

Epsom & Ewell Faces Tight Constraints in 25/26 Government settlement

26 December 2024

Surrey Borough	Core Spending Power (€M)	Dwellings As At September 2024	Core Spending Power per dwelling €	Settlement Funding Assessment (€M)	SFA per dwelling
Woking	16.8	44,495	378	2.5	56.08
Runnymede	10.7	39,372	271	2.2	55.30
Guildford	17.6	62,447	281	3.4	54.46
Spelthorne	13.4	44,594	300	2.3	50.50
Epsom And Ewell	10.2	33,272	307	1.6	49.06
Surrey Heath	13.3	38,624	343	1.8	47.17
Elmbridge	22.0	58,940	367	2.7	45.57
Tandridge	12.9	38,137	338	1.7	44.97
Reigate And Banstead	22.2	64,821	342	2.8	43.34
Waverley	17.2	57,335	300	2.3	40.83
Mole Valley	11.4	38,666	289	1.6	39.23

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has received its provisional financial settlement for 2025/26, and while the figures align with expectations, they highlight ongoing financial pressures on local services. The settlement forms part of the UK Government's wider local authority funding announcement, which has delivered mixed outcomes across Surrey's district and borough councils.

Epsom & Ewell's Settlement Overview

According to the latest figures, Epsom & Ewell's **Core Spending Power** for 2025/26 is projected at **£10.23 million**, equating to **£307 per dwelling**. This places Epsom & Ewell below several neighbouring boroughs, including Woking (£378 per dwelling) and Elmbridge (£367 per dwelling), but slightly above Waverley (£300 per dwelling).

The **Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA)**, which includes central government grants and retained business rates, stands at **£1.63 million**. This figure underscores the limited financial flexibility available to the council, particularly given rising costs and increasing service demands.

The Funding Context

The settlement includes a modest contribution from the **New Homes Bonus**, with Epsom & Ewell receiving only **£6,160**. This pales in comparison to Runnymede (£774,587) and Guildford (£614,903), reflecting the borough's slower rate of housing growth.

A Challenging Year Ahead

The provisional settlement aligns with broader trends across Surrey, where councils have been advised to continue delivering "high levels of efficiency" to maintain balanced budgets. Surrey County Council, facing similar pressures, acknowledged the settlement as expected but warned of the continued uncertainty surrounding medium-term funding.

Councillor David Lewis, Surrey County Council's cabinet member for finance and resources, noted: *"Councils across the country continue to face a very challenging financial future. Uncertainty on funding into the medium term, coupled with high prices and increased demand, means high levels of efficiencies continue to be required in order to balance budgets."*

Limited Relief from Government

While councils such as Mole Valley have benefitted from additional Government grants targeting homelessness and recycling services, Epsom & Ewell has not been as fortunate. With no significant uplift in funding and reliance on reserves to bridge financial gaps, the council faces tough decisions in the coming financial year.

Furthermore, the **funding floor** mechanism has provided limited relief, ensuring that Epsom & Ewell does not see a drastic year-on-year funding drop. However, without long-term certainty or multi-year settlements, financial planning remains a significant challenge.

Looking Forward

As the Government promises to 'fix the foundations of local government' from **2026-27 onwards**, Epsom & Ewell will need to rely on prudent financial management and creative revenue generation strategies to maintain essential services.

Residents can expect continued fiscal caution from the council as it navigates rising costs, growing demand for services, and ongoing funding uncertainty. The final settlement figures are expected to be confirmed early in the new year, and until then, the council's budget planners remain in a holding pattern.

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