EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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12th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES

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# Karl Nicholas honoured with Active Citizen Award at Borough Civic Reception

14 March 2026



A long-serving community volunteer whose work spans youth organisations, music, policing and education has been honoured with Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Active Citizen Award at the Mayor's Annual Civic Reception.

The award was presented to **Karl Nicholas** by the Mayor, Cllr Robert Leach, during the civic gathering held on the evening of 13 March at Bourne Hall in Ewell. The reception, hosted by the Mayor and Mayoress Marilyn Leach, brought together councillors, aldermen, freemen of the borough, past mayors and other invited residents who have contributed to civic life in Epsom & Ewell.

Among those attending was Mary Zoeller, Deputy-Lieutenant of Surrey, along with a wide range of community figures representing voluntary organisations, education, faith groups and public service across the borough.

The Active Citizen citation described Nicholas as someone with a "distinguished record of public service", highlighting decades of involvement across multiple areas of community life.

He has been involved with Second Cuddington Scouts for more than two decades, including 18 years serving as assistant commissioner for the area. The scout group provides activities for boys and girls aged six to eighteen and offers training opportunities for young people, including camps and leadership development.

Music has been another major thread in Nicholas's community service. He serves as bandmaster and assistant musical director of the Kingston and Malden Scout and Guide Band, a role he has held for 25 years. The band has performed at prestigious occasions including Buckingham Palace garden parties and the Lord Mayor's Show.

His musical contribution also extends to church life. Nicholas learned to play the organ at Cuddington Church and has been involved in church music there for more than 30 years, first as a choirboy and later as organist and choir director. The citation notes that he has frequently stepped in to support services when needed, including standing in at short notice to play for the Mayor's civic service when the regular organist was taken ill.

Alongside his voluntary work, Nicholas has also served as a special constable for 14 years, and in his professional life works as a teacher. He currently serves as Head of Inclusion and Special Needs at Southborough High School, having previously been deputy head at a school in Cheam.

The citation concluded that across these roles Nicholas has shown "commitment and competence" and that his personal manner and skill make him "a worthy recipient of the Active Citizen Award".

The civic reception itself provided a relaxed and celebratory atmosphere in Bourne Hall. The evening featured musical performances from Ukrainian musician Vladislav Voloshin, who entertained guests with a programme including pieces by ABBA and Bach, performed on saxophone and clarinet. The Mayor himself accompanied the performance on the piano.

Guests mingled over refreshments in the hall while reflecting the borough's long civic traditions. The gathering brought together representatives from across the political spectrum and many strands of local life, demonstrating the borough's continuing culture of voluntary service and public engagement.

Proceedings were guided with humour and warmth by Cllr Julian Freeman, the Liberal Democrat councillor who acted as master of ceremonies for the evening.

While politics often divides in the council chamber, the reception provided a reminder that the borough's civic culture rests on a broader shared commitment to public service and community life.

That spirit was embodied in the recognition of Karl Nicholas — a volunteer whose decades of work in youth development, music, education and policing have quietly strengthened the fabric of local life in Epsom & Ewell.

Lionel Blackman

Image: Karl Nicholas holding his award medal against the background of St Mary's Church (Des Blenkinsopp – CC BY-SA 2.0)

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