insisted the scheme still passes the required "sequential test" — which means no safer, alternative sites are reasonably available — and that the approved drainage strategy will prevent increased flood risk.

"In practical terms it will make no difference to this development," an officer told the committee. "The drainage strategy already approved is sufficient even with the updated flood risk."

The development does not fall within the newly created "Grey Belt" category introduced in the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), but it was judged to still harm the Surrey Hills National Landscape.

With no new highways flooding issues identified and no change to the approved drainage plan, officers confirmed the project remains compliant with planning rules. Plans to redevelop the police HQ and build a new access road was unanimously approved.

Mount Browne has been the headquarters of Surrey Police for more than 70 years. The current campus contains a large number of buildings which have been constructed mainly on a piecemeal basis and are judged no longer fit for purpose.

Emily Dalton

Proposed Redevelopment of Mount Browne, Surrey Police\'s HQ. (Credit: Surrey Police)

Surrey Police tax set to rise

11 September 2025

Council tax bills could keep climbing despite warnings residents could be getting less bang for their buck. Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner has insisted she "will not ask the public to be less safe" as she defended plans to raise council tax for policing.

At a Police and Crime Panel meeting last week (September 4), PCC Lisa Townsend explained the decisions on the annual precept rise were driven by the Chief Constable's assessment of what the force needs to keep the country safe.

"It's not me plucking a figure out of thin air," she told councillors. For Ms Townsend, the choice is clear: "Surrey Police

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

are cutting their cloth, but what I am not prepared to do is ask the public to be less safe."

Surrey Police must find £14.8m savings by 2029 with pay (which makes up 80 per cent of its spending) ramping up costs, a report states. Each 1 per cent pay rise for police officers adds £2.4m to the budget, equivalent to £4.80 on the average council tax bill.

The report revealed: "Whilst the force is making every effort to not impact services as a result of savings required, there is a risk that this will not be possible".

Ms Townsend's comments came after councillors questioned whether constant tax rises could be justified when Surrey Police must still deliver sweeping budget cuts to balance its budget.

Cllr Richard Wilson challenged: "At some point Surrey Police has to cut its cloth. You can't keep asking the public for more and more money when it's a regressive tax." He asked the PCC to "give the public a break" from the ever-increasing tax bills.

But finance officers warned that the ability to make further cuts "become more difficult every year" despite efforts to standardise IT systems, renegotiate contracts and improve procurement. They warned if Surrey Police do not increase the precept in a particular year then it has "missed that chance" in every following year to raise funds for the Force.

Although the Government has promised to fund some police pay rises above 2.8 per cent, Surrey is still waiting for clarity on how much of this money it will actually receive. The long-awaited Police Reform Bill could also see some functions stripped away to a national body or Surrey forced into merger talks — changes with potentially "major financial implications."

Surrey remains one of the lowest government-funded forces in the country, leaving residents to shoulder more of the burden through local taxation.

Anti-catcalling campaign triggered 'vitriolic' backlash

11 September 2025

Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner has said the "vitriolic" online abuse she faced after an anti-catcalling trial campaign went viral shows why tackling violence against women and girls must remain a priority.

The 'Jog On' pilot, launched in the summer, was led by a female police officer who had been harassed while out running. It aimed to address the harassment many women face in public spaces just going about their lives but it sparked fierce backlash online- with some critics questioning whether it was a good use of police resources.

Ms Townsend, who said she was not directly involved in the campaign, said she received the "most vitriolic messages" on social media and they were the worst she had faced in her time as a PCC.

She told a Police and Crime Panel on September 4: "The fact that this was the most awful sort of language that I've had I think tells you why this work is so important."

One X (formerly Twitter) user asked her whether the campaign was a waste of Surrey Police;s time, given that catcalling was not a criminal offence. Others said it was a total waste of taxpayer's money.

Townsend has responded on social media and publicly that early intervention and crime prevention are essential parts of policing, explaining that behaviours dismissed as minor – like catcalling and public intimidation – can escalate into more serious offences.

The PCC's comments come as she set out Surrey's apparent progress against her Police and Crime Plan which says tackling VAWG is a top priority.

Councillors challenged Surrey Police's record claiming it is not possible to tell whether violence against women and girls has increased or decreased. The volume of violent domestic abuse crimes reported has decreased by 4 per cent from 7,995 in June 2024 to 7,673 in June 2025. However, the volume of serious sexual offences has increased by 2 per cent from June 2024 to June 2025.

The PCC said: "I hope to see reports of violence against women and girls go up during my term as PCC because we know it is one of the most under-reported crimes in this country, not just in Surrey but right across this country.

"I don't take an increase in reports as a bad thing. I think everyone that comes forward to talk about an experience that they may not have had the confidence to do before is a good and important thing.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

“I don’t expect to see a reduction in reports anytime soon.”

Lisa Townsend, Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner. (Credit: Surrey PCC office)

Surrey police officer barred for domestic abuse

11 September 2025

A former Surrey Police officer secretly got back with his ex while under investigation for behaviour in their relationship – then tried to persuade her to retract a statement, a misconduct panel has ruled.

The officer, referred to as Officer A in the report, was supposed to stay away from his former partner, Ms A, after concerns were raised about his behaviour. But the hearing in July and August 2025 was told he started seeing her again behind the force’s back and even pushed her to withdraw what she’d told investigators.

The panel said it was a clear attempt to interfere with a witness and undermine a formal investigation to the alleged misconduct.

The panel concluded the officer’s behaviour as gross misconduct because he tried to interfere with a live investigation, secretly rekindling a relationship with a key witness and pressuring her to change her statement.

His harassment, aggressive behaviour and invasive social media posts were judged so serious they risked undermining public confidence in the police.

Further incidents of harassment were also proved by the hearing. Ms A said the former officer showed up to her home uninvited and barged his way in, leaving her with bruises, and confronted her in a pub where he made crude remarks in front of others.

Officer A denied contacting Ms A and asking her to retract her statement to the police. He also refuted barging into Ms A’s home.

Investigators also discovered that Officer A had been posting personal and sexualised material on Pinterest- including symbols from their relationship like a fake boarding pass for her birthday trip, yellow tulips (her favourite flowers) and photos of home-made sexual restraint gear.

While not every allegation was proven, the panel ruled that Officer A had broken police rules on honesty, respect and professional conduct, and said his actions were serious enough to damage confidence in the force.

The report read: “We do note that before these matters the former officer did serve the public well as demonstrated by the service record provided. He undertook a difficult and stressful role that required a lot of hard work to achieve and maintain during his career.

“We thank the officer for that service, however this past record would not allow us to impose a lesser outcome, given the serious nature of our findings.”

In terms of mitigating factors, the panel noted Officer A was emotionally distraught at times during the misconduct hearing and was finding matters personally difficult, as confirmed by another officer.

A Surrey Police spokesperson said: “As soon as we were made aware of the allegations involving Officer A, a thorough investigation was carried out by the Force’s Professional Standards Department.

“It was determined that former Officer A would have been dismissed had they still been serving and was placed on the College of Policing Barred List.

“Domestic abuse by any of our officers and staff simply will not be condoned and such allegations against any of our officers or staff are always subject to a thorough investigation by our Professional Standards Department.”

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

Student overdose leads to policy change

11 September 2025

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

A university student from Surrey could have been saved from an overdose if police had left a voicemail for her parents, an inquest jury has found. Despite needing to find her address, officers did not leave a message. Amy Levy, 22, deliberately took an overdose of her prescription pills at her student home in Bristol while on the phone to a friend on June 18, 2023. Her friend alerted the police as Amy's condition worsened. Surrey Police and Avon and Somerset Police launched an urgent search to find the University of the West of England (UWE) student and tried to contact her parents, who live in Surrey, because they did not know her address. But when officers and staff tried to reach Amy's parents, no one picked up the phone to the number showing 'no caller ID'. The calls were left unanswered, unable to ring back and no voicemail was left despite the gravity of the situation. Amy was eventually located more than 90 minutes after the first police call. Sadly, she died in hospital on June 22, 2023 from an overdose of different medications which caused hypoxic brain injury.

In a statement, Amy's parents said: "We are totally broken that Amy is no longer with us, but we are also so proud of Amy and grateful for the time we had her in our lives." An inquest jury identified a "catalogue of missed opportunities" to save Amy. The five-day inquest from June 6, 2025 concluded if the police had found her sooner, she would have survived. The jury said that despite taking a deliberate overdose of prescription drugs, it was not possible to know her true intent. Robert Sowersby, Assistant Coroner for Avon, has now issued a report raising concern about the lack of guidance or training issued to officers and staff about leaving voicemail messages – especially in circumstances where they are trying to obtain important information in a time-pressured situation. He said it was "hard to understand" why all of the officers or police staff decided not to leave any voicemail or message despite both forces grading Amy's case as requiring an "immediate" response, the most urgent category.

"Both police forces knew that Amy had taken an overdose at an unknown address and that her condition was deteriorating," the report said. "Despite that factual background, none of the officers or call handlers who phoned Amy's parents left a voicemail message." The inquest found that because the missed calls were from an unknown number, Amy's parents did not know that there was an emergency, or that the police wanted to speak with them, and had no way of calling them back. Assistant coroner Sowersby wrote: "It is probable that Amy's location could have been obtained earlier than it was if the police had left a suitably worded voicemail for one or more of her parents." Surrey Police attended the family home in person and received details of Amy's current address, which led to officers being able to find her in Bristol, Avon and Somerset Police said.

Police inspectors from both forces gave evidence at the inquest. There was guidance in Avon not to leave voicemails when the incident in question concerns domestic abuse, but there is no general guidance about when to leave a voicemail message in other cases. Surrey Police provided the coroner with evidence of updated voicemail procedure indicating that callers must consider if it is appropriate to leave a voicemail or message. Mr Sowersby said: "With limited or no guidance, training or policy on when police and/or police support staff liaising with the public should leave a voicemail, particularly in circumstances where they are trying to obtain important information in a time-pressured situation, I am concerned that there is a risk that future deaths will occur unless action is taken."

Iftikhar Manzoor, of Hudgell Solicitors, represented Amy's parents at the Inquest and said her death 'must lead to clear policies' across UK police forces when the risk to an individual has been graded as the highest level of urgency. He said: "What has been truly shocking to learn has been the fact that there is no system in place with regard to leaving messages in a situation where somebody's life is quite clearly at risk, and the only person posing a danger to them is themselves. The calls were shown as unknown numbers, and as the police chose not to leave messages and only made one call attempt, a huge opportunity was lost immediately, and the sense of urgency dropped. It was the bare minimum effort."

Responding to the coroner's report, Superintendent Chris Colley of Surrey Police said: "Our thoughts and condolences remain with Amy's friends and family following what must have been a very hard couple of years for her loved ones." He added: "We have now made changes to our procedure around the use of voicemails and telephone contact attempts, to ensure we are doing all we can to be there for people when they need us most." A spokesman for Avon and Somerset Police said: "Our thoughts are with the family of Amy Levy, who died in extremely tragic circumstances two years ago. A private apology has been made to her family, which we wish to repeat publicly, and we are reviewing our organisational policies in line with the findings relating to this case." Avon and Somerset Police also said they are looking at potential changes to force polices as guided by an Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) learning recommendation earlier this month. The spokesperson said: "We will ensure any necessary changes to help protect the public are adopted and will provide a further update to the IOPC and coroner in due course."

HM Coroners Court Woking Surrey

Surrey Police officer inspires change to racism law

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

in private places

11 September 2025

Surrey Police officer Sergeant Candice Gill is celebrating this week after successfully campaigning for an amendment to the law that will have a far-reaching impact.

While it is a criminal offence to racially or religiously abuse someone in public, this does not extend to incidents occurring in homes. This loophole left police officers and emergency workers with no legal protection from such attacks during home visits.

Candice experienced the impact of this first-hand. She says: “I cast my mind back to the day of a racially aggravated incident against me. I knew the man was racist. Once I was inside his house, he made it overtly clear. The abuse he threw at me was both damaging and humiliating, and there were no legal consequences.

“It seemed like a no-brainer to me that something had to change. But changing the law seemed way too big, far out of my remit, impossible even.”

Surrey Police Deputy Chief Constable Nev Kemp heard about this outdated gap in the law and committed to championing the cause with Candice.

He capitalised on opportunities to brief ministers and wrote numerous letters. Alongside Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend, Candice and Nev made a trip to Parliament to press the case for change.

When they learnt earlier this year that there was cross-party support in Parliament and the changes would be made, Candice and Nev were thrilled. Last week they received written confirmation that the government will make an amendment to the law, subject to the Police and Crime Bill receiving Royal Assent later this year. The government will introduce two new offences, ensuring that emergency workers are covered under the law when doing their jobs in private homes.

Candice says: “I am absolutely delighted to have heard that my proposal to have the law changed has been agreed.

“I hope the change will go some way into making all officers but particularly the officers who are ethnically or religiously diverse feel more protected and more valued while doing one of the hardest jobs out there. The positive impact is widespread across all police forces and other emergency services.”

Deputy Chief Constable Nev Kemp says: “More than once, I heard from colleagues that the impact of being singled out and attacked for simply being who you are was more profound than being physically assaulted.

“This important change wouldn’t have happened without Candice and is a reminder of the difference we can make with determination and teamwork. Letters of support from national leaders representing the ambulance service, fire and rescue service and the Police Federation have helped to confirm the difference it will make to emergency workers across England and Wales.

“Surrey is a consistently improving force, and this is further evidence of our pathway to becoming a leading force in fighting crime and protecting people.”

Policing Minister Dame Diana Johnson said: “Candice’s story is heartbreaking. Our emergency workers put themselves in harm’s way every day to keep us safe and they should never have to tolerate abuse due to their race or religion while simply doing their job.

“As part of our Plan for Change, this government is rebuilding the bond between the public and police, and part of that means ensuring our officers have the protections they deserve.

“By closing this loophole, we’re sending a clear message that racial and religious abuse directed towards those who serve our communities will not be tolerated, and I thank Candice, Deputy Chief Constable Nev Kemp and all those at Surrey Police who have campaigned for this important law change.”

Surrey Police know where they’re going with more of them

11 September 2025

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Surrey Police will have ‘the highest number of officers in a generation” after locking up money for 40 more patrol cops. The estimated £2.5million in central government money is part of a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee and will add to the 222 extra officers who joined the force since March 2021 – and its March 2025 total of 2,336 officers. The new recruits will likely comprise 25 full time police officers and 15 special constables.

The programme is part of the government’s plan to have at least one named, contactable, officer in each neighbourhood, as well as dedicated teams on patrol in town centres and other hotspots. There will also be dedicated antisocial behaviour leads in every force which Surrey Police said reflects the government’s recognition of the public’s crime and safety concerns.

Surrey Police Chief Constable, Tim De Meyer, said: “For us, the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee is a chance to strengthen our presence in the heart of our communities, with officers working alongside residents, identify local issues, and resolve problems before they escalate. It’s about building lasting relationships and ensuring that we are seen as a trusted resource, not just an authority figure. The guarantee reinforces our commitment to community engagement, crime prevention, and proactive policing. With this initiative, we will be better equipped to build stronger relationships, deliver more targeted interventions though our hotspot policing efforts, and improve overall safety for the communities we serve. The promise of increased officer numbers will enable us to further tackle issues such as anti-social behaviour, theft, and drug-related crimes. While the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee presents several advantages, it also comes with challenges that we must address to ensure its success. The demand for resources across the Force must be managed effectively to ensure that neighbourhood policing remains a priority, even in times of high demand. Additionally, engaging with communities that have historically had strained relationships with the police can take time and require a sensitive, consistent and tailored approach. However, these challenges present an opportunity for us to demonstrate our commitment to transparency, community-focused policing, and problem-solving.”

Assistant Chief Constable, Tanya Jones, added: “By staying true to the Force principles, and embracing the goals of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, we can strengthen our role as a trusted, proactive Force that works alongside local communities to tackle crime, improve public safety, and build a sense of community pride. As officers and staff, we must embrace opportunities to speak with local residents, build trust, and work collaboratively to prevent crime. We can create environments where residents feel heard, supported, and secure. It’s more than just policing, it’s about shaping communities in a way that promotes safety, confidence, and lasting social cohesion.”

Surrey’s Police and Crime Commissioner, Lisa Townsend welcomed the additional funding. She said: “Based on the funding allocation provided, it is projected that Surrey Police will benefit from an additional 25 police officers, as well as 15 Special Constables.” Adding: “Neighbourhood policing is a key commitment for Surrey Police, and residents are already benefiting from that focus, with an additional 3,500 charges and 2,500 more arrests across all crime types in 12 months. Initiatives such as the Safer Streets programme and hotspot policing have led to increased trust and greater intelligence gathering in our communities. However, forces across the country are also seeing a rise in ‘hidden’ crime types, such as fraud, domestic abuse and sextortion, and Surrey is no exception. These crimes have very real victims, and we must ensure those victims are getting support from specially-trained officers dedicated to pursuing justice for them. As part of the doctrine of operational independence, Surrey’s Chief Constable Tim De Meyer decides where his officers and staff are best-deployed to tackle offending. Under his leadership, the Force is one of the fastest-improving in the country. Both Tim and I are determined to ensure this brilliant progress is sustained.”

Image: © Copyright Peter Trimming and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.

New Surrey police division HQ plans

11 September 2025

Plans for a new Surrey Police headquarters have been put forward for its eastern division in Leatherhead.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

The force said it hopes to develop a “bespoke and permanent” HQ on the former Electrical Research Association and Cobham Industries site. An application has also been put forward to develop an area of the Cleeve Road site into affordable housing.

After discovering Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in Reigate Police Station in September 2023, the division temporarily moved to the old Surrey Fire & Rescue Services HQ at Wray Park in Reigate.

Deputy Chief Constable Nev Kemp said the planning application is a “key step in our journey” to building a permanent location for police operations in East Surrey. He said the force has been focusing on finding a site that will help staff and officers to investigate and prevent crime and keep people safe.

Surrey Police bought the former Electrical Research Association (ERA) and Cobham Industries site on Cleeve Road in 2018 for nearly £20.5m, aiming to develop a new, purpose-built headquarters from the ground up. But by 2021 the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Surrey Police Chief Officer team decided to scrap the idea and look to Mount Browne, in Guildford, and redevelop the existing HQ.

The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) revealed earlier this year that Surrey Police spent nearly £3 million, on top of the £20.5m used to buy the Leatherhead site, on failed plans to move its headquarters as part of disastrous money-saving efforts. Much of the money used was spent on building designs and surveys for the project which the Police and Crime Commissioner said was directly transferable to the Mount Browne redevelopment project.

The force said it had held public meetings with local residents, businesses, councillors, and community group representatives to share initial plans and gather feedback. The force is also working closely with key stakeholders in the community, including Mole Valley District Council.

Related report:

Surrey police to move to Epsom and Ewell constituency

Cleeve Road premises bought by Surrey Police. Google Street View

---

New priorities for Surrey Police?

11 September 2025

Going “back to basics” is the key part of Surrey Police’s priorities under new plans announced by the county’s Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

Surrey’s new Police and Crime plan launched on April 4 includes ambitions to address the issues affecting people’s daily lives as well as focus on safeguarding vulnerable children and adults. Seeking to strengthen community trust, the plan details that every neighbourhood will have a dedicated police officer or PCSO with clear contact details.

PCC Lisa Townsend said the new approach will “concentrate on what our policing teams do best – fighting crime in our local communities, getting tough on offenders and protecting people.”

The plan, which runs to 2028, names violence against women and girls, the “growing scourge of shoplifting” along with rural offences and antisocial behaviour as priorities to deal with regionally. Boosting police morale and creating a supporting workplace culture is also listed as a prime concern to retaining officers in Surrey.

“I want Surrey Police to focus on tackling those crimes that blight our local communities, while also taking persistent offenders off our streets,” Ms Townsend said. “I promised that we would return to a ‘back to basics’ approach to policing, and this pledge forms the cornerstone of my Police and Crime Plan.”

The “back to basics” approach focuses on five crucial elements:

- Getting the fundamentals right – preventing crime, bringing offenders to justice swiftly, and tackling the issues that concern residents most.
- Protecting vulnerable people in Surrey – from children and young people, to elderly residents, rural communities and those in a mental health crisis
- Preventing violence against women and girls – helping women and girls in Surrey both be safe and feel safe whether in public or private
- Strengthening safe and resilient communities – where people feel listened to, feel a visible police presence and confident issues will be resolved

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

- Fostering integrity, accountability and wellbeing in policing –creating a transparent and supportive workplace culture, aiming to improve officer wellbeing and reduce staff turnover

Safer roads have been left out as a priority from this police and crime plan, much to the dismay of Surrey county councillors at a meeting earlier this year. They slammed the plan for having a lack of objective targets for many of the measures.

However, the new plan does include addressing gaps in road safety, finding local initiatives and to support Surrey County Council's vision to reduce and eliminate deaths and serious injuries on the road.

Early intervention efforts are also set to include tackling knife related-crime, working with schools and community groups to educate young people about the nature and consequences of serious crimes.

Efforts to tackle violence against women and girls include building public confidence in the police's ability to investigate VAWG, but it does not specifically outline how. Plans also detail ensuring survivor voices and the needs of families of perpetrators are heard to understand experiences and challenges.

The plan also includes measures such as using data and intelligence to understand crime trends and find priority areas to keep neighbourhoods safe. Community and stakeholder collaboration will play a more active and important role over the next five years and the PCC hopes to create lasting solutions.

Tim De Meyer, the county's Chief Police Constable said: "There is much that Surrey Police and the PCC can do with our partners to build safe and resilient communities – especially in respect of our fight against pernicious crimes such as shoplifting.

"My meetings with the public have shown that theft, anti-social behaviour and drug abuse trouble people a great deal. I believe that this Plan, allied with that of the Force, will help us redouble our efforts to ensure that Surrey Police applies all its neighbourhood policing experience to combat these issues."

Local engagement has formed much of the basis of the new priorities with residents, community groups, business leaders and victims' services consulted over the last autumn and winter.

Epsom and Ewell Council Approves Public Spaces Protection Order for Borough-Wide Expansion

11 September 2025

The Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Crime and Disorder Committee has voted to recommend the adoption of a borough-wide Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) following a public consultation that showed overwhelming community support.

The new PSPO, which will now be referred to Full Council for final approval, aims to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) by prohibiting a range of activities, including harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse, and alcohol consumption in public spaces after a warning from an authorised officer. The order also bans wearing face coverings, such as balaclavas, with the intent to commit ASB or crime, a measure police say will help deter group-related intimidation.

At the meeting, Public Protection Manager Oliver Nelson introduced the officers' report, highlighting the strong public backing for the PSPO. He noted that 92% of respondents supported extending the order for three years, and 83% backed its expansion across the entire borough. "The consultation has given us a clear steer from residents," he said. "We've slightly refined the prohibitions based on feedback, ensuring the PSPO is proportionate and enforceable."

Police representatives, including Acting Inspector Tommy Pearson and Chief Inspector Kelly Clifton-Sinclair, attended the meeting in support of the proposal.

Lib Dem Councillor **James Lawrence** (College) expressed his support, citing the consultation results as key to his decision. "Over 200 people responded to the consultation, with 92% of respondents supporting an extension to the PSPO and 83% supporting it covering the entire borough. My fellow Lib Dem councillors and I are happy to uphold public opinion on this and support the PSPO as proposed," he said.

However, some concerns were raised over the demographic spread of consultation responses. Councillor **Christine Howells** (RA Nonsuch) noted that only 2% of respondents were under the age of 24, questioning whether younger voices had been fully heard. In response, Committee Chair Councillor **Shanice Goldman (RA Nonsuch)** acknowledged the difficulty in securing wider engagement but highlighted outreach efforts to schools, faith groups, and youth charities,

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

including Buddy Up, a mentoring programme for young people.

Councillor **Tony Froud** (RA Stoneleigh)sought clarification on the geographical scope of the PSPO, asking whether it applied to specific areas or the entire borough. Cllr Goldman confirmed that the order would be borough-wide, expanding upon previous PSPOs that only covered certain locations. “It’s about making sure enforcement is not limited to certain hotspots,” she explained.

The Committee also unanimously agreed to recommend a £100 fixed penalty for breaches (reduced to £80 if paid within 10 days). The PSPO will now go to Full Council for formal adoption, where it is expected to pass with broad support.

If approved, the borough-wide PSPO will be in place for three years, subject to review. Council officers have committed to a public awareness campaign, including new signage and social media outreach, to ensure residents are informed about the restrictions.

Sam Jones – Reporter

Image credits: Google and Tobias “ToMar” Maier Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0

Guildford Students protest against PSPOs

Surrey students have come out against a council’s draft rules about public spaces, saying they could be “detrimental” to local students. Under the proposed new rules, students could be banned from being in a group of two or more people in the town centre which could “cause harassment, alarm or distress” to other people.

Guildford town centre has public space protection orders (PSPO) aimed at tackling persistent anti-social behaviour affecting others. Introduced in 2022, the rules are now up for review. Boundaries for the PSPO cover the town centre, Stoke Park and some neighbouring residential roads, the Mount (residential area and green open space), including Black Cat Alley.

But students at the University of Surrey have attacked the draft regulations as “vague” and have said that they can be “misinterpreted” in a way that can be harmful to students in Guildford.

Leading the cause, the Student Union’s President Liam White said in a statement: “We are concerned by the overly conditional phrasing of ‘acting in a manner that is likely to cause’ and the vague nature of ‘distress’. This feels like an extremely broad scope to enforce, given that members of the public may potentially be ‘distressed’ when encountering young adults socialising in public, even if it is not disorderly or anti-social.”

Under a PSPO, individuals deemed to be breaching the order can be asked to change their behaviour by police officers, PCSOs, or GBC compliance officers. Fines and written warnings can be given for repeated breaches.

He argued the PSPO is not phrased in a way which prevents groups acting disorderly but instead relies purely on a member of the public claiming to be distressed or alarmed. Mr White claimed this is “unreasonable” to potentially penalise members of the public, including students, in the town centre.

A spokesperson for Guildford Borough Council said: “We appreciate everyone who has taken time to respond to the Town Centre Public Spaces Protection Order consultation. These were draft proposals and the purpose of the consultation was to encourage feedback.

“In response to our partners and consultees, including the Student Union, we have adapted the proposed restrictions. The revised draft restrictions will be presented to the Executive on 27 March 2025 for consideration.”

Other key concerns raised included how “rowdy and inconsiderate behaviour” could be defined by someone’s clothing. The draft proposals state: “Wearing a piece of clothing with the intent to obscure or hide his/her identity for the purposes of committing crime and/or anti-social behaviour”.

The Student Union said this is particularly concerning for members of the community who wear clothing that covers their face or hair for religious purposes. “We question how appropriate it is to be enforcing restrictions on clothing, rather than other indicators of anti-social behaviour,” members said.

Students also criticised the proposed public space rules against the “anti-social” use of bicycles, skateboards and scooters in pedestrian areas. They said some of Guildford’s community is already “resistant” to the Beryl Bikes scheme and extending the PSPO will “disincentivise people from using sustainable travel”.

Emily Dalton

Concerns over secretive policing include Surrey

11 September 2025

Surrey Police has been affected by a nationwide push by the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) to influence responses to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, raising concerns about transparency in local policing.

Newly obtained data from the BBC reveals that Surrey Police referred a total of 39 FOI and Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests to the NPCC’s Central Referral Unit (CRU) between January and March 2024. This accounts for around 9.6% of all FOI and EIR requests received by the force in January, 8% in February, and 3.5% in March.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Of the 39 requests referred, six were classified as “mandatory referrals,” a controversial category requiring police forces to consult with the CRU before disclosing certain types of information. Topics covered under these mandatory referrals include covert policing operations, counter-terrorism, and the use of controversial surveillance technology. Critics argue this process enables the NPCC to centralise control over information disclosure, effectively limiting the public’s right to know.

Nationally, the CRU advised local police forces on 1,706 FOI requests in the first three months of 2024, a practice campaigners have labelled as “authoritarian censorship.” In some cases, police forces that had initially disclosed information were later advised to retract their responses, with the CRU citing concerns about national security and reputational risks.

Surrey Police received 523 FOI and EIR requests over the three-month period, meaning one in 13 requests was referred for CRU advice. Transparency advocates argue that these figures highlight an increasing trend of policing secrecy, particularly in sensitive areas such as police surveillance, drug-related crime, and misconduct investigations.

Jake Hurfurt, head of research at Big Brother Watch, condemned the NPCC’s role, stating: “Pressuring police forces to retract data disclosed in response to journalists’ Freedom of Information requests, and instead trying to refuse to confirm or deny they hold the data, is the practice of an authoritarian censor, not an accountable public body.”

While the NPCC insists it only provides guidance and does not dictate disclosure decisions, critics believe the process lacks accountability. The Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) has previously taken action against multiple police forces for poor FOI performance, though Surrey Police has not been subject to specific regulatory action.

This revelation raises questions about whether Surrey residents are receiving the full picture when requesting information from their local police force. As scrutiny intensifies over the role of the NPCC in transparency matters, campaigners are calling for greater oversight to ensure that FOI laws serve the public interest rather than institutional secrecy.

Epsom complainant changes Surrey police procedure

11 September 2025

Surrey Police Accepts Recommendation to Improve Retention of Body-Worn Video Evidence in Complaints

Surrey Police has agreed to implement a key recommendation from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) following a complaint by an Epsom resident regarding the retention of body-worn video (BWV) footage in police complaints.

The issue arose from an incident on 12 April 2023, when the complainant was filmed by a police officer, PC Scruby, during a meeting at his mother’s address. The complainant alleged that he was not informed he was being recorded until ten minutes into their interaction. He later raised concerns that the footage, which he believed could substantiate his account, had been deleted under Surrey Police’s 28-day evidence retention policy before it could be considered in his complaint.

After being dissatisfied with the response from Surrey Police’s Professional Standards Department (PSD) in October 2024, the complainant appealed to the OPCC. The OPCC conducted a review and found that Surrey Police’s service was acceptable in 18 out of 19 points raised in the complaint. However, it upheld one element of the complaint, determining that the complaint handler had failed to properly investigate the complainant’s concerns regarding what the officer had said during the meeting.

The review confirmed that the interaction had been recorded on BWV, but the footage was not secured by Surrey Police despite the complaint being made the following day on 13 April 2023. As a result, in line with the force’s BWV policy, the footage was automatically deleted from the system without being saved, rendering it unavailable as evidence in the complaint process.

In response to the case, the OPCC issued a recommendation that complaint handlers should secure any BWV footage providing evidence in a complaint against police at the earliest opportunity and, in any case, within 28 days of the alleged incident. This measure is aimed at closing a procedural gap that may hinder transparency and accountability in police investigations.

The complainant expressed frustration over the deletion of potentially valuable evidence, stating: “It is concerning that evidence which could clarify what happened during my interaction with the officer was destroyed. I welcome the OPCC’s recognition that procedural changes are needed.”

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

The OPCC's report also addressed broader concerns raised in the complaint, including allegations of inadequate communication and procedural mishandling by PSD. While it found that Surrey Police's actions were generally in line with existing procedures, the recommendation for improved evidence retention was seen as a necessary step to enhance the fairness and thoroughness of future complaint investigations.

Surrey Police confirmed that it accepted the recommendation in full on 20 January 2025, with the PSD now in the process of implementing the change.

This development highlights ongoing efforts to ensure greater accountability and efficiency in police complaint handling, reinforcing public trust in the system.

Image: West Midlands Police – CC BY-SA 2.0

Surrey Police hikes its Council tax share

11 September 2025

Surrey Police's share of council tax bills will leap over £335 a year for the average Band D households. Lisa Townsend, Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) said the 4.3 per cent increase was needed to "maintain the level of service".

Ms Townsend told the Surrey Police and Crime panel the government "absolutely expects" PCCs to raise council tax precepts by the maximum £14 to cover the police officer wage increase (set nationally) and inflation.

The annual charge will increase from £323.57 in 2024/25 for a Band D property to £337.57 in 2025/26.

The commissioner told the panel even with the precept increase and the use of some reserves, the Force will still need to find £3.6m of savings this year and over £15m for the three years after that.

Although the commissioner said Surrey Police is one of the fastest-improving forces in the country, she stressed the increase in funds was needed to "keep us where we are". Surrey Police has more than doubled its charge rate, with an additional 3,500 offences being prosecuted, according to the PCC. Ms Townsend told the panel the increase is "against a backdrop of a massive increase year on year which our financial resources can't keep up with".

Reports state the cost to operate the Force has increased by £23.2m compared to 2024/25, meaning Surrey Police have to make a saving of £3.6m this year. Ms Townsend argued if the precept was not increased, police services would have to be cut and "achievements would be at risk".

The news comes as 59 per cent of people said they would pay more to support Surrey police in the PCC's online survey. Over 3,200 people voted in the online consultation which asked them if they would be willing to pay an extra £1.16 a month to support policing teams, based on the average Band D property.

But members of the Surrey Police and Crime Panel voted against the proposed increase in a meeting on February 3. Four councillors opposed the tax hike, four were in favour and one person abstained- leaving the chair of the meeting to cast the deciding vote which was found to be against.

"There is no doubt that all members want to support the police," said Cllr John Robini, chair of the meeting. "However, we hear time and time again how our community is struggling with finances." Yet, there were not enough votes to veto the proposal and the panel accepted the Commissioner's precept of 4.3 per cent to come into effect.

Epsom and Ewell Times explainer: First vote on principle against the rise by a simple majority of votes cast, including the chair's. Second vote a legal requirement as vetoing the proposed increase requires a two-thirds majority under the rules and that special majority was not achieved.

"I've got people in my ward who can't afford to pay their bills and feed their kids," Cllr Richard Wilson said. "This squeeze above inflation is going to take more of their pay…and make it more difficult to support their families."

Raising the council tax above inflation levels (currently around 2.5 per cent), councillors questioned whether this was an acceptable strain on residents. Kelvin Menon, Chief Financial Officer for the PCC, said: "We have a lot of historic inflation we have to cope with and cover."

The PCC's report details recruiting officers can be a challenge with high living costs in Surrey, contributing to over 11 per cent of posts vacant. Increased use of technology by criminals has also led to a growing demand for technological forensic services, with almost all crimes having a digital element to them, according to the report.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Online Fraud in Epsom & Ewell: Call for an Online Crime Agency

11 September 2025

Online fraud, particularly through fake retail websites, has become a significant issue both nationally and within our local community of Epsom & Ewell. Recent data underscores the pressing need for enhanced measures to protect consumers from these deceptive practices.

The Local Impact

In the 2023/24 financial year, Surrey reported 1,276 cases of online shopping fraud, resulting in losses totaling £848,000.his equates to an average loss of approximately £665 per victim. These figures highlight the substantial financial impact on residents and the pervasive nature of online fraud in our area.

National Perspective

Across the UK, online shopping scams are alarmingly prevalent.n the year leading up to October 2023, there were 71,894 reports of such scams, with total reported losses amounting to £106.8 million.he average loss per victim was £1,486, indicating that the financial repercussions can be devastating.

Current Policing Resources

The primary body for reporting fraud in the UK is Action Fraud, the national reporting center for fraud and cybercrime. Reports submitted to Action Fraud are analyzed by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB), which then disseminates information to relevant police forces for investigation. However, the increasing volume and sophistication of online fraud cases have strained existing resources, leading to calls for more specialized approaches.

The Proposal for an Online Crime Agency

Helen Maguire, Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom & Ewell, is advocating for the establishment of a dedicated Online Crime Agency. This agency would focus exclusively on combating online fraud and related cyber crimes. The proposed agency aims to:

- **Specialized Focus**: oncentrate resources and expertise specifically on online fraud, ensuring more effective prevention and enforcement.
- **Enhanced Coordination**: acilitate better collaboration between various law enforcement bodies, technology companies, and financial institutions to address the multifaceted nature of online scams.
- **Victim Support**: rovide dedicated support to victims of online fraud, guiding them through reporting processes and helping them recover losses where possible. P Maguire emphasizes the urgency of this initiative, stating, “Victims in Surrey have been left short-changed and vulnerable to opportunistic fraudsters. We urgently need action. The previous Conservative government completely failed to act. They were asleep at the wheel when it came to online fraud.”

Maguire argues the establishment of a specialized Online Crime Agency could play a pivotal role in safeguarding consumers. By focusing dedicated resources and fostering collaboration across sectors, such an agency holds the promise of mitigating the impact of online fraud on our community.

Surrey Taxpayers Face Policing Squeeze Amid Funding ‘Postcode Lottery’

11 September 2025

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

The “post-code lottery” of police funding could force residents to shoulder more of the burden, according to Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) **Lisa Townsend**. The PCC said she fears it will be inevitable taxpayers will have to contribute more to policing.

Home Secretary **Yvette Cooper** announced she will end the “postcode lottery in policing”, in a speech to local PCCs and police chiefs on November 19. She confirmed that central government funding for police will go up next year by around £500m, with a detailed breakdown of funding allocations for each force will be published mid-December. Until then, many police forces are left in uncertainty about what the changes might be.

But Surrey’s Commissioner said she fears money will be distributed unfairly in Surrey, from the government’s “not fit for purpose” police funding formula. Ms Townsend said if there is a postcode lottery of policing it is financial. She said: “There’s an idea that Surrey is wealthy, but Surrey Police isn’t.”

The way money is divided up for police forces means that some areas receive a significantly larger share than others. For instance, money allocated to Surrey covers just 45% of the total budget whereas other areas such as Northumbria get 80%.

Surrey Police have to save, or cut, £23.4m over the next four years to maintain its current service, according to the LDRS. Inflation, government-agreed pay increases have also contributed to the force’s position.

The Conservative PCC wrote to the Home Secretary on November 13, urging her to review the police funding. She asked the Home Secretary to not use the police funding formula when granting additional money to combat the increase in employers’ National Insurance (NI) as this would “penalise” some counties and benefit others.

Earlier this year, the government provided an additional grant to cover the police pay increase of over 2.5 per cent. Because this money was distributed by the funding formula, Surrey Police had to make up for a shortfall of around £1m, according to the PCC.

In the letter, Commissioner Townsend said she is “prepared to ask local taxpayers to shoulder more of the burden of the cost of policing”. But she added it “cannot be fair” that residents have to pay for an “imposed” increase.

The letter read: “Here in Surrey, 80% of our costs relate to people and so we have calculated that the proposed increase in NI would add approximately £4.5m to our costs. To put this into context, this would be equivalent to an additional £9 on Band D Council Tax or around 100 Police officers.”

Ms Townsend said she did not want to alter Surrey Police’s service to make residents suffer. “What we’re not clear on is what else the government wants us to cut,” she said.

The PCC said she is “not optimistic” about Surrey achieving more money from the new government, despite the county getting an additional £17.3m last year. “We’ve got nobody making the case for us,” Ms Townsend told the LDRS, “we’ve got no Labour MPs or Labour councils.”

A Home Office spokesperson said: “The Government will fully compensate police forces for the impact of the changes to National Insurance Employer contributions.” They added: “Details on the allocation of this funding will be confirmed at the provisional police settlement in mid-December.”

Photo: Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey Lisa Townsend. Credit: Surrey Live photographer Darren Pepe.

Surrey Police HQ redesign will quieten the dogs

11 September 2025

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Plans to redevelop Surrey Police headquarters, at Mount Browne, have been given the go-ahead. The changes also include a new access road which the Force say will speed up response times from Mount Browne by two minutes.

The significant modifications to the police's home include demolition and rebuilding of the dog school, accommodation for Police students, and a new Contact and Deployment centre, a multi-storey car park with electrical charging points.

Members of Guildford Borough Council (GBC) planning committee unanimously approved both applications on November 6. Councillors praised the application for the compactness of the development, with no overall height increase and limited harm to the Green Belt.

One of the applications included a new western arm to Artington Roundabout, which the Force says will reduce traffic on neighbouring roads like Sandy Lane and The Ridges.

Straight through the middle of an open field, officers highlighted the new access road would be visible and harm the Green Belt as well as agricultural land. However, they also noted even small improvements in Police response times can have a large positive impact on how emergencies can be handled.

The second application relates to the redevelopment and modernisation of the site, including demolition and construction of operational buildings, as well as internal refurbishment of the old building, corridor wing and sports building.

Mount Browne, on the outskirts of Guildford, has been the headquarters for Surrey Police for over 70 years. The current campus contains a large number of buildings which have been constructed mainly on a piecemeal basis and are judged no longer fit for purpose by the Force.

The benefits of the scheme include high quality facilities to meet the ongoing operational needs of the Police, as well as staff retention and well-being, according to the report. Replacing the dog kennels was also said to provide significant improvements to operations. Officers told the committee that currently all the training dogs can see each other in the kennels, so if one dog barks "they all go off".

Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Lisa Townsend has welcomed the decision, calling it a "significant milestone for the Force". A six-week judicial review period now awaits before Surrey Police can take decisions on the next steps.

Mrs Townsend added: "Mount Browne has been Surrey Police's home for over 70 years, but the buildings here are run down, expensive to maintain and simply no longer meet the requirements of a modern police force."

The PCC and Surrey Police's Chief Officer decided in 2021 that the Force should remain at Mount Browne, on the edge of Guildford, rather than seek a new location.

Image – unrelated dog in a kennel

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd.
Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY