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Up to £1 where sold

Epsom shops targeted in Surrey crackdown on illegal goods

13 November 2026



Shops in Epsom were among premises targeted in a county-wide crackdown on illegal trading and suspected money laundering which resulted in the seizure of goods valued at £55,500.

The October operation involved Surrey Trading Standards, Surrey Police, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and Home Office Immigration Enforcement, working together as part of a national campaign against organised crime operating through apparently legitimate high street businesses.

The goods seized across Surrey included illicit cigarettes, tobacco, vapes, vaping liquids, counterfeit products and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) products. Officers also used specialist tobacco detection dogs trained to locate illicit goods hidden in concealed storage compartments.

The operation, known as Operation Machinize, took place in Epsom, Elmbridge, Guildford, Reigate, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath and Woking.

However, although Surrey County Council has confirmed that Epsom was among the locations targeted, its announcement does not identify the Epsom businesses visited, the number of premises inspected locally, or the value and nature of any goods seized specifically in the town.

Nor does the announcement establish whether any Epsom traders were arrested, charged or referred for prosecution. The £55,500 figure relates to seizures across the participating Surrey areas, not to Epsom alone.

Criminal money on the high street

Operation Machinize is coordinated nationally by the National Crime Agency (NCA) and targets businesses suspected of providing a means for organised criminals to launder money.

Cash-intensive businesses can be exploited to disguise the proceeds of crime as legitimate sales. The operation also targets offences involving counterfeit goods, illegal tobacco, drugs, tax evasion and immigration law.

The NCA estimates that at least £1 billion in criminal cash is laundered annually through cash-intensive high street businesses, including some vape shops and barbers. It stresses that the campaign is directed at criminal exploitation of businesses, rather than legitimate traders generally.

Figures released by the NCA on 11 November show the scale of the latest nationwide operation. During October, officers and enforcement agencies visited or raided 3,029 premises across the UK, making 349 arrests and seizing £2.2 million in cash.

Further results included £3.7 million in account freezing orders and £6.8 million worth of criminal commodities seized, including approximately 49,300 illegal vapes, 1,645 kilograms of illicit tobacco and 6.3 million illegal cigarettes. These are national figures and are separate from Surrey’s reported £55,500 seizure total. National Crime Agency

Surrey Police involvement

Surrey Police has separately confirmed enforcement activity under Operation Machinize on 21 October. In a neighbourhood policing update published the following day, officers reported working alongside partner agencies to tackle money laundering and the criminal use of cash-intensive high street businesses in Elmbridge.

The police said its neighbourhood teams had carried out proactive enforcement and engagement work. Surrey Police+1

The county council says the Surrey operation demonstrated the effectiveness of cooperation between different enforcement authorities, with specialist tobacco detection dogs helping officers find concealed products.

Council pledges protection for residents and legitimate traders

Kevin Deanus, Surrey County Council’s Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue, and Resilience, said:

“We are here to protect our residents from harm, and we take that responsibility incredibly seriously.

“The success of Operation Machinize is testament to the fact that we will not tolerate illegal activities on our streets and

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will always protect our residents from any potentially unsafe goods.

“Not only that, we also have a duty to protect both legitimate businesses on our high streets and their vital contribution to the local economy.

“As always, I’d like to thank the Trading Standards team involved with this operation for their invaluable work in keeping residents safe.”

Residents with information about illegal tobacco, cigarettes or vaping products can report concerns anonymously on 0300 999 6 999 or through the Stop Illegal Tobacco website at www.stop-illegal-tobacco.co.uk.

Earlier Epsom operation

Epsom also featured in the previous phase of Operation Machinize in October 2025, when Trading Standards organised public engagement events in the town and elsewhere in Surrey.

A report to the Surrey and Buckinghamshire Joint Trading Standards Service Committee in May 2026 recorded that more than 800 people attended the combined events in Epsom, Runnymede and Surrey Heath. The events included demonstrations involving tobacco detection dogs and advice from police, public health representatives and Crimestoppers.

During that earlier operation, Trading Standards and partner agencies visited 20 businesses across Surrey and Buckinghamshire and seized approximately £68,000 worth of illegal tobacco, vapes and counterfeit products from 11 premises. The report did not specify how much of that total related to Epsom. Surrey County Council+1

Editorial note — further Epsom enquiries

I found no independently verified identification of Epsom premises involved in the October 2026 operation in the publicly accessible Surrey Police reports and neighbourhood updates checked.

The most useful follow-up would be to ask Surrey Police and Trading Standards for the number and locations of Epsom inspections, the goods seized locally, whether arrests or prosecutions followed, and whether any businesses were ordered to close.

I would retain the opening headline and paragraphs above, and insert the earlier Epsom operation section immediately before the council’s reaction. It gives the report some documented local history without suggesting that the businesses inspected in 2025 were necessarily involved in October 2026.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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