

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council debt update

26 August 2025



Councils across the UK have added a further £7.8bn to their collective borrowing in the last year, leaving local authorities with debts of £122.2bn – the equivalent of £1,791 for every resident. The figures, released by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government show that council debt rose seven per cent in a single year from £114.5bn in 2024.

For Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC), debt at the end of the 2024/25 financial year stood at £64.4m – or £785.80 per head of population. Surrey County Council's position is much larger in absolute terms, with borrowing of £1.07bn, equating to £873.69 per resident. EEBC's debt level is exactly the same as the previous year. "This is because the council has not taken on any additional borrowing, and no debt was paid between the two financial years", said Cllr **Neil Dallen** (RA Town Ward), Chair of EEBC's Strategy and Resources Committee.

Both figures sit below the UK-wide average of £1,791 per head but illustrate how deeply embedded borrowing now is in local government finance.

Why councils borrow

Local authorities are permitted to borrow to fund projects such as schools, leisure centres, theatres and housing. Many also borrowed heavily over the past decade to acquire commercial property – from office parks to shopping centres – intended to generate rental income to offset cuts to central government funding.

But short-term borrowing from central government has almost tripled in recent years, in some cases used to plug day-to-day budget gaps rather than pay for long-term investments. Jonathan Carr-West of the Local Government Information Unit warned the approach was "extremely worrying", likening it to "payday loans for local governments".

Surrey's position

Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, said that while the council had "a stable budget position", it was not immune to national financial pressures. He added: "All our key services – including social care, children's services, and highways maintenance – are facing higher demand, higher costs, and reduced funding. We must find ways to continue to support those residents who need us most, and to deliver the services that people rely on every day.

"As part of our budget setting process, the levels of balances and reserves have been determined to ensure that the level is justifiable and manageable in the context of local circumstances and risk."

Surrey's capital spending ambitions include new school places, highways upgrades, green initiatives, social care accommodation and library improvements, but the council has been forced to hold more expensive short-term debt while waiting for interest rates to fall.

National concerns

Warnings about the sustainability of council borrowing are not new. Six authorities – Croydon, Slough, Thurrock, Birmingham, Woking and Nottingham – have effectively declared bankruptcy in recent years, in some cases due to failed investment schemes. Thurrock alone faces a £469m funding black hole from collapsed solar farm projects.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has calculated that local authority "core spending power" remains 18% lower per resident than in 2010 despite some increases since the pandemic.

In June, Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer pledged an overhaul of the council grant system to simplify the funding formula and shift resources towards the most deprived areas. While welcomed by urban councils, rural authorities have raised concerns that redistribution could "overcompensate" and leave them exposed.

Cost of servicing debt

Separate analysis by the *Times* found that councils across Great Britain now spend the equivalent of a fifth of council tax revenues on servicing their debts. Annual interest costs are estimated at over £4bn – more than the combined national spend on emergency housing and libraries, culture and tourism.

The Local Government Association's finance spokesperson, Cllr Pete Marland, said council finances "remain in a fragile position", adding: "A sustainable, long-term financial model for local government must lead to all councils having adequate resources to meet growing cost and demand pressures."

The local picture

Epsom and Ewell's £64.4m debt may appear modest compared with Surrey County Council's £1.07bn, but both authorities – like councils nationwide – must balance their budgets each year while contending with higher borrowing costs, reduced grant funding and rising demand for services.

With 30 more councils seeking exceptional financial support from government this year, including permission to use loans or asset sales to cover day-to-day spending, the pressure on local finances is set to remain intense.

The table below lists all of Surrey's districts highest debt first for 2024/2025:

Surrey's Districts	Total debt	Per person
Woking	£2,155,641,000	£20,601.33
Spelthorne	£1,065,761,000	£10,252.24
Runnymede	£597,712,000	£6,608.79
Guildford	£311,532,000	£2,088.35
Surrey Heath	£183,436,000	£1,990.24
Waverley	£140,286,000	£1,061.60
Tandridge	£92,816,000	£1,038.11
Mole Valley	£73,850,000	£836.68
Epsom & Ewell	£64,427,000	£785.80
Elmbridge	£48,624,000	£346.08
Reigate & Banstead	£5,000,000	£32.05

RNIB blind to the interests of its Epsom residents?

26 August 2025



The future of Swail House in Epsom, a landmark housing estate for visually impaired people, has become the subject of debate as residents and the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) present differing perspectives on redevelopment plans.

Swail House, opened in 1952 and named after Martha Swail, was one of the first estates in the UK designed specifically for blind people. With flats laid out to aid navigation, landscaped grounds, and facilities for social activities, it was hailed as a flagship initiative. Over time it has included social rooms, a restaurant, and a Chelsea Flower Show award-winning garden.

Residents' Concerns

Some residents and supporters have voiced fears that redevelopment will diminish the estate's original character and reduce the number of flats for visually impaired tenants. They argue that facilities such as communal spaces, gardens, and the on-site Epsom & Ewell Talking Newspaper (EETN) studio, which has operated from Swail House for over 40 years, are at risk.

Complaints have also been made about the consultation process, with claims that residents' questions have gone unanswered and that accessible formats, such as tactile scale models of proposed buildings, have not been provided.

Russell Bailey, Chair of the Swail House Association for the Visually Impaired, told the *Epsom and Ewell Times*:

"We are very keen for the development to go through. We are not so keen about the way it's being done – i.e. selling off land to pay for the new development – and we are certainly not keen with the fact that there's going to be fewer flats for visually impaired people. If the RNIB were more financially secure, they could have lent money against the value of the property, kept the land, and built more flats.

I don't think residents feel they have had the opportunity to input into how it's going to develop. One real concern is that there will be no communal lounge and no facilities for recording the Epsom newspaper which has been going for many

years.”

RNIB’s Position

The RNIB, however, says it has engaged with tenants and will continue to do so. Kathryn Sherratt, RNIB’s Chief Financial Officer, said:

“In March 2025, RNIB submitted an outline planning application to redevelop land at the back of Swail House to build 48 units, and we’re currently waiting for a decision on the planning proposal.

RNIB has consulted with tenants on the planning proposal and will continue to share information and consult as the proposals develop, subject to the outcome of the planning decision.”

Wider Concerns

Supporters of the estate point out that Swail House is more than just a residential complex. Its natural grounds provide quiet areas for guide dogs and for residents to experience sounds of nature in place of visual cues. Campaigners say this unique environment is at risk if large sections of the site are sold.

Local residents outside Swail House have also raised objections to the design and scale of the proposed development, citing environmental and aesthetic impacts.

Next Steps

The future of Swail House now rests with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s planning process. Whatever the outcome, the debate highlights tensions between the need to modernise housing stock and preserve the historic vision and facilities that made Swail House a pioneering model for visually impaired people more than 70 years ago.

Image: Swail House aerial – Google Maps.

Prostate cancer vaccine research launched in Surrey

26 August 2025



In September 2025, The Prostate Project, a Guildford-based volunteer-led charity, will launch a £250,000 campaign to raise funds for a prostate cancer research project widely anticipated to be ‘game-changing’.

Work has begun to develop a vaccine to prevent the return of prostate cancer in men who have undergone a radical prostatectomy, the surgical removal of the prostate. Cancer vaccines have become an exciting area of research in recent years, and this new treatment could potentially save the lives of more than 1,500 men each year in the UK alone.

The Prostate Project, based at the Stokes Centre for Urology at Royal Surrey County Hospital, has a proven track record of funding research and treatment of prostate cancer, raising more than £11 million since its formation in 1998.

During this time the charity has provided funds for research at the University of Surrey, leading directly to breakthroughs in the diagnosis and treatment of prostate and other urological cancers. The university team is one of the leading groups for immunotherapy research in the UK, and is recognised around the world for its work.

This latest initiative is part of the charity’s longstanding and ongoing support for the work of Dr. Nicola Annels and Dr. Guy Simpson and their team based at the University of Surrey.

A patent has been applied for the vaccine and Dr. Simpson has already proven that it works in the similar treatment of bladder cancer. This new research is required to see if the vaccine works as effectively for prostate cancer patients.

Dr. Guy Simpson, Research Fellow Oncology at the University of Surrey explains:

‘The research will focus on a ‘prime-boost’ vaccine strategy. The new cancer-killing virus, known as HSV5-15 developed by our team at the University of Surrey will be used as an immune ‘priming’ vaccine along with a prostate specific mRNA vaccine to ‘boost’ and maintain this immune response against the prostate.

mRNA vaccines have already proven to be revolutionary in preventing COVID, and this technology is promising similarly effective results in treating cancer tumours.

The vaccine trains the body's immune system to recognise cancer cells so any that return after surgery can be hunted down and killed, reducing the risk of the disease coming back. Around 5,000 radical prostatectomies are performed each year in the UK, but between 20% and 50% of men who have their prostates removed will have their cancer return, resulting in them undergoing further radiotherapy and/or hormone therapy.

This treatment is costly, time-consuming and can have unpleasant side effects, and is not always completely successful.'

Prostate Project Chairman, Martin Davies, expands on the fundraising initiative:

'For over 25 years the Prostate Project has been proud to support a team that is quite rightly recognised by their peers for their work in immunology research, and this latest initiative is perhaps the most important yet. We are looking to raise £250,000, a target that we recognise as ambitious but completely achievable, especially given our past record, and the significance of the potential outcome.'

A final word from Dr. Simpson on the timescales for delivery.

'This funding will support the initial 18 month research period, but the more money that we raise will have a significant effect on timescales.

The Prostate Project website www.prostate-project.org.uk features a comprehensive FAQ page with answers to many of the questions about the vaccine and details of how to donate.

Epsom schools celebrate GCSE results

26 August 2025



Epsom schools have been celebrating another strong year of GCSE results, with both Glyn School and Rosebery School reporting exceptional performances from the Class of 2025.

At **Glyn School**, 86% of students achieved grade 4 or above in English and Maths, with 66% reaching grade 5 or above. Disadvantaged pupils also excelled, with 84% attaining grade 4 or better in the core subjects. Among the top performers were Joshua Ellis (eight grade 9s and three grade 8s), William Unsworth (eight grade 9s), and Frederick Browning (eight grade 9s). Twins Hamish and Oscar Donald also secured a string of solid passes, while Chelsea Football Club player Reggie Walsh managed to complete seven GCSEs alongside making his debut for the club's first team.

Students reflected on the hard work behind their achievements, with Nicholas Cooper noting: *"It was hard work but worth it,"* and Joshua Ellis adding: *"I'm really happy with my results, and I want to thank my teachers for helping me achieve them."*

Headteacher Jo Garrod praised the determination of staff and pupils, while James Nicholson, CEO of GLF Schools, described the outcomes across the trust as "a fantastic set of GCSE results."

Meanwhile, at **Rosebery School**, the celebrations were equally jubilant. One in three exam entries was awarded a top grade 9 or 8, and half of all results fell between grades 9 and 7. Ninety-one per cent of students achieved grade 4 or higher in both English and Maths, and more than 80% reached grade 5 or above. In Maths and Science alone, Rosebery girls achieved 128 grade 9s.

Individual highlights included Iris Aryeetey and Eilidh McFarlane, who each achieved ten grade 9s, while twins Grace and Hannah Black amassed a remarkable 15 grade 9s and five grade 8s between them.

The school's overall performance set new records, with an average grade of 6.4 and an Attainment 8 score of 64. Headteacher David Lach said the results placed the cohort among the top 5% of schools nationally and praised both staff and pupils for their resilience during what he described as a "tragic and difficult academic year."

With both schools celebrating record results following last week's strong A Level outcomes, Epsom students appear to be ending the summer term on a high.

Related reports:

Epsom's boys' and girls' schools celebrate A level results

Photo: Rosebery girls celebrate. Credit: GLF Schools

Epsom commemorates VJ day

26 August 2025



St Martin's Church, Epsom, was filled on Friday 15th August as the borough came together to mark the 80th anniversary of VJ Day - the end of the Second World War in the Far East. The service, organised by the Royal British Legion's Epsom and Ewell branch, brought together civic leaders, veterans, families, choirs and the wider community to commemorate those who served and those who never came home.

The service was led by Revd Nick Parish, who in his opening prayer set the tone:

"God, our Father, in the dying and rising of your Son, Jesus Christ, you have brought life and salvation out of cruelty and death. We mark VJ Day in gratitude for the courage of the allied forces who suffered for freedom in the Far East campaign, and in sorrow for all that hinders the coming of your kingdom of peace. Give us wisdom to learn from the bitter memories of war and hearts that long for the unity of all nations."

A personal touch from local families

Among the most moving contributions came from Mrs Sheila Carlson-Berry, who read extracts from her late father Douglas Fletcher's letters home from Burma. Fletcher, who had volunteered for the RAF at 19, wrote more than 250 letters to his sweetheart Sylvie during his service.

From October 1944 he wrote with cautious optimism:

"I suppose by the time you receive this European war will be just about finished. What a wonderful thought. It must make the people at home very happy... loved ones at home free from all danger. That, of course, is the main reason for our joy. The other is that now we can have the men and materials out here to put an end to this."

In another letter, he reflected on the "forgotten" nature of the Burma campaign:

"Most people don't realise there's a war on out here. It's only the people who have someone here that understand what is happening. The children have suffered most. It will take years to erase horrible memories from their minds. Man's inhumanity to man - a terrible war, isn't it?"

By August 1945, as the atomic bombs fell on Japan, Fletcher wrote with relief:

"So it's all over. Hard to believe, isn't it? It came so suddenly, but there it is. It will make things so much easier... Yes, the atomic bomb is a terrible weapon, but I think we have it to thank for the Jap surrender... I sincerely hope it will be the last war on this earth. War is too terrible a business. So many innocent people have to suffer."

Sheila told the congregation: "As you probably guessed, Douglas is my dad. Sylvie, my mum. He never forgot his comrades. Each Remembrance Day, I went with him to Westminster, and he cried as he planted a cross in the garden for his friend and pilot, Godwin Scudamore, who didn't make it home."

The stories of Epsom's fallen

Cllr Dr Graham Jones MBE and the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, Michael Molyneux, read researched accounts of four Epsom men who lost their lives in the Far East campaign.

- **Sergeant Jack Cannon**, Royal Artillery, died 28 February 1944 aged 30 at Imphal, India: "Jack married Nora Rush in 1940, and a year later their son Anthony was born. After just a year with his family, Jack was sent to India... He was killed in action during a Japanese attack and later interred at the Commonwealth War Graves cemetery in Imphal. His widow Nora requested the inscription: *'To a beautiful life came a sudden end, and he died as he lived, everyone's friend.'*"
- **Corporal Lionel William Murray**, Dorset Regiment, killed at the Battle of Kohima, 4 May 1944, aged 28: "Before the war he lived with his mother in Langley Vale. He was evacuated from Dunkirk, then sent to India to train in jungle warfare. At Kohima he fought in bitter hand-to-hand combat and was killed in action. His gravestone reads: *'In loving memory of a beloved son and brother. Rest in peace.'*"
- **Lance Bombardier Alfred William Cates**, Royal Artillery, died of cholera 26 July 1943 aged 42: "Stationed in Singapore, he was taken prisoner in February 1942 and sent to work on the notorious Thailand-Burma Death Railway. His widow Emma chose the words: *'So young, so calm, so bright, I bid you, my dearest one, goodnight.'*"
- **Noel Seymour**, RAF wireless operator, died 14 October 1943 aged 21: "Taken prisoner in Singapore, he too was

forced to work on the Burma Railway, where some 30 prisoners died every day. Noel was one of them. He lies in Kanchanaburi War Cemetery in Thailand, and his name is remembered on the war memorial in this very church.”

Tributes from today’s leaders

Helen Maguire MP for Epsom and Ewell, whose grandfather had served in Burma, spoke of both the past and her own military service: “Those who served in the Burma campaign were referred to as the Forgotten Army, and today we remember them and we honour them... My grandfather fought in the Battle of Kohima, a brutal and decisive turning point in the war. Like many who served there, he never spoke of his experiences, but it was clear the war stayed with him for the rest of his life. I remember him today with pride, gratitude and honour.”

Maguire linked her own military service in Bosnia and Iraq to the experiences of those remembered:

“War is cruel and it affects innocent people. It’s something civilians should never have to live through. Today, I remember my grandfather and those he served with. I remember those who didn’t come home, and I remember too the lasting impact of service on families, on lives and on future generations. We give thanks for peace and pray for an end to wars.”

Community effort

Barb Warwick, principal organiser with the Epsom RBL, later thanked the many contributors, from choirs and standard bearers to the volunteers who served over 100 cups of tea and cake in St Martin’s Hall. She acknowledged the “wonderful trumpeter Mr Dennis Sexton” for sounding the Last Post, and Tom Davey representing 135 Squadron.

Warwick reflected that this was “almost certainly the last service of its kind” and praised those who helped plan the event, especially John Rogers and Revd Nick Parish: “You did them proud.”

Remembering the Forgotten Army

The commemoration at St Martin’s – once known as the “Burma Star church” – brought together personal memory, civic duty, and community remembrance. The letters of Douglas Fletcher, the stories of Cannon, Murray, Cates and Seymour, and the testimonies of descendants and leaders ensured that those from Epsom who served in the Far East will not be forgotten.

As the exhortation reminded the packed congregation: “*We will remember them.*”

You can watch the full service on this video link: [Epsom and Ewell VJ Day Commemoration](#)

Image: Barb Warwick of Royal British Legion Epsom and Ewell the principal organiser of the event.

Local MP speaks out on Epsom Hospital’s bed-blocking

26 August 2025



Epsom & Ewell’s MP, Helen Maguire, has called for urgent action on social care after visiting Epsom Hospital’s accident and emergency department this week.

The Liberal Democrat MP met hospital staff and health professionals to discuss the forthcoming NHS 10 Year Plan. She said her visit underlined the “unimaginable pressures” faced by staff and patients as a result of overcrowding and long waits.

According to figures from Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust, the average stay in A&E at Epsom during 2024/25 was 5 hours and 41 minutes. For patients admitted, the average length of stay rises to nearly 10 days. Some patients with mental health needs remain in the emergency department for extended periods due to difficulties securing appropriate care.

Maguire said she was concerned at the sight of patients being treated in corridor beds — something NHS staff acknowledged as a consequence of space shortages and wider pressures across the system.

Welcoming the government’s forthcoming NHS 10 Year Plan, Maguire argued that improvements in social care were essential to tackle the problem of so-called “bed-blocking” — where patients who are medically fit to be discharged

remain in hospital because no suitable care arrangements are available.

“Hospitals like Epsom, in my constituency, face unimaginable pressures as a result of years of mismanagement under the previous Conservative government,” she said. “If this Labour government are serious about ending the bed-blocking crisis and improving patient outcomes, they should listen to the Liberal Democrats and put social care front and centre of the NHS 10 Year Plan. We cannot fix our NHS unless we fix the crisis in social care.”

She also praised the efforts of Epsom and St Helier staff: “I want to pay tribute to all of the wonderful staff at Epsom Hospital, and across the Trust, who work tirelessly to deliver the best possible outcomes for patients under incredibly testing circumstances.”

Local pressures in national context

Epsom and St Helier hospitals have faced longstanding challenges with ageing estates, high demand, and difficulties in discharging patients into community or residential care. The Trust has been working on plans to modernise services, including proposals for a new specialist emergency care hospital in Sutton, while maintaining district services in Epsom and St Helier.

Nationally, the issue of delayed discharges has been identified by successive governments as a major factor behind hospital overcrowding. NHS England data for 2024 showed that more than 12,000 hospital beds across the country were occupied each day by patients who no longer needed acute care, but who could not be discharged safely.

Health experts say shortages of social care staff, funding pressures on local councils, and a rising elderly population have combined to make the problem worse. The government has promised its NHS 10 Year Plan will set out reforms aimed at shifting more care into the community and improving integration between health and social care.

No alcohol sales between 3am and 7am rules Epsom licensing committee

26 August 2025



An Epsom corner shop has been given the green light for longer trading hours - but stopped short of being allowed to serve alcohol 24/7.

Ruxley Food & Wine, an off-licence on a busy A-road junction at 427 Kingston Road, applied to extend its alcohol license sales to 24 hours a day. The plan included serving customers via a hatch after 11pm, with Uber Eats and delivery drivers able to collect goods through the window.

But at a meeting on August 13, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s licensing committee agreed to a police-backed compromise: alcohol can be sold until 1am Sunday-Thursday, and until 3am on Fridays and Saturdays.

The store’s consultant told councillors the business had traded without incident for three years. He said crime levels in the immediate area were low with “less than one offence a month” and argued serving alcohol, cigarettes and milk late at night “will not attract a disorderly crowd”.

The consultant explained extending the corner shop’s hours was to attract additional business. Currently the shop can sell alcohol between 8am and 11pm. He said: “Why should members of the public be denied service when most people go to bed at 10pm at night?”

After hearing Surrey Police and the council’s Environmental Health department’s concerns, the applicant decided to reduce its licence application operating hours to 7am-2am the following day Sunday to Thursday, and then 7am to 3am Friday to Saturday.

But at the meeting officers still stressed their worries have not been resolved. Environmental Health officers argued the importance of protecting residents from late-night disturbance and the safety of potential lone shop workers.

Both Surrey police and Environmental Health warned of potential noise and nuisance for nearby residents - those living on adjoining streets or above the parade of shops.

“If you open up later it does open up the area to potential crime and disorder,” said a Surrey Police representative. She argued selling alcohol 24 hours a day or similar will increase the likelihood of such crimes such as anti-social behaviour.

The committee concluded that granting the full hours could undermine the licensing objectives of preventing crime and disorder, public safety, preventing public nuisance and protecting children from harm particularly during weeknights in a

residential area.

Image: Ruxley Food and Wine shop on Kingston Road. (Credit Emily Dalton/ LDRS)

Epsom's boys' and girls' schools celebrate A level results

26 August 2025



Epsom's two prominent secondary schools, Rosebery and Glyn, are celebrating outstanding A-level and vocational qualification results, with this year's achievements marking new highs in performance and student destinations.

At Rosebery School, staff and students are celebrating the school's best-ever Key Stage 5 results. A-level attainment, vocational outcomes and overall achievement surpassed last year's record figures, with 36% of entries graded A* or A, 70% awarded between A* and B, and 88% graded A* to C. Vocational entries averaged a Distinction.

Among the highest achievers were Sadie Smith (A* in Maths, Further Maths, Physics and Chemistry - now heading to Durham University to study Mathematics), Bethany Hatton (A* in Biology, Chemistry and Maths - Biochemistry at Warwick University), and Raadhika Wenham (A* in Biology, Chemistry and Psychology - Zoology at the University of Nottingham). Other top performers included Jessica Sheehy, Dasha Botha, Lily Browning, Stacey Boamah, Kate Blackall and Esther Scott, each with two As, *and Issy Carter, who achieved a Distinction* in both vocational qualifications.

Headteacher David Lach praised the "remarkable resilience, determination, and talent" of the Class of 2025, noting that students leave as "empowered, confident young women ready to make their mark on the world".

Glyn School also reported a strong year, with nearly half of all grades at A*-B. Standout results included Faris Al-Ugaily (A* in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics - Chemical Engineering at Imperial College London), Brody Skinner and Lewis Ashworth (both achieving A* in Physics, Further Maths, Maths and the EPQ, with Ashworth progressing to Automotive Engineering at Loughborough University), and Eleanor Weston (A* in Biology, A in Chemistry and Maths - Biomedical Science at Newcastle University). Olivia Buchanan (A* in Geography, A* in Psychology, A in Politics and A* in EPQ) will study Law at the University of Exeter, while Head Boy Donovan Livesey (A* in English Literature, A* in Sociology, A in Media Studies, A* in EPQ) will study Journalism at the University of Sheffield.

Glyn Headteacher Jo Garrod described the results as "a testament to hard work, determination, and the support of our exceptional staff" and said she was delighted to see so many students securing places at their chosen universities, apprenticeships and career pathways.

Both schools are part of the GLF Schools Multi-Academy Trust. Chief Executive James Nicholson congratulated staff, students and families, saying he was "delighted" with the impressive achievements across the board.

Today's Epsom racing tips

26 August 2025



Epsom Racecourse presents its latest meeting on Friday afternoon, with a six-race card consisting of five handicaps and one fillies' novice.

*Read on for a full preview of and tips for the Epsom card, courtesy of Boyle Sports, who offer all the latest **horse racing odds**.*

The first race of the afternoon is a seven-furlong two-year-olds' nursery handicap (2.05). Of the six runners, Tom Dascombe's Jowalla is the only one making her handicap debut, and wears first-time cheekpieces for the occasion, which could help her improve on her consistent placing form. Gascony wasn't suited by the heavy ground when last seen at Glorious Goodwood, and should be able to get back to his best today under a five pound claimer.

Next is a seven-furlong two-year-old fillies' novice (2.40). We have two newcomers here; Born To Bright, who wears a hood, and the expensive Lady Vanguard, who cost 320,000 guineas as a yearling, for George Scott. Calendar Girl is the filly she has to get past, who won on her debut in smart fashion at Newbury in July, but Epsom is a very different track and Lady Vanguard's trainer has the higher strike rate with juveniles in this context, so ought to be worth siding with.

Race three is a six-furlong handicap (3.15). There are just five runners here, but this is nonetheless a competitive race. Harry Eustace's Kisskodi completed a hat-trick earlier this season, and another good race is unlikely to be beyond him, especially with a claiming rider in the saddle again. Nordic Games has good course form, having placed a very close second at this track last time out, so could be involved again.

The fourth race is a mile and a quarter handicap (3.50). Letsbeatsepsis should have a chance, remaining on the same mark today as when second of 10 last time out, while Twilight Guest is back down to his last winning mark and could get back to the hat-trick winning ways of earlier this summer. He's a consistent type who should be capable of a decent result.

Second to last, race five is an extended mile handicap for three-year-olds (4.20). Jim Boyle's Play Me has come down two pounds in the handicap lately and now looks tempting, especially with a seven-pound claimer in the saddle. Though disappointing last time out at Lingfield, he is normally better and should be able to do his best work today. Coma Cluster similarly is at a winnable mark and should be at the sharp end.

Finally, the afternoon's racing concludes with a seven-furlong handicap (4.50). Revolutionise should be bang there, running off the same mark as last time when second over course and distance. Course and distance winner Marlay Park also should be able to run a good race on the same mark as a promising performance last time at Brighton. With Luke Catton's three pounds to boot, he could win this.

Epsom selections - Friday (via Sporting Life):

2.05 - Gascony

2.40 - Lady Vanguard

3.15 - Kisskodi

3.50 - Letsbeatsepsis

4.20 - Coma Cluster

4.50 - Marlay Park

Horses racing Image: Credit Paul. CC BY 2.0

Let your A level winners be creative says Epsom's Arts University

26 August 2025



Ahead of A-level results day and Clearing, University for the Creative Arts (UCA) has written an open letter to parents and carers asking them not to discourage their children from making the creative choice and ultimately pursuing their dreams this week.

UCA writes on behalf of the children that came before, those that didn't choose games over geography, marketing over medicine or animation over accounting due to pressure from their parents and carers, of which there are many examples posted on the online community, The Student Room. *"I'm honestly just doing linguistics for my parents. They expect me to get a 'good' degree, to get a secure job - they think working in the film industry won't get me anywhere."*

The University, which for nearly 170 years has delivered creative education, acknowledges it's only natural for parents and carers to feel uncertain when children say they want to pursue a creative subject. *"We understand the hopes and concerns that come with guiding children's higher education and subject choice. Parents and carers want the best for them - a secure future,"* says UCA's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Melanie Gray.

This is reinforced in UCAS' Project Next Generation report, which states parents want to guide their children towards the pathways that have the best capacity for earning and stability. As a result, almost half (48%) of children in the report, agreed that they feel pressure from parents to make 'good' decisions about their education.

UCA reassures in the letter that 'a creative choice is a career choice,' with the creative industries worth £124 billion a year to the UK economy and support more than 2.4 million jobs. Long-term, the sector is also part of the Government's modern Industrial Strategy – a 10-year plan backing the UK's strengths with ambitions for eight high-growth sectors, aiming to increase productivity and create jobs.

Professor Gray, adds: *"With this letter we're not reprimanding parents and carers, we're simply asking them to support their children and have confidence in them choosing what they love. We have seen time and time again, children not pursuing their creative dreams, which now more than ever, have a secure future."*

UCAS' report acknowledges parents and carers play a pivotal role in the crucial choices children make about their future. It also shows children's higher education choices are inspired by their passions. Support and reassurance, not pressure, is needed to empower children in their decision making.

Support ahead of A-level results day and Clearing is available on UCA's dedicated webpage, uca.ac.uk/clearing for parents and carers, as well as those wanting to make the creative choice. On Friday 15 and Saturday 16 August, the University also welcomes anyone to tour its campuses and ask staff and current students questions. For those not yet applied through Clearing, Staff will also make on-the-spot offers to those suitable.

Image: Student work by UCA BA Graphic Ryon Pattison

Keep our Valley Green say Langley Vale campaigners

26 August 2025



Campaigners in an Epsom village have hit out at proposals to build on "pristine farmland", warning the plans will destroy a cherished stretch of countryside on the edge of the Surrey Hills. The outline application covers more than five hectares of agricultural farm land at Langley Bottom Farm, adjacent to Langley Vale village. Developer Fairfax Aspire Ltd has envisioned the 5.2 hectare field on Epsom Downs for 110 new homes. Although the exact height, design and layout will be determined later, planning documents suggest the new houses will be predominantly two-storey to eaves.

Dubbed 'the valley', locals are baffled that the agricultural field could ever be considered as a grey belt. The land has been classed as 'low-quality land' that could be prioritised for development, but residents say the designation is nonsense. "[Grey belt should be] for scrappy old car parks, not pristine farmland," John Mumford of the Woodcote Epsom Residents Society and Save Langley Vale said. He pointed out the combine harvester in the field and explained it is still being used for agriculture. "We shouldn't be sacrificing the green belt for land for land-owning interests," he added. Fairfax Aspire Ltd stated in the application: "The site represents an opportunity for modest, sustainable development on the edge of the settlement boundary."

The proposed development site sits down the road from Epsom Derby race course and is part of a landscape known for its race horse culture and rich ecology. Matt Dunn, who grew up in Langley Vale, described how buses only visited hourly, and horse riding and jockey training were common pastimes in the close-knit community. He said: "This scheme is tacked on, not integrated into the village." Planning documents state most of the existing hedgerows and important trees will be retained and enhanced with native planting, with other features including new ecological improvements like wildlife corridors linking to the nearby woodland at The Warren. But campaigners say it is home to deer, badgers, and protected bird species like buzzards and skylarks, and that horse riders, dog walkers and ramblers make frequent use of the fields behind the village.

"It will completely destroy a much loved valley," Matt said. "Ecology mitigation doesn't mean anything if it doesn't change the wrongs and the impact on wildlife." The dispute comes amid national concerns over habitat loss — in England, the abundance of wildlife species has fallen by around 19 per cent since 1970. Matt accused the developer of trying to "whip up houses which don't meet local need," describing the affordable housing element as a "tick-boxing exercise". The 29-year-old explained that selling houses at 80 per cent of the average Epsom house price (£559k according to RightMove) does not make the homes remotely affordable.

Langley Vale currently has around 400 houses, and campaigners fear the development could swell its size by more than 20 per cent, straining the roads, utilities and services. A new access road would be created on Langley Vale Road to get

into the site, but residents warn this could exacerbate traffic issues in their rural community. Campaigners have also launched a petition against the development which has gained more than 1,000 signatures already. Mr Mumford has also set up a fundraiser to help pay for the campaign, gathering £3,700.

Planning documents state: "The opportunity exists for the creation of a high quality landscape and ecology led residential scheme to be provided in this sustainable location. The illustrative material demonstrates how a residential scheme, including new affordable homes, can be delivered without having undue impact on the site's immediate neighbours, the wider area or key landscape and ecological features. The site is available, sustainable and importantly, deliverable, and will link to Langley Vale and the wider area." The developer has been approached for further comment.

Related report:

110-Home Scheme at Langley Vale Sparks Green Belt Fears

Campaigners, Matt Dunn (left) and John Mumford (right), in front of the proposed development site. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

New Business Start-Up Surrey Programme

26 August 2025



Budding entrepreneurs and early-stage businesses across Surrey are set to receive a major boost with the launch of the Start-Up Surrey Programme, a dynamic new initiative funded by Surrey County Council and delivered by leading business support provider The IncuHive Group.

This pilot programme will offer free, tailored guidance and practical support to residents who are preparing to launch their own ventures, as well as businesses in their first year of operation.

It will guide founders step by step, with expert-led workshops, one-to-one mentoring, practical advice, and support from others on the same journey.

The programme is expected to engage a diverse range of businesses across Surrey and will cover key areas such as funding, marketing, finance, digital presence, and scaling strategies. 120 businesses are set to receive support in the next six months.

It's the latest initiative from the Council under its Business Surrey offer, which provides free accessible support to help businesses of all sizes to start, grow and thrive.

Matt Furniss, the Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, welcomed the launch, adding:

"Surrey has a wealth of untapped entrepreneurial talent, and this programme provides a much-needed platform to turn ideas into action. It aligns strongly with wider efforts to boost inclusive economic growth, support innovation, and build resilience into our local economy - all of which provides benefits to our people and communities."

George Scott-Welsh, CEO of The IncuHive Group, said:

"IncuHive is delighted to bring this initiative to life. We've seen first-hand how the right support, delivered at the right time, can completely change the trajectory of a business. We're not just helping people start businesses, we're helping them build viable, resilient ventures that can generate a real income and contribute to the local economy. We are thrilled to be working with Surrey County Council to bring hands-on support and real opportunities to Surrey's start-ups."

The Start-Up Surrey Programme is now open for registrations to all start-ups and businesses in their first year of trading across Surrey.

Participation in the Programme is free for businesses, as it is fully funded by Council via UK government Growth Hub funding.

Anyone interested is welcomed to register for the introductory webinar hosted by the IncuHive team on Wednesday August 27 from 11am to 12pm. Register via the Eventbrite event link.

For more information or to register for the programme, visit <https://incuhive.co.uk/acceleration-investment/business-surrey>.

Or you can contact the Business Surrey team via the website - <https://www.businesssurrey.co.uk/advice-and-support/business-support-form/>

IncuHive will deliver the new Startup Surrey programme for budding business founders

The IncuHive Group is a leading business support provider offering mentoring, funding guidance, flexible workspaces, and training across Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Surrey. Their hands-on, high-impact approach has helped hundreds of businesses grow, thrive, and succeed.

Business Surrey is a Surrey County Council initiative focused on economic growth, skills development, and entrepreneurial support to help businesses start, grow, and scale in the region. It's offer includes a Growth Hub service, which is funded by UK Government.

Silver musical lines under a cloudless Epsom sky

26 August 2025



On Sunday 10 August, under a radiant summer sky, the Epsom & Ewell Silver Band gave a free open-air concert in Rosebery Park. Families and friends gathered, bringing their own chairs or settling under marquees, enjoying ice creams, picnics, and the gentle warmth of the day. The relaxed, communal atmosphere felt quintessentially British—just the sort of setting the band seems to relish.

EESB competes in the First Section of the London & Southern Counties region, and is active within the Southern Counties Amateur Band Association (eesb.org.uk). Founded around 1910 as Banstead Silver Band, it has a rich heritage, including early rehearsal stories in barns and a legendary centenarian player, Tom Fiddimore, who helped sustain the band through decades. In July 2023, the experienced tenor-horn player and conductor Tariq Ahmed was appointed Musical Director. Originally from Lancashire, Tariq has an impressive background with championship bands and contest successes, including experience on BBC Radio 2, European tours, and national finals.

EESB's presentation was a masterclass in subtle harmonies and gorgeous arrangements. The ensemble gently wove together familiar melodies with rich brass textures.

The first half opened with San Lorenzo, a lyrical piece whose fluid lines invoked a serene Italian sunrise. Swingtime Religion brought a sprightly, jazz-tinged rhythm to the park. The Wichita Lineman was delivered with poignant phrasing, capturing the emotional core of Jimmy Webb's classic. In Concerto de Aranjuez, the Adagio's romantic guitar theme, eloquently rendered by brass, floated beautifully amid the greenery. The Spirit Within, a more modern piece imbued with introspection and warmth. Bui Doi carried a haunting quality, resonating with depth, while St Louis Blues March blended bluesy soul with marching energy. Let's Face the Music and Dance, the Irving Berlin standard, swung with effortless charm to close the half.

The second half began with Florentiner March, bright and ceremonial, restoring lively momentum. Ae Fond Kiss, Robert Burns' tender farewell, was exquisitely phrased. Salute to Sinatra offered a glitzy, nostalgic trip back to the Rat Pack era. With One Look from the musical Sunset Boulevard was dramatic and expressive, the brass almost singing the lyrics. Pinball Wizard brought energy and edge, while Song of the Night Sky was dreamy and atmospheric, ideal for a summer evening. Pastime with Good Company nodded to Elizabethan merriment, and the finale, You Can't Stop the Beat, soared energetically to bring the concert to a rousing close.

This concert showcased the band's mastery of nuance, from classical depth to modern zest, with arrangements that highlighted every section in balanced harmony. On a sunny August afternoon, amid picnics and cheerful chatter, the Epsom & Ewell Silver Band underlined its role not just as a brass ensemble, but as a focal point of community culture and joyful musical experience.

Thanks to Cllr Steven McCormick (RA Surrey and Woodcote and Langley) for arranging and the photo.

Garage Gives Ewell a Heart-Start

26 August 2025



A busy garage in Ewell that supports a prominent local charity now offers a rather special – and potentially life-saving – service.

Autotest MOT in Ruxley Lane recently celebrated its new car-servicing facility with an open day hosted by directors Stephen Hardie-East and Shelley Hofman, inviting customers, friends and neighbours. Guests enjoyed music, refreshments and a raffle, including a light-hearted competition to guess how many balloons were packed into a car. The event raised funds for the Epsom Medical Equipment Fund, a charity that since its launch in 1979 by Bess Harding has raised over £6 million to buy equipment for Epsom General Hospital that would not normally be funded by the National Health Service. Purchases have ranged from small items to major diagnostic machines.

As Autotest approaches its thirty-fifth year of trading, the charity has returned the gesture of support. It has donated a ZOLL brand defibrillator worth £2,300 to the garage. A defibrillator is a device that can deliver an electric shock to restart a person's heart in cardiac arrest. This model is designed for public use and gives clear spoken instructions, guiding an untrained person step-by-step through pad placement and giving real-time feedback on the quality of chest compressions. Bess Harding explained that it "verbally walks a rescuer through placing the pads and gives essential feedback on the quality of their compressions to give the best chance of surviving."

Stephen and Shelley, with Shelley being a qualified first-aider, said they were delighted to have the device on site and thanked the Epsom Medical Equipment Fund for providing it. The charity has also just purchased twenty-nine defibrillators for Epsom General Hospital.

Public access to defibrillators is seen nationally as a key factor in saving lives from cardiac arrest outside hospital. There are around 30,000 such incidents in the United Kingdom each year and fewer than ten per cent of people survive. Medical experts say the chances of survival more than double if a defibrillator is used quickly, ideally within five minutes, together with cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Each minute of delay can cut survival chances by up to ten per cent. Despite this, studies show that even when a defibrillator is located within 500 metres, it is only used in about one in ten cases, often because bystanders do not know where to find one or are uncertain how to operate it.

The UK's national database, known as The Circuit, maps the location of defibrillators so ambulance services can direct people to them during emergencies. There are now more than 70,000 devices registered, with a target of 100,000. Health charities estimate that if public awareness, training and willingness to use defibrillators were more widespread, an extra 1,000 lives could be saved in England each year.

In Epsom and Ewell, the borough council has worked with the Community Heartbeat Trust to install twelve public access defibrillators at locations including Ewell's Market Place, Horton Pharmacy and Ruxley Lane. The new unit at Autotest adds another publicly accessible location, well-placed in a busy part of the borough, and comes with the reassurance of staff familiar with first aid.

More information about EMEF on its website: emef.org.uk

Image: Bess Harding of EMEF gives defibrillator to Stephen Hardie-East of Autotest

Banned fan cheers on Epsom and Ewell FC from tree

26 August 2025



A lifelong supporter of Epsom & Ewell Football Club has taken to watching matches from a nearby tree after receiving

what he describes as an “unwarranted” lifetime ban from the club’s ground.

Richard Lambert, 58, has followed the ninth-tier side for nearly 44 years. The ban was imposed in January following a long-running series of disputes with the club’s committee.

Mr Lambert told the BBC he believes the suspension was triggered after he altered the name of his personal X (formerly Twitter) account to appear as if it were the club’s official account. He has been a frequent critic of the club’s management on social media and on his personal website, with some posts directed at individual committee members.

Since April, the BBC says it has approached Epsom & Ewell three times for details about the ban. The club has declined to discuss the matter beyond stating: “We have had a number of issues with this supporter over the years. We do not want to discuss this any further. The matter has been dealt with.”

A letter from the club to Mr Lambert, seen by the BBC, cites only a breach of a previous agreement over use of social media. It referred to an “indefinite” ban, but the club has since told the BBC it is now for life. Mr Lambert says he has not been officially informed of this change.

Mr Lambert, who first attended a match as a 15-year-old in 1981, has served as the club’s historian for two decades, producing statistical archives and match reports. “All I want to do is see my team play,” he said, “but I also want to see the culture at our club change towards valuing its supporters.”

Lifetime bans from football stadiums are rare and generally imposed only for serious offences or criminal acts, which is not alleged in this case. Clubs, however, are entitled to refuse entry to anyone without giving a reason.

The Football Supporters’ Association told the BBC it had attempted to mediate between Mr Lambert and the club but received no response from the club’s committee. “At non-league level, fans are the lifeblood of the game,” said the FSA’s Garreth Cummins. “In a situation like this, we don’t see that either side is winning.”

Mr Lambert initially watched games from outside the perimeter fence but says that after the club stationed security to move him on, he began climbing a tree for a better view. He ended last season 30ft up overlooking King George’s Field in Surbiton. This season, the Salts have returned to Leg O’Mutton Field in Cobham, sharing with Cobham FC, and Mr Lambert has found a lower tree with a full view of the pitch.

Founded in 1918 as Epsom Juniors, Epsom & Ewell’s greatest moment came in 1975 when they reached the inaugural FA Vase final at Wembley, losing 2-1 to Hoddesdon Town. Last season they lifted the Southern Combination Challenge Cup, defeating Abbey Rangers 1-0 in the final. The Salts averaged around 90 spectators at home league matches in 2024-25.

“If the ban stays in place for life,” Mr Lambert told the BBC, “then I’ll be climbing this tree for the rest of my life – or at least for as long as I’m physically able to.”

Richard Lambert sitting in a tree looking on to the pitch where Epsom & Ewell play, with his back to the camera and the pitch in the background

Epsom Mother and Daughter join British Army together

26 August 2025



A mother and daughter from Epsom have completed Army entry training within weeks of each other, marking the start of their respective military careers.

Sherene De Stadler, 40, will join the Army Reserve with the Grenadier Guards, while her daughter Chloe, 17, has graduated from the Army Foundation College in Harrogate.

Chloe was among 750 Junior Soldiers taking part in a parade at Harrogate to mark the end of months of basic training. The programme included military skills, fitness, education and a two-week battle camp and tactical exercise to prepare recruits for Army life.

Having completed phase one training, Chloe will now move on to trade training in her chosen specialism. She hopes to join the Army Air Corps as ground crew, aiming to work with Apache helicopters as part of the rear crew team.

She enlisted shortly after sitting her GCSEs at Epsom High School. “Joining the Army always interested me because of all it has to offer,” Chloe said. “I am grateful for the opportunities it will give my future career and the challenges I will need to overcome to get there.”

Over 5,000 family members attended the parade, including Sherene. “It felt amazing knowing my mum was in the audience, knowing what I’ve gone through to be on that parade square,” Chloe said. “It’s so nice to be able to talk to her about Army life because she understands and can relate to it. I hope my mum is as proud of me as I am of her.”

Sherene, who completed her own basic training weeks earlier, said: “There’s definitely been loads of tears from myself and her father today. Chloe has quit projects before when they’ve been hard, so I’m very proud of her for going through the challenges of Army training and enjoying it.”

Chloe fought to get time off to attend Sherene’s passing out parade earlier this year. “It’s very different from watching your daughter graduate from university,” Sherene said. “We’ve completed training so close together that we both have a unique mother-daughter bond that not many people get to have.”

Chloe’s advice to any young person considering the Army is: “Try your hardest and do not let other people get into your head.”

The Senior Inspecting Officer at the Harrogate parade was Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Roly Walker, with former England football manager Sir Gareth Southgate as guest of honour.

The Army Foundation College takes two cohorts of Junior Soldiers each year, offering either a 49-week course or a shorter 23-week course.

For more information, resources and how to join junior training at AFC Harrogate [click here](#).