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

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Epsom’s silent firework display seeks public home

4 November 2026



Epsom radio founder hopes vintage fireworks will spark a museum

Thousands of vintage British fireworks collected by Epsom-born Radio Jackie founder Tony Collis could one day help preserve the history of a once-thriving British industry.

Tony, who still lives in Epsom, has spent more than 30 years assembling a collection stretching from the 1920s to the 1990s. Behind it are memories of childhood Bonfire Nights, when his father turned the family’s back garden into the setting for one of the highlights of the year.

“I remember Bonfire Night being a big feature of the year. My father thoroughly enjoyed it, and, as kids, my brother and I would be taken to the bottom of the garden, where there was a bonfire. Back then, the fireworks were very small, but because we were small and they were let off in close proximity, they always looked bigger!”

The celebrations extended beyond the family garden.

“It was a magical time. We’d have potatoes cooking on the bonfire to eat afterwards, and the whole street seemed to join in. The gardens were laid out in a line, with a bonfire at the end of each garden, so the atmosphere along the street was electric, really fabulous.”

From garden memories to glass cabinets

Speaking to World of Collecting, Tony explained how those memories inspired him to begin collecting in the early 1990s. Most of his thousands of items date from the 1950s and 1960s.

Manufacturers represented include Standard, Brock’s and Pains, the latter having a local connection through its manufacturing base in Mitcham.

The collection is arranged by manufacturer and type, with much of it displayed in glass cabinets away from sunlight to protect the colourful paper designs. A recreated shop-counter display, complete with stock boxes, recalls childhood shopping trips with his mother.

“I also have a short counter display, like the sort you might have seen in a newsagent, with stock boxes of fireworks.”

Among his favourites are air bombs, remembered for their noisy contribution to garden celebrations in the 1960s.

A museum ambition

Tony hopes the collection will eventually find a permanent home where the designs and history of British fireworks can be appreciated by future generations.

“I’d love people to learn a bit more about them, so ideally I’d love my collection to go into a dedicated museum about British firework making through the ages. I understand that people can be wary of fireworks, but a museum could help them appreciate the designs, colours and history of the industry.

“I’d also like the museum to be dedicated to the ethos of Bonfire Night, which I feel is slowly being wiped out at the moment.”

A member of a Sussex Bonfire Society, Tony previously organised large displays himself. These days he attends the celebrations in Lewes, valuing the communal traditions of gathering around a fire as well as the fireworks.

Appeal for forgotten fireworks

For Tony, collecting is about preserving something he loves rather than pursuing a financial return.

“My collection isn’t about making money. I collect these things because they interest me, and I enjoy showing them to people.”

He hopes anyone discovering old fireworks will contact him rather than set them off.

“This is part of an appeal: If anyone comes across old fireworks, particularly examples with blue touch paper, I’d ask them not to set them off and to give me a call on 07956506300. I’d be happy to collect them.”

The full interview and photographs of the collection appear on the World of Collecting website.

Lionel Blackman

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Image credit Tony Collis

Payroll Essentials for Independent Businesses in Epsom and Ewell

4 November 2026



From the independent shops lining Epsom's high street to small firms around Ewell Village, local businesses require a reliable payroll process to ensure employees are paid correctly and on time. However, without the right tools, payroll can be a huge administrative burden, even with a small team.

So, with that in mind, here are the main payroll considerations for independent businesses in Epsom and Ewell and how employers can keep on top of their responsibilities without spending hours on paperwork and manual calculations.

Important Payroll Considerations

Holiday Pay

Calculating holiday pay is fairly straightforward for full time staff with fixed hours. However, when it comes to part-time employees or those who work irregular hours, it can be a little more complicated.

For part time workers with fixed hours, holiday entitlement works on a pro-rata basis, whereas workers with irregular hours build up their entitlement at a rate of 12.07%. Because of these differences, classifying workers accurately and documenting calculations correctly is essential for staying compliant.

Workplace Pensions

Employees aged 22 and over who earn more than £10,000 a year must be automatically enrolled into a qualifying workplace pension. They are allowed to opt-out, but they must always be auto-enrolled if they meet the eligibility criteria.

Employers must then contribute the correct amount (at least 5%) and deduct the right amount from the employee's pay (at least 3%).

HMRC Deadlines

HMRC requires employers to submit accurate reports. This includes:

- An FPS (Full Payment Submission) on or before payday
- An EPS (Employer Payment Summary) by the 19th of the tax month
- Year-end FPS by 5 April

New starters or leavers must also be declared, and if any of the information submitted is incorrect, it must be rectified as soon as possible.

How Employers Can Simplify the Payroll Process

It's not uncommon for small and independent businesses to handle payroll manually. However, particularly if part time or seasonal employees are involved, this can lead to huge amounts of admin. And any errors can lead to further complications, fines, and even legal disputes.

To ensure businesses aren't spending hours upon hours calculating wages, holiday entitlement, deductions, and contributions, and aren't worrying about creating accurate reports and submitting them on time, do follow managed payroll services.

By outsourcing payroll, employees consistently receive the right amount of pay, and businesses remain compliant without having to spend a considerable amount of time and money in the process.

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Balancing Compliance and Admin is Essential

Maintaining payroll compliance is critical, but it’s important that businesses aren’t bogged down by admin in the process. By outsourcing payroll instead, employers can have confidence that their employees will be paid correctly and on time and reports will be submitted to HMRC accurately and before their deadline.

[Sponsored article]

Surrey’s ancient woods among England’s richest – at risk?

4 November 2026



New BBC analysis shows Surrey is home to some of the densest concentrations of ancient woodland in England, as conservation groups warn that the drive to build 1.5 million homes and the new “grey belt” could weaken protection for habitats that have stood since at least 1600.

Surrey is one of the most important counties in England for ancient woodland, according to new figures from the BBC Shared Data Unit – and campaigners fear the national push for housing could put some of those woods under growing pressure.

Ancient woodland is land that has been continuously wooded since at least 1600. It covers only around 2.5% of England, yet it is regarded as one of the country’s most valuable wildlife habitats. Because these ecosystems take centuries to develop, conservation groups describe them as irreplaceable.

The BBC’s analysis of Natural England mapping shows that across England as a whole, ancient woodland covers 2.6% of council areas.

In Surrey, the picture varies sharply from borough to borough. Mole Valley, which borders Epsom & Ewell to the south, is among the most heavily wooded districts in the country, with ancient woodland covering 12.7% of its area – placing it eighth of roughly 290 council areas in the data. Waverley (11.4%) ranks tenth. Tandridge (7.1%) and Guildford (6.8%) are also well above the national figure.

By contrast, Epsom & Ewell has about 34 hectares of ancient woodland – roughly 340,000 square metres, or the equivalent of around 47 football pitches – covering 1.0% of the borough. That is below the national average, reflecting the borough’s small size and largely built-up character. Much of what survives lies within the borough’s countryside: the council describes much of the woodland at Horton Country Park as ancient coppice woodland, including Butcher’s Grove, where coppicing dates back to medieval times.

Taken together, Surrey’s eleven districts and boroughs contain around 12,150 hectares of ancient woodland – about 47 square miles.

“Wholly exceptional”

Under national planning policy, development that would cause the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland should be refused unless there are “wholly exceptional reasons” and a suitable compensation strategy exists. Natural England advises councils to keep a buffer of at least 15 metres between new development and ancient woodland.

But the BBC Shared Data Unit found dozens of housing schemes across England proposed or approved on land immediately beside ancient woods – including around 450 homes close to Hook Wood in Kent, 150 bordering Chaddesden Wood in Derby and about 130 beside Gelster Wood near Doncaster.

Campaigners say much of the controversy is not about felling trees but about building right up to the woodland edge. Ecologists warn that construction can damage root systems, change drainage, increase pollution and bring noise and light – while new residents’ pets can threaten ground-nesting birds and bats.

They also point to the government’s target of 1.5 million new homes by the end of 2029 and the creation of the “grey belt” – poorer-quality parts of the Green Belt that can be built on – as raising the pressure, particularly in the South East.

Lucy Graebe-Watson, chairwoman of Ancient Woodland UK, said: “We are already seeing cases where existing protections are struggling.” She said her organisation had seen a rise in concerns and alerts from local groups since recent planning reforms, especially around land allocations and buffer zones, and warned that because protection is based on policy rather than law, any increase in pressure raises the risk. Ancient Woodland UK wants statutory legal protection for

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ancient woodland.

Carl Bunnage, head of nature policy at the RSPB, described the “wholly exceptional” provision as a potential loophole for developers. He said that while the RSPB welcomed improvements to the definition of irreplaceable habitats in the new National Planning Policy Framework, protection should be strengthened – including a definitive list of irreplaceable habitats given the strongest safeguards, as historic buildings are. He added that housing and growth policies are generally given “substantial” weight in planning decisions while nature policies are not, meaning efforts to protect nature often start as an uphill battle.

A spokesperson for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government said ancient woodlands have “very clear and strong protections” and that proposals resulting in their loss or deterioration should be refused, with very limited exceptions such as nationally significant infrastructure – where measures to compensate for the impact would be required.

Local Plan

The figures come as Epsom & Ewell’s own Local Plan remains under examination. The plan was submitted to the government in March 2025, and earlier this year, at the inspector’s request, the council consulted on additional sites that could be allocated for housing through main modifications.

Surrey’s ancient woodland at a glance (share of each council area)
Mole Valley – 12.7% (about 3,287 hectares)
Waverley – 11.4% (3,942 ha)
Tandridge – 7.1% (1,770 ha)
Guildford – 6.8% (1,836 ha)
Reigate and Banstead – 4.5% (578 ha)
Runnymede – 4.0% (312 ha)
Elmbridge – 2.8% (268 ha)
Epsom and Ewell – 1.0% (34 ha)
Surrey Heath – 0.8% (76 ha)
Woking – 0.8% (51 ha)
Spelthorne – less than 0.1% (2 ha)
England average – 2.6%

How the figures were calculated: the BBC Shared Data Unit combined Natural England’s mapping of ancient woodland with Office for National Statistics council boundaries, and divided the area of ancient woodland in each council by that council’s total area. Hectare figures, the Surrey total and rankings have been calculated by Epsom and Ewell Times from the BBC data.

This story was produced with data from the BBC Shared Data Unit, part of the BBC Local News Partnerships.

Sam Jones – Reporter



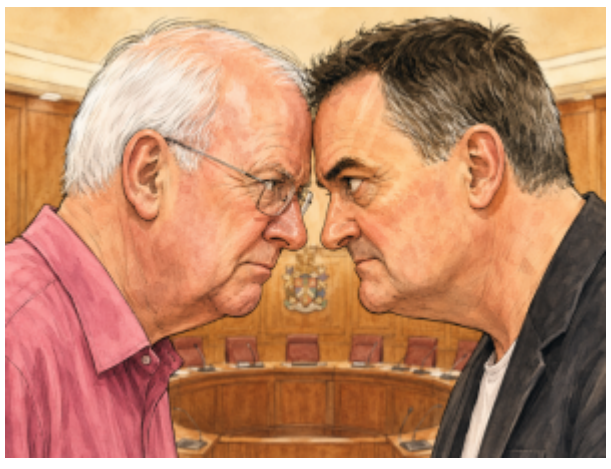
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Image: Butchers Grove Horton Country Park Epsom aerial from google maps

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The cost so far to the Epsom taxpayer of Cllr Neil Dallen’s “arrogance”.

4 November 2026



£8,567 complaint bill prompts calls for Dallen to withdraw

External fees arising from Cllr **Neil Dallen**’s standards complaint against Cllr Chris Ames have reached £8,567.64, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has disclosed. The figure excludes the uncalculated cost of council officers’ time and

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comes as two councillors call for the complaint to be withdrawn.

Cllr **Alex Coley** (Independent Ruxley) and Cllr **Steven McCormick** (Conservative Woodcote and Langley) were the only councillors to respond by publication to an Epsom and Ewell Times enquiry asking other members whether Cllr Dallen should withdraw. Both said he should.

Cllr **Dallen** (Residents' Association Town), responding separately through the Council's communications team, said the standards process should be allowed to run its course without external pressure.

What the Council has disclosed

In a Freedom of Information response dated 22 October, the Council identified two invoices, for £5,568.14 and £2,999.50, relating to the complaint. Understood to be the fees of an "independent" investigator and a legal expert. Together they total £8,567.64.

The request covered costs incurred from receipt of the complaint to 27 September, including the standards hearing on 22 September and its adjournment. The disclosed figure is therefore a snapshot of invoiced costs within that period, rather than a final bill for the proceedings. The Council said both invoices remained unpaid at the time of the request.

It withheld supplier names, descriptions of the work, billing periods and itemised fees, citing the Freedom of Information Act's commercial-interests exemption. It argued that disclosure could prejudice suppliers' competitive positions and the Council's ability to negotiate for similar services. Its response did not clarify the VAT treatment of the disclosed totals.

The Council holds no separately calculated figure for officers' time spent handling the complaint, including the Monitoring Officer's involvement. Nor does it hold separately recorded expenditure for the September hearing. It also said it held no approved budget, purchase order or current estimate for further work beyond the invoices already received.

The £8,567.64 therefore does not capture the full resources devoted to the case.

Putting the bill in perspective

Against the Council's approved 2026/27 net budget requirement of £12.038 million, the external invoices represent approximately 0.071 per cent — about £1 in every £1,405 of that budget.

The borough council's own annual Council Tax charge for a Band D home is £239.85. The invoices are equivalent to almost 36 households' annual payments of that borough share.

The complete Band D bill, including Surrey County Council and Surrey Police, is £2,530.84. Measured against that figure, the invoices equal approximately 3.4 households' entire annual bills. The distinction matters because most of the Council Tax collected locally funds the county council and police, rather than EEBC.

Spread across the borough's Council Tax base of 34,083.2 Band D equivalent properties, the disclosed external fees amount to approximately 25p per Band D equivalent property. These comparisons put the scale of the spending in context; they do not establish whether pursuing the complaint represents good value.

The Rainbow exchange behind the complaint

The complaint arose from the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting on 27 January 2026. Cllr **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) questioned the confidentiality surrounding an urgent decision making up to £500,000 available for repairs at the Rainbow Leisure Centre.

Cllr Dallen had supported the urgent decision and was chairing the meeting at which it was questioned. Ames wanted to know who had decided that the public interest justified withholding the decision document.

During the confrontation, Dallen asserted: "It does say in the Constitution that this is the chairman's meeting". He subsequently declared: "It is my meeting". Ames called him "arrogant" and alleged a "cover-up".

Ames later told EET that he regretted calling Dallen arrogant and should instead have raised a formal point of order about Dallen continuing to chair the item.

EET questions the constitutional basis for describing a committee meeting as belonging to its chairman. A chair has powers to control debate, but that does not resolve whether those powers were properly exercised to stop questions about a decision in which the chair himself had participated.

The procedural issue was allowed to become a personal confrontation. Ames did not formally raise the point of order; Dallen did not hand the chair to his vice-chair while his own involvement was considered; and the Monitoring Officer did not guide the meeting towards resolving that issue. No other member intervened to secure that procedural clarification.

An external investigator subsequently recommended a finding that Ames had failed to show respect. That recommendation is not a determination by the hearing panel. The September hearing adjourned after challenges concerning the Council's complaints arrangements, without deciding whether Ames had breached the Code of Conduct.

Two councillors call for withdrawal

Cllr McCormick told EET: "Yes, I believe Cllr Dallen should immediately withdraw his complaint."

He said Ames's questions were legitimate and that robust questioning and open debate were essential to democratic accountability.

"As Chair of Strategy and Resources, one should have thick enough skin to take challenging scrutiny and forthright

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remarks from fellow councillors on the chin," he said.

"At a time when public finances are under pressure, continuing to waste taxpayers' money on this matter is completely unjustified."

Cllr Coley was similarly critical: "Yes, Cllr Dallen should give up the continued waste of tax payers money, pursuing a fruitless endeavour to seek satisfaction over hurty words. Cut and thrust is nothing new in democracy."

Coley also reported an earlier conversation with Dallen: "I exchanged words with Cllr Dallen last month asking why he would not withdraw from this damaging process and he claimed that it was Cllr Ames that was keeping the matter going."

He added: "I put it to you that if the complaint were withdrawn there would be nothing to keep going."

EET asked both Dallen and Ames to comment on the suggestion that Ames was keeping the matter going. Cllr Ames responded to this suggestion:

"To suggest that I am keeping this farce going is ludicrous. It is Neil Dallen who launched this vendetta and has the power to stop it, to prevent any further waste of residents' money. But Dallen and indeed the administration as a whole are determined to punish me for calling out how he tried to cover up his own cover-up of the Rainbow Centre scandal."

Cllr Dallen has responded "I refer you to the response received earlier" (the statement reported below received from the Council's communications team). He did not deny the comment attributed to him by Coley.

Dallen says process should run its course

Asked separately whether the disclosed costs made withdrawal appropriate, Dallen supplied the following statement through the Council administration communications team rather than from his own email account:

"Complaints made under the Member Code of Conduct should be considered fairly, impartially and in accordance with the Council's adopted arrangements.

"The matters to which your questions relate form part of an ongoing Standards process that has not yet concluded. It would not be appropriate to comment on matters that may fall to be considered by the Standards Hearing Sub-Committee, as this carries a risk of undermining the integrity and perceived fairness of the process.

"The process should be allowed to run its course without external pressure being placed on any of those involved. The appropriate forum for considering these matters is the Standards process itself, not the media. Until that process has concluded, I do not intend to comment further."

That response does not offer to withdraw the complaint. With external invoices already exceeding £8,500, internal costs uncalculated and no estimate disclosed for further work, the question remains whether continuing these proceedings is a proportionate use of public money.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council will be no more in less than six months time. Neither Ames nor Dallen have any local government elected mandate thereafter. Some may think the head of steam at the January meeting was precipitated by Cllr Dallen's own ineptitude in the chair or the silencing by him of dissent or both.

Despite persistent efforts the Epsom and Ewell Times still has received no satisfactory answers from the Council as to whether its own officers' negligence allowed the dilapidations bill for the Rainbow Centre to accumulate unaddressed for 20 years. And maybe that is really at the heart of this matter.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Related reports

- Time for Cllr Dallen to drop his taxpayer funded complaint? — 23 September 2026
- Epsom & Ewell Council refuses to explain complaints disparity — 21 August 2026
- "It's my meeting": Cllr Dallen stops questions about his role in alleged Rainbow "cover-up" — 23 February 2026

See editorial Dallen's Dilemma

Cats come to Leatherhead

4 November 2026

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Hairless cats, spotted Bengals and fluffy Ragdolls will be among the attractions when two sisters bring their international championship cat show to Leatherhead Leisure Centre on 14 and 15 November.

Velvet Rebellion is organised by Felinology, founded by sisters Jo and Emily Bell, who held their first small show in Edenbridge, Kent, in 2016. Ten years on, they run international championship shows under the auspices of The International Cat Association (TICA).

Last November, 121 breeders and around 650 visitors attended their Leatherhead show. This year's event has a fashion theme and is the first in a planned three-part "Fashion Trilogy".

Cats on show

Pedigree cats will be judged in 10 rings across the weekend by an international panel, with judges travelling from as far afield as Canada. Visitors will be able to watch the judging and meet breeds including Persians, Ragdolls, Bengals, Savannahs, Sphynx and Peterbalds.

Jo Bell said: "People picture a cat show as rows of cages and very serious people with clipboards. We wanted the opposite. It's glamorous, it's a bit mad, and it's the best day out you can have for twelve quid. Bring the kids, they get in free, and they'll go home wanting a hairless cat. Sorry in advance."

The free Cativity Zone will offer crafts and a breed hunt. Children can also take part in Gentle Paws, a short session with Ellie's Animal Academy on handling cats kindly. Each child taking part will receive a certificate.

A marketplace of independent cat businesses will run on both days.

Visiting the show

Velvet Rebellion takes place at Leatherhead Leisure Centre, Guildford Road, Leatherhead KT22 9BL, on Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 November, from 10am to 4pm. Last entry is at 3pm.

Tickets cost £12 for adults and £6 for concessions. Children under 12 and carers enter free, and family tickets start at £22. Tickets are available in advance at buytickets.at/felinology1/2298475 or on the door. There is free parking on site.

Carer caught red-handed goes to prison

4 November 2026



Hidden CCTV caught a carer stealing jewellery from her elderly and vulnerable client's home in Oxted, after his family noticed items were missing.

Lara Jones, 50, of Cowden Pound Road, Mark Beech, Kent, has been sentenced to three years in prison for burglary.

After Jones completed her first shift for the client, his family noticed an earring at the top of the stairs. When they went to return it to their jewellery box, they discovered that jewellery was missing. They suspected the new carer but could not be sure, so they installed hidden cameras in the bedroom.

On November 26, 2025, Jones entered the bedroom and was seen going through drawers and wardrobes and pocketing jewellery worth £8,000.

The victim's daughter called police on Wednesday, December 3, saying her father was alone at home with his new carer, whom the family had seen on CCTV going through bedroom drawers and cupboards. Officers attended and arrested Jones on suspicion of burglary. She was searched and the jewellery was found.

The victim's family said: "Having someone violate your trust in your own home, at a time when you are at your most

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vulnerable, is devastating. The emotional impact has been profound, and it has made an already difficult situation even harder.

“We are immensely grateful to Surrey Police and the Crown Prosecution Service for their dedication, compassion and determination in securing this conviction. Their support throughout has meant a great deal to our family, and we are relieved that justice has been served.”

Detective Constable Jen Trudel, the officer in charge of the case, said: “The family were so disheartened that someone they let into their home to care for a loved one could be so heartless as to steal from them at the first opportunity. This has made them wary of letting anyone into their home despite the much-needed respite required. It was an incredibly emotional moment for the family when the sentence was read out, and hopefully this will allow them some closure so that they can move on with their lives.”

Jones pleaded not guilty and the case went to trial in August, when a jury found her guilty of three counts of burglary. She was sentenced at Guildford Crown Court on Friday, October 9, and ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £228.

Surrey Police

Epsom artist’s peaches win Surrey readers’ choice award

4 November 2026



An Epsom artist has won a readers’ choice award in the Surrey Artist of the Year 2026 competition with a painting of peaches.

Artan Jahaj’s *Peaches on Navy* was voted the favourite among the work of 17 shortlisted artists in the Essential Surrey Readers’ Choice Award.

Artan, a long-time Epsom resident, is a classically trained painter who began as an apprentice in a working studio in central Athens. He went on to spend more than ten years working there as a professional artist.

He remains drawn to Mediterranean light and travels in southern Europe, taking photographs that inspire paintings full of light, colour and warmth.

Speaking to Essential Surrey about the award, Artan said: “I am absolutely thrilled to hear that my work won the Readers’ Choice Award. It means a great deal, especially as I have made Surrey my home and it is amazing to know that people here have connected with my work.”

The readers’ award was held alongside the Surrey Artist of the Year competition, organised by Surrey Artists Open Studios and the New Ashgate Gallery in Farnham. Own Art

Artan’s work will have an extended display at the New Ashgate Gallery until 16 January 2027. The gallery is a not-for-profit organisation, and sales of artwork benefit both the gallery and the artist.

Lionel Blackman

Spelthorne leaders play musical chairs in Council’s dying days

4 November 2026

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A Surrey district council has chosen to replace its council leader just months before the council's abolition next spring. Councillor Joanne Sexton (Independent Spelthorne Group: Ashford East) will now lead Spelthorne Borough Council until next April, when the authority is absorbed into the new West Surrey council.

It came after the now ex-leader, Greg Neall (Liberal Democrats: Ashford Town), faced a no-confidence motion, despite having led the council since May. The motion was tabled by another former council leader John Boughtflower (Conservative: Shepperton Town), who sought to return to the post following Councillor Neall's removal from office.

But the meeting quickly turned bitter and acrimonious as Councillor Neall fought to defend the record of his brief spell in the job. Opening the debate, Councillor Boughtflower said: "We voted in the current leadership with high hopes, but this has quickly faded."

The former council leader attacked the current executive over ongoing asset sales amid the authority's precarious financial picture, saying "we just don't have the confidence".

He added: "With some major challenges left, I'm not filled with any confidence. We need to get the last part of this council right before it moves to West Surrey."

Spelthorne is currently overseen by government-appointed commissioners, who were brought in last year to close the council's budget gaps after it amassed significant debts.

Deputy leader Councillor Chris Bateson (Liberal Democrats: Staines South) blasted the no-confidence motion as an "act of self-indulgence by the opposition".

Addressing Councillor Boughtflower's criticisms of asset sales, he said: "Let's not be under illusions when we talk about property. We are under government direction for asset sales.

"And behind the scenes we have our arguments with the commissioners, but at the end of the day they trump everything – and whoever sits in these seats will face the same issues and get the same answers."

Councillor Neall also stood up to back up his record and echo his deputy's sentiments about the motion.

"Contrary to the absence of evidence in this motion, there is plenty of evidence that my leadership has been successful," he said, citing housing targets, morale among service teams and the performance of planning officers as among his achievements.

"Anything less than voting against this motion is electing a leadership team who don't even know where their confidence lies from one month to the next.

"Whether I am leader of the council after this meeting or not, I will hold my head up high knowing that my leadership was successful and I have the evidence to prove it."

It comes as Spelthorne Borough Council enters its final few months of existence before the abolition of the current two-tier council structure in Surrey in favour of two new unitary councils in the West and East.

The current system has an overarching county council alongside several borough councils, both of which carry out different functions.

Under the incoming system, all local government services will be provided by each of the two new councils in their respective areas.

Accusations of "personal attacks" were frequently levied throughout the confidence debate, with the chair intervening on multiple occasions to insist that councillors refrain from "aggravation" and stick to the specifics of the motion.

Members ultimately voted to remove Councillor Neall from the leadership, with 12 votes in favour of a motion to declare no confidence, 9 against, and 12 abstentions. No one party has a majority on Spelthorne Borough Council, with the Conservatives being the largest group – holding 14 of the council's 39 seats.

The next step of the motion would have been a vote to install Councillor Boughtflower as council leader in his stead. However, Councillor John Turner (Liberal Democrats: Halliford and Sunbury West) interjected to table an amendment suggesting Councillor Sexton as the replacement leader. His amendment also proposed Councillor Bateson be brought back as deputy leader.

Councillor Turner said: "We had a successful partnership there for many months, and hopefully we can heal a few wounds tonight and get on with what we have to do."

Spelthorne has seen a high turnover of council leaders over the past decade, with 10 different councillors having held the role since 2011.

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

Image: Epsom and Ewell Times

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Residents invited to help shape the future of East and West Surrey councils

4 November 2026



Residents across Surrey are being invited to have their say on the future priorities of the new East Surrey and West Surrey councils and help shape how services will be delivered from April 2027.

As preparations continue for the launch of the new councils on 1 April 2027, both organisations are developing their long-term plans for the future. These plans will guide the services they provide, the investment they make and the outcomes they want to achieve for local people and communities.

Residents, businesses, community groups and local organisations are being encouraged to share their views on the draft strategies and priorities, including what matters most in their local area, what is working well and where improvements are needed.

The new councils will be responsible for a wide range of services that support everyday life, from helping vulnerable children and adults, maintaining roads, supporting local businesses and communities, planning for new homes and infrastructure, protecting the environment and ensuring residents can access the services they need.

- People can take part through separate online surveys for East Surrey and West Surrey between Monday 19 October and midnight on Sunday 15 November.
- A programme of local drop-in events will also take place across Surrey, giving residents the opportunity to ask questions and speak directly with representatives from the new councils.

Further information can be found on the Future Surrey website.

East Surrey Council surreylgrhub.gov.uk/east-strategy

West Surrey Council surreylgrhub.gov.uk/west-strategy

At a time when councils across the country are facing increasing demand for services, rising costs and changes to government funding, feedback from residents will help ensure future resources are focused on the issues that matter most to local communities.

Councillor Steve Wotton, Leader of East Surrey Shadow Authority, said: “The creation of East Surrey Council gives us a unique opportunity for a fresh start and new ways of working that better meet the needs of local communities.

“Our vision is for East Surrey to be an inclusive place where people are heard and supported, communities are strong, people are proud of where they live and growth is sustainable. The decisions we make now will help turn that vision into reality.

“The strategy is built around three key priorities: people, place and council. That means helping people access the support, education, housing and opportunities they need, as well as improving the places where people live and work.

“We will be delivering this in a challenging financial environment, with reduced government funding and growing demand for services. That is why a clear and robust delivery plan is so important, helping us focus resources where they can make the biggest difference and ensuring East Surrey remains financially sustainable for the long term.

“Whether your priorities are stronger communities, better access to services, homes that meet local needs, supporting businesses, tackling climate change or improving local neighbourhoods, we want to hear from you. Your feedback will help shape our delivery plan for 2027 to 2032 and ensure East Surrey Council is ready to deliver from day one.”

Councillor Paul Follows, Leader of West Surrey Shadow Authority, said: “The creation of West Surrey Council is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a council around the needs of residents, communities and businesses.

“We want West Surrey to be a place where people thrive, communities flourish, opportunity is shared and residents can trust their council to deliver. As we develop the council’s vision and priorities, it is important they reflect what matters most to local people.

“We’re asking residents for their views on our draft ambitions for West Surrey: a place where people can access the homes, opportunities and support they need; where communities and businesses can thrive; and where a trusted, well-run council listens, delivers and makes the best use of residents’ money.

“Like councils across the country, we will face significant financial challenges from day one. That makes it even more important that we understand local priorities and focus our resources where they can have the greatest impact. Whether you complete the survey online or attend one of our events, your views will help shape the future direction of the new

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council and the services it provides."

Surrey County Council

Start-up loans heat up as sauna entrepreneur takes ambassador role

4 November 2026



A Government-backed loan scheme which has already helped more than 100 businesses in Epsom and Ewell has chosen a sauna entrepreneur as its new ambassador for the South East.

Amelia Sweeney, founder of Ojas Sauna, has been named the 2026/27 South East Ambassador for the British Business Bank's Start Up Loans programme.

Sweeney left an 11-year career in construction project management after turning what began as a weekend interest in saunas and cold-water swimming into a growing business.

She launched Ojas Sauna in 2024 after obtaining a £13,000 Start Up Loan, supplemented by her own savings. She initially continued working full-time while establishing the business before leaving her previous career as demand increased.

A second Start Up Loan, together with profits reinvested from the business, subsequently helped finance another venue. The company now offers communal and private sauna and cold-plunge sessions as well as a portable operation used for home hire, retreats and festivals. It employs eight flexible sauna hosts, while its established Buckinghamshire site can accommodate up to 50 customers a day at weekends.

The ambassador scheme is intended to put successful recipients of Start Up Loans in front of prospective entrepreneurs so they can pass on some of what they learned while establishing their businesses.

Sweeney said perseverance had been particularly important. Before securing a site she approached around 450 possible venues looking for somewhere from which to operate.

Her advice to would-be entrepreneurs was essentially not to be discouraged by rejection: eventually, she said, "one person will say yes".

£20 million lent in Surrey

The announcement has a more local relevance than the sauna business itself.

Figures published by Start Up Loans in July showed that more than £20 million had been lent to Surrey entrepreneurs since the programme began in 2012, through more than 1,500 loans.

Epsom and Ewell borough accounted for **116 loans**, equivalent to 126 loans for every 100,000 residents. Elmbridge topped the Surrey table with 241 loans.

Separate British Business Bank figures, calculated by parliamentary constituency rather than borough boundaries, record **145 Start Up Loans worth £1,702,161 in the Epsom and Ewell constituency** up to June 2026.

Across the South East as a whole, more than £150 million had already been lent to almost 14,000 entrepreneurs by March this year. Surrey was then among the three counties with the largest numbers of recipients, alongside Kent and Hampshire.

The latest ambassador announcement says the regional total has since passed **£170 million**.

Nationally the Start Up Loans programme has provided more than £1.4 billion in finance since its creation in 2012, according to the latest figures supplied with the announcement.

What is a Start Up Loan?

Despite its name, the scheme does not simply distribute Government grants.

It provides **personal loans for business purposes**, together with business-planning assistance and mentoring. First and

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second loans can be worth up to £25,000, and eligibility for a first loan has been extended to businesses which have already been trading for up to five years.

The programme is operated by the Start-Up Loans Company, a subsidiary of the Government-owned British Business Bank.

The Bank says repayments and interest received through the programme are recycled to help finance further businesses.

Sweeney is one of 14 entrepreneurs selected as ambassadors for 2026. They are expected to spend the coming year sharing their experiences with people considering starting or developing their own businesses.

Lionel Blackman

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Related Reports

- Epsom company among Surrey businesses backed by £20m Start Up Loans funding – 1 July 2026. EET reported on Epsom-registered craft distillery Silhouette Stills, which had received two Start Up Loans, and on the wider £20m lent to Surrey businesses through the scheme

Photo: Amelia Sweeney, founder of Ojas Sauna

Surrey Police to crack down on illegal e-scooters

4 November 2026



Surrey Police has launched a county-wide crackdown on illegal e-bikes and e-scooters, with seized machines set to be destroyed under a tougher enforcement policy from next month.

The new operation, called Operation Scramble, will see roads policing officers working alongside local Safer Neighbourhood Teams to stop riders suspected of using illegal or dangerously modified machines, or riding in an antisocial or reckless manner.

Police say they have already seized 136 e-bikes and e-scooters in Surrey during 2026, compared with 127 during the whole of last year.

Where the age of riders has been established, Surrey Police says 36 per cent have been children or teenagers.

Chief Superintendent Graham Barnett, head of Surrey and Sussex Police's operations and protective security command, said illegal use had become a growing problem.

"The illegal use of e-bikes and e-scooters is a growing problem in Surrey, and we will tirelessly pursue riders who are causing fear and nuisance in our county," he said.

"Many of the reports of illegal e-bikes relate to criminal activity."

He added that the force would combine enforcement with education, particularly because of the number of younger riders involved.

From next month Surrey Police says its policy will be for illegal e-bikes and e-scooters seized by officers to be sent for destruction.

The distinction between an ordinary legal e-bike and an illegal machine can sometimes be misunderstood.

A road-legal electrically assisted pedal cycle, or EAPC, must have pedals capable of propelling it, an electric motor with a maximum continuous rated output of no more than 250 watts and electrical assistance which cuts out once the bicycle reaches 15.5mph.

Riders must be at least 14 years old. A compliant EAPC can be used without a driving licence, vehicle registration, road tax or motor insurance and is generally treated in law in the same way as an ordinary bicycle.

However, a machine capable of being powered electrically beyond 15.5mph, or fitted with a motor exceeding the permitted continuous rating, does not qualify simply because it looks like a bicycle.

It is instead treated as a motor vehicle and, for lawful road use, would need the appropriate registration, insurance and driving licence requirements to be met. An approved motorcycle helmet may also be required.

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

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The Government considered increasing the normal e-bike power limit from 250 watts to 500 watts in 2024, together with relaxing rules governing throttle-controlled “twist and go” bikes. The proposals were abandoned in January 2025 after most of the main stakeholder organisations responding to the consultation opposed them and the Department for Transport concluded there was insufficient evidence to justify the change. The 250-watt limit therefore remains.

The position for privately owned e-scooters is more restrictive.

They are legally classed as motor vehicles and cannot ordinarily be used on public roads, pavements or other public places. Special regulations allow e-scooters hired as part of authorised Government trials to be used in participating areas, but there is no such rental trial operating in Surrey.

Official casualty figures suggest the issue is not confined to nuisance complaints.

Department for Transport statistics published in July show there were 1,377 reported collisions involving e-scooters in Great Britain during 2025, resulting in 1,477 casualties. Ten people were killed, all of them e-scooter riders, while an estimated 484 people were seriously injured.

Thirteen casualties from e-scooter collisions were recorded within the Surrey Police area during 2025.

Surrey Police says that since October 2025 there have also been two collisions resulting in serious injury in the county involving e-scooters and three road traffic collisions involving e-bikes.

Concern about illegal powered bikes and scooters has already featured in local policing priorities elsewhere in Surrey. Earlier this month Surrey Police identified illegal use of e-scooters and bikes around Frimley Green Recreation Ground as an antisocial behaviour priority, saying officers could use powers including vehicle seizure as well as traffic offence reports.

There is a separate safety concern surrounding poorly manufactured or modified electric bikes.

In March 2025 Surrey County Council reported that an unsafe battery fitted to a converted e-bike had caused a fire at a Surrey home while being charged. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and Trading Standards subsequently secured the removal of the particular battery from sale on Amazon.

Government safety advice warns that counterfeit, damaged or badly modified batteries and incompatible chargers can increase the risk of lithium-ion battery fires.

Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend said complaints about e-bikes and e-scooters had repeatedly been raised during her office’s Policing Your Community roadshow over the summer.

“They told us loud and clear they have had enough and we have listened to those concerns,” she said.

“The result is this operation which aims to crackdown on illegal riding and take these often-dangerous machines off our streets for good. We know that their use can often be linked to wider criminal activity and the message is clear – we want to make Surrey an illegal e-bike and e-scooter free county.”

Chief Superintendent Barnett said: “From next month our policy is clear: all illegal e-bikes and e-scooters we seize will be sent for destruction.

“I hope this provides direct reassurance to Surrey residents that we are listening to your concerns around illegal and reckless riding and taking decisive action.”

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Related Reports

- Back to Westminster with local priorities in focus – 18 September 2026. Helen Maguire MP said she would host a roundtable of police chiefs to press for clearer Government guidance on e-scooters. epsomandewelltimes.com
- January crime and safety round-up – 4 June 2026. Surrey Police identified antisocial use of motorbikes and e-bikes as a local policing priority in Epsom and Ewell. epsomandewelltimes.com
- The New Year view from Westminster – 2 February 2026. Helen Maguire highlighted constituents’ concerns about illegal and unsafe e-scooter use and called for a more coordinated response. epsomandewelltimes.com
- Surrey services get fire e-bike removed from Amazon – 13 March 2025. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and Trading Standards acted after an unsafe e-bike battery caused a house fire. epsomandewelltimes.com

Image: “idealised” e-bike and e-scooter in Epsom High Street (Google street view)

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Lots of Lieutenants light upon Epsom’s NESCOT

4 November 2026



His Majesty’s Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey visited Nescot in Epsom with a large delegation of Deputy Lieutenants and community leaders to hear directly from students about their experiences, concerns and ambitions.

Mrs Neelam Dharni Devesher MBE toured the college yesterday, meeting students across subjects ranging from hair and beauty and bricklaying to robotics, motorsport, performing arts and catering.

The visit also gave students the opportunity to raise issues affecting young people in Surrey, including the cost of living and difficulties travelling around the county by public transport.

A panel discussion entitled “Being a Youth in Surrey” formed a central part of the visit. Students spoke about their experiences and aspirations, with their views intended to help inform the Lord-Lieutenant’s work during her term of office.

One student told the delegation: “It’s really important for young people to have opportunities to speak up like this about the things that affect us.

“Transport is a big issue for me. Getting to college can be expensive and it isn’t always easy to get around Surrey using public transport.

“The cost of living is another concern, because when you’re studying, everyday things like travelling to college and getting a good meal can really add up.”

Mrs Devesher said one of the most rewarding parts of her role was meeting young people and hearing about their lives and ambitions.

She said: “I was hugely impressed by the students at Nescot, whose enthusiasm, talent and aspiration was evident throughout.

“The visit gave us the chance to listen to what matters to young people today and to understand how we can help reflect that in the work we do across Surrey.”

The Lord-Lieutenant and her delegation also toured Nescot’s teaching facilities, including its immersive classroom and Institute of Technology.

Visitors were greeted by “Nes bot”, the college robot, which presented them with their visitor lanyards.

Performing arts students provided entertainment, Nescot’s motorsport team displayed its vehicle and catering students prepared food for the visitors. Public services students also took part in a parade and flag-raising ceremony.

The delegation was hosted by Nescot Principal and CEO Julie Kapsalis MBE and members of the college’s leadership team.

Ms Kapsalis said: “It was an honour to welcome the Lord-Lieutenant and her delegation to Nescot.

“With such a large group, we got to showcase the extraordinary breadth of learning that takes place across our campus, from advanced technology and construction trades to performing arts, hospitality and childcare.

“Most importantly, it gave our students the chance to share their views and experiences directly with civic leaders.”

The Lord-Lieutenant is the King’s personal representative in Surrey. The unpaid and politically neutral role includes supporting community organisations, arranging and attending Royal visits, presenting honours and promoting voluntary, business and military organisations across the county.

Nescot, the North East Surrey College of Technology, offers vocational and technical courses for school leavers and adults from its campus in Ewell.

Courses include motor vehicle studies, animal care, hair and beauty, computing and IT, performing arts, childcare, health and social care and construction.

Further information is available at www.nescot.ac.uk.

Lionel Blackman

Guests accompanying the Lord-Lieutenant included:

Emma O’Donnell, Deputy Clerk to the Surrey Lieutenancy

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Jacqui Archer, PA to His Majesty’s Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey

Andrew Canale MVO, Deputy Lieutenant

Dr Beccy Bowden, Chief Executive, Community Foundation for Surrey

Bridget Biddell MBE, Co-Director, Hampton Estate and former High Sheriff of Surrey

Carol Magras, Magistrate

Sir Denis O’Connor CBE QPM, former Chief Constable of Surrey and lecturer at Cambridge University

Giles Verity, Deputy Lieutenant

James Babbington OBE, Deputy Lieutenant

John Machin, Deputy Lieutenant

Jonathan Freeman MBE, CEO, Charity for Civil Servants

Joosje Hamilton, High Sheriff of Surrey

Kristina Murrin, Deputy Lieutenant

Lady Louise O’Connor, Deputy Lieutenant

Mark Carter, Deputy Lieutenant

Mark Tantam, Deputy Lieutenant

Mary Zoeller, Deputy Lieutenant

Dr Michael Kelly JP, Under Sheriff of Surrey

Nick Brooks, Deputy Lieutenant

Shaded Azeem, Deputy Lieutenant

Timothy Wates, Deputy Lieutenant

Peter Lee, Vice-President, Surrey Clubs for Young People

Michael Hayman MBE, Lieutenancy Business Group and Lieutenancy Communications Group

Reverend Clare Marren, Chaplain to the Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey

Dr Vanessa Lawrence CB, Location International

“What’s in a name?” Not “Middlesex”

4 November 2026



Middlesex campaigners said they were ‘gutted’ after the government pulled the rug on efforts to bring back the historic county’s name – but critics said the council should have checked the legality first.

In July, the new shadow authority passed a motion to rebrand itself as West Surrey and South Middlesex, in time for October when official branding was due to be released.

Last week, however, the minister for housing communities and local government wrote to the leader of West Surrey saying their request had been denied but said it could take legal advice on whether it was possible to use a more widely accepted name without the formal legal change.

The news was met with dismay by campaigners who said they had hoped the government would have ‘done the right thing for once’.

Critics however said the name change should have been put to residents, while the minister’s decision also raised serious questions over why it was advanced before the legal basis was known.

Middlesex was abolished as a local authority on April 1, 1965, and campaigners, including astrologer Russell Grant, have been fighting for its return ever since.

Councillor Harry Boparai, the Liberal Democrat councillor for Sunbury Common & Ashford Common put forward the original motion.

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He said: “It’s really sad. South Middlesex is one sixth of the new authority. We are part of the family, we don’t want to be the dysfunctional cousins on the side.

“We’re not trying to be different, we’re just trying to be who we are. Get on a train to Reigate, get on a train to Guildford, get on a train to Spelthorne and you’ll see the difference, years of neglect.

“Going forward we want a level playing field.”

At the October 12, West Surrey shadow executive, its leader, Councillor Paul Follows, said they would look at ways of bringing the matter back to a future consideration but that the council would carry on as West Surrey in the meantime.

Cllr Boparai added: “We will still get there. I was confident they would just rubber stamp it but they didn’t.

“In 1972, the government assisted councils to change their names and considering we’re now the only unitary going forward, you would think they would have helped us because we have all this debt to deal with. I’m determined to get this over the line.”

Councillor Jane Austin, leader of the Conservative opposition group, said: “The Lib Dem Leader may well be relieved by the minister’s response, as while we recognise this is an important issue for some residents in the Spelthorne area, many people across the other five boroughs have struggled to understand why the Lib Dem administration was pursuing a name change in the first place – and why this was being prioritised over tackling council debt and ensuring the successful transfer of vital public services.

“The minister’s letter raises serious questions about why the proposal was advanced before establishing the legal basis for doing so, and without giving residents a proper opportunity to have their say.

“West Surrey Conservatives maintain that any decision affecting the identity of West Surrey must be based on clear legal advice, proper scrutiny, a full understanding of the costs and meaningful public consultation.”

Chris Caulfield Local Democracy Reporter

Image: Cllr Harry Boparai with fellow councillors (image Harry Boparai) with Middlesex flag

Related Reports:

Epsom’s Cllr McCormick gives Middlesex revival the irregular iambic treatment – Surrey County Council backs an earlier call for the western unitary to be named “West Surrey and South Middlesex”. epsomandewelltimes.com

Residents invited to help shape New East and West Surrey council brands – Residents were asked for their views as work began on the identities of Surrey’s two new councils. epsomandewelltimes.com

Surrey leaders promise smooth transition to unitaries – Preparations for the replacement of Surrey’s existing councils by East and West Surrey. epsomandewelltimes.com

West Surrey ‘much worse off’ – The financial inheritance facing the new western unitary authority. epsomandewelltimes.com

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“What’s in a logo?” That which we call East Surrey

4 November 2026



The new East Surrey council’s logo has been unveiled to the public in the latest big step towards the authority’s creation next spring.

With just under six months to go until Surrey County Council and the county’s 11 district councils are abolished, the two new unitary authorities that will replace them are beginning to take shape.

The East Surrey logo, which will accompany all official documents and communications for the new council, was crafted

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following a consultation with residents about what makes the area special.

It features five shapes that are designed to represent the five boroughs merging to form the new council – which are Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge.

“The logo tells the story of East Surrey,” council leader Steve Wotton (Liberal Democrats: Horley West, Salfords & Sidlow) explained.

“The five interconnected shapes represent the five areas coming together to create one new council, while reflecting the rivers, countryside and landscapes that connect our communities.

“Just as importantly, it symbolises the relationships between people, places and services that will help make East Surrey Council a strong and connected organisation.”

An East Surrey spokesperson stressed that the logo was designed in-house at no additional cost to taxpayers.

The consultation that led to the design drew more than 2,000 responses among residents, with community, countryside, waterways, and heritage emerging as the strongest themes defining East Surrey.

It was the area’s landscape, rivers and countryside that inspired the colour palette featured on the logo.

Councillor Wotton added: “I would like to thank everyone who took the time to share their views and ideas.

“This new identity has been shaped by the people and communities it will serve and reflects the pride people feel in East Surrey.

“My thanks also to our talented in-house designers who have created the new brand using their skills, creativity and local knowledge, making best use of existing resources, without additional cost to taxpayers.”

East Surrey shadow authority’s cabinet has agreed to a phased introduction of the new brand, meaning that existing signage and vehicles bearing the old county and district council logos will not immediately be replaced or repainted.

Instead, they will only be changed to feature the new East Surrey logo as and when they need to be renovated in a bid to save on unnecessary costs.

The logo for the new West Surrey council will be decided in the coming weeks, the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) understands.

East and West Surrey councils will formally take over the reins of local government from April 2027, at which point they will be responsible for all services in their respective areas.

Under the current system, this responsibility is split between the county council and various district councils, with Surrey County Council managing services such as education and highways while the districts take care of council tax and planning applications.

Although the government has paused local government restructure for many other similar “two-tier” councils across England, it is still going ahead in Surrey as the process is too far down the line.

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

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