



# Thames Water hopes £37m investment will end record sewer flooding

Thames Water has said it will spend £37m upgrading its Mole Valley network raising hopes it could spell the end of homes, gardens and rivers being flooded with sewage waste.

The private utility company came in for heavy criticism for the “damage it has inflicted” despite huge profits and shareholder payouts while its pipe network falls into disrepair during the latest scrutiny committee meeting at Mole Valley District Council.

However, it hopes investment projects in Dorking, Earlswood, and Horley will increase its ability to manage storm flows, treat more waste water, and prevent “effluent” flooding rivers and waterways.

The investment was welcomed as a step in the right direction but many at the meeting aired their disappointment with the firm for letting the situation get this bad.

Last year, Thames Water spent 13,101 hours pumping sewage into the River Mole and its tributaries according to new government data seen by the MP – an increase of 10.9 per cent despite there being less rain.

Speaking after the meeting, the Dorking and Horley MP, Chris Coghlan, described the record as “simply unacceptable” but has since had assurances from Thames Water and environmental regulators that “long overdue” upgrades were on the way

He said: “For years, the entire water industry has been poorly managed and woefully under-regulated.

“To expect hard-pressed customers to now pick up the tab for 35 years of under-investment by Thames Water, while the company continues to flood my constituents’ homes and gardens with disgusting sewage is shocking.

“The Government and Ofwat have a duty to hold the water companies to account”, he said, adding that the regulator needed to be replaced with a body that would “will make Thames water pay up for the damage it has inflicted.”

In Dorking, Thames Water is putting £16m into new storm tanks to treat incoming sewage and reduce dumping of untreated waste.

At its Earlswood site, just outside Mole Valley, it will increase treatment volumes from 340 to 440 litres per second, helping to prevent effluent going into the river – and what does will be of a higher quality.

Horley will benefit from upgrades to improve performance in wet weather.

Councillor Stephen Cooksey, leader of Mole Valley District Council told the meeting: “The question that flows through my mind is, although you can’t answer it tonight, is how as a responsible company you’ve allowed your infrastructure to get into such a dreadful condition?”

Thames Water’s Alice Keeping described the £37m as “a substantial amount of money that we are going to invest going forward”.

A Thames Water spokesperson said: “In 2024 parts of our region experienced some of the wettest months in 250 years. This overwhelmed our sewer network which resulted in diluted wastewater being released into rivers. While all storm discharges are unacceptable, the sewage systems were designed in this way to prevent sewage backing up into people’s homes.

“Over the next five years we will deliver a record amount of investment across our network.

“We continue to execute our plans to upgrade over 250 of our storm overflows to reduce the number of storm discharges including at our sites in Crawley and Horley.

Esher Mill Road overflow sewage site (image Chris Caulfield)

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## New Surrey police division HQ plans

Plans for a new Surrey Police headquarters have been put forward for its eastern division in Leatherhead.

The force said it hopes to develop a “bespoke and permanent” HQ on the former Electrical Research Association and Cobham Industries site. An application has also been put forward to develop an area of the Cleeve Road site into affordable housing.



After discovering Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in Reigate Police Station in September 2023, the division temporarily moved to the old Surrey Fire & Rescue Services HQ at Wray Park in Reigate.

Deputy Chief Constable Nev Kemp said the planning application is a “key step in our journey” to building a permanent location for police operations in East Surrey. He said the force has been focusing on finding a site that will help staff and officers to investigate and prevent crime and keep people safe.

Surrey Police bought the former Electrical Research Association (ERA) and Cobham Industries site on Cleeve Road in 2018 for nearly £20.5m, aiming to develop a new, purpose-built headquarters from the ground up. But by 2021 the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Surrey Police Chief Officer team decided to scrap the idea and look to Mount Browne, in Guildford, and redevelop the existing HQ.

The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) revealed earlier this year that Surrey Police spent nearly £3 million, on top of the £20.5m used to buy the Leatherhead site, on failed plans to move its headquarters as part of disastrous money-saving efforts. Much of the money used was spent on building designs and surveys for the project which the Police and Crime Commissioner said was directly transferable to the Mount Browne redevelopment project.

The force said it had held public meetings with local residents, businesses, councillors, and community group representatives to share initial plans and gather feedback. The force is also working closely with key stakeholders in the community, including Mole Valley District Council.

Related report:

[Surrey police to move to Epsom and Ewell constituency](#)

[Cleeve Road premises bought by Surrey Police. Google Street View](#)

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## New priorities for Surrey Police?

Going “back to basics” is the key part of Surrey Police’s priorities under new plans announced by the county’s Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

Surrey’s new Police and Crime plan launched on April 4 includes ambitions to address the issues affecting people’s daily lives as well as focus on safeguarding vulnerable children and adults. Seeking to strengthen community trust, the plan details that every neighbourhood will have a dedicated police officer or PCSO with clear contact details.

PCC Lisa Townsend said the new approach will “concentrate on what our policing teams do best – fighting crime in our local communities, getting tough on offenders and protecting people.”

The plan, which runs to 2028, names violence against women and girls, the “growing scourge of shoplifting” along with rural offences and antisocial behaviour as priorities to deal with regionally. Boosting police morale and creating a supporting workplace culture is also listed as a prime concern to retaining officers in Surrey.

“I want Surrey Police to focus on tackling those crimes that blight our local communities, while also taking persistent offenders off our streets,” Ms Townsend said. “I promised that we would return to a ‘back to basics’ approach to policing, and this pledge forms the cornerstone of my Police and Crime Plan.”

The “back to basics” approach focuses on five crucial elements:

- Getting the fundamentals right – preventing crime, bringing offenders to justice swiftly, and tackling the issues that concern residents most.
- Protecting vulnerable people in Surrey – from children and young people, to elderly residents, rural communities and those in a mental health crisis
- Preventing violence against women and girls – helping women and girls in Surrey both be safe and feel safe whether in public or private
- Strengthening safe and resilient communities – where people feel listened to, feel a visible police presence and confident issues will be resolved



- Fostering integrity, accountability and wellbeing in policing –creating a transparent and supportive workplace culture, aiming to improve officer wellbeing and reduce staff turnover

Safer roads have been left out as a priority from this police and crime plan, much to the dismay of Surrey county councillors at a meeting earlier this year. They slammed the plan for having a lack of objective targets for many of the measures.

However, the new plan does include addressing gaps in road safety, finding local initiatives and to support Surrey County Council's vision to reduce and eliminate deaths and serious injuries on the road.

Early intervention efforts are also set to include tackling knife related-crime, working with schools and community groups to educate young people about the nature and consequences of serious crimes.

Efforts to tackle violence against women and girls include building public confidence in the police's ability to investigate VAWG, but it does not specifically outline how. Plans also detail ensuring survivor voices and the needs of families of perpetrators are heard to understand experiences and challenges.

The plan also includes measures such as using data and intelligence to understand crime trends and find priority areas to keep neighbourhoods safe. Community and stakeholder collaboration will play a more active and important role over the next five years and the PCC hopes to create lasting solutions.

Tim De Meyer, the county's Chief Police Constable said: "There is much that Surrey Police and the PCC can do with our partners to build safe and resilient communities – especially in respect of our fight against pernicious crimes such as shoplifting.

"My meetings with the public have shown that theft, anti-social behaviour and drug abuse trouble people a great deal. I believe that this Plan, allied with that of the Force, will help us redouble our efforts to ensure that Surrey Police applies all its neighbourhood policing experience to combat these issues."

Local engagement has formed much of the basis of the new priorities with residents, community groups, business leaders and victims' services consulted over the last autumn and winter.

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## News and events from Surrey History Centre

### Surrey Photographers: A Day of Talks

Join the **Surrey Local History Committee** for a fascinating day of illustrated talks on the history of photography in Surrey. Experts will explore a variety of themes:

- **Keith Harding**: *Victorian Dorking in photographs by Walter Rose & John Chaplin*
- **Nigel Balchin**: *Picture postcards and local history*
- **Jane Lewis and Jill Hyams** (Surrey History Centre): *Portrait of a Surrey town between the wars: the photographic archive of Sidney Francis*
- **Julian Pooley** (Surrey History Centre): *Patient Portraits from Surrey Hospitals, 1850-1980*
- **Chris Shephard**: *Farnham's war caught by the camera? Photographs that avoided the censor*

There will also be a display of Surrey photographs from the archive for attendees to explore.

### Event Details

**Location:** Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking GU21 6ND

**Date and Time:** Saturday 26 April, 9.55am to 4.15pm

**Tickets:** £18 if booked online via the Surrey Archaeological Society website. £20 on the day (cash only).

[Sign up »](#)



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## VE Day 80 Display

Visit our foyer display from early May to commemorate the **80th anniversary of VE Day**. Featuring photographs, records, and stories from Surrey's VE Day celebrations in **1945, 1995, 2005, 2015, and 2020**, the display highlights personal memories from those who experienced the historic day.

You can also discover records to help trace family members who served in WWII.

All the latest news from the Surrey History Centre [HERE](#)

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## Baroque to Modern concert by Epsom Chamber Choir

**Epsom & Ewell is fortunate to have many excellent music and drama groups to join, learn and perform with, and for audiences to enjoy old favourites or explore something unfamiliar and perhaps a bit challenging.**

This lovely concert by Epsom Chamber Choir gave us contrasting styles from the 17th, 18th, 20th and 21st centuries, all with a meditative quality. Good programme notes were helpful.

In the fantastic acoustic of St. Martin's Church one was immersed in the spacious depths of the sounds; the intensity produced several spine-tingling moments for me.

The choir opened with *I was glad when they said unto me* – not the familiar setting used at King Charles' coronation in 2023 (which is by Parry) but one written by Henry Purcell for the coronation of James II in 1685. It sets off in a joyful dance. The top part floated over the others in a plea for peace and it drew to an exultant finish in a wish for *world without end*.

Purcell's style is perhaps less familiar to us today than Bach's, so it was great to hear three more pieces which showed his skill in dramatic and plangent composition, and the choir's skill in their performance. My notes on *Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts* and *Hear my prayer, O Lord say sublime and understated intense anguish* – sounds which produced more delightful shivers up the spine.

Then to compare them with Bach across four pieces – in these there were stately dance rhythms and delicacy as befitted some of the words. *Fürchte dich nicht* (Do not fear, I am near you), probably written for a funeral (it's a pity we don't know who commissioned the work), seemed to demonstrate all the complexities which Bach could write in a short piece. I hadn't heard this before, but it did not sound an easy sing!

In Arvo Pärt's *The Deer's Cry*, written in 2008, the dynamics, sonority and breath were beautifully controlled in some very exposed writing, then the very long lines of John Tavener's *Funeral Ikos* were effortlessly phrased.

Three short modern pieces followed – John Tavener's *A Hymn to the Mother of God*, James Macmillan's *A Child's Prayer* (dedicated to the 16 children and their teacher who were killed at Dunblane in March 1996), and Eric Whitacre's *Lux Aurumque* (*Light and Gold*, which was introduced as representing light falling through stained glass) – they were full of space, profound, resonant and uplifting.

In the baroque pieces the choir of just over 30 singers had a light accompaniment on chamber organ and cello. Poppy Walshaw, the cellist, also played three movements from the Bach cello suites. This was more music to get lost inside, the two dances leading us into a celebration of life in the joyous *Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf* (*The spirit comes to help our weakness*) to conclude a most enjoyable evening.

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### Upcoming Events



The choir is holding a **Come & Sing! Haydn's *The Creation* on Saturday 10th May, 1.30-5pm**, at **St. Martin's Junior School, Ashley Road KT18 7AD**  
(£10, students £5, under 18s free – includes music hire and light refreshments).

Their next concert, '**The Food of Love**', is a choral tapestry ranging from 16th-century fun, through *West Side Story*, *I Got Rhythm* and *Summertime*, to Billy Joel –  
**Saturday 28th June, 7.30pm, St. Martin's Church, Epsom KT17 4PX.**

Anita Littler

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## Miller hat-trick saves Epsom and Ewell FC

Spelthorne Sports 1-4 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Saturday 29th March.

It's like London buses; you wait eight matches for a win and then along come two at once! The same story could be applied to our little winger Luke Miller, who had scored 36 goals for our club previously, but not a single one since September, and yet his well taken second half hat trick was enough to break a fairly weak Spelthorne resistance as we won at the Sports Club by four goals to one, confirming our mathematical escape from relegation this season.

Maybe unsurprisingly, we stuck with an unchanged starting eleven for our meeting with the club at the foot of the League in the hope that momentum gained in Tuesday's win over Corinthian-Casuals would continue. Going into this contest we knew that a win would guarantee our survival at Step Five for 2025/26, but anything less would leave us looking over our shoulders at the fast improving Balham team.

We got off to a fine start at the Spelthorne Sports Club; a venue we have never lost at in five previous visits, and were ahead as early as the seventh minute after some early pressure led to the ball being passed around on the edge of the Spelthorne Sports penalty area and out of nowhere, Brendan Murphy-McVey struck a shot across home keeper Aaron Etukado with the outside of his left foot. It was a cultured and clinical finish and was also our new man's first goal for the club, having been unfortunate when hitting the post four days previously.

The home side were forced into an early substitution due to injury and after Jason Bloor was brought down on the edge of the area, Murphy-McVey's strike forced Etukado into a low save. Bloor sent a strike over the bar from distance and Toby Young headed wide from a deep Miller free kick. It was interesting to see the Spelthorne number ten Glenn Yala stumble in the penalty area and then receive a yellow card for simulation which looked harsh, before a card was issued in the direction of our bench for something that was said. Just before half time Ethan Nelson-Roberts saw his shot take a heavy deflection wide and from the corner Anthony Nazareth headed wide at the far post.

As the players went off at half time there was only really one team in it, but a substitution at the break worked instantly as Oliver Jovanovic came on and with just 20 seconds having elapsed, he tried his luck with the breeze now in his favour and it flew right into the top corner, leaving Sami Nabbad helpless.

A week or two ago this might have caused us to wobble, but the home side rarely challenged and we soon picked up where we had left off in the first half. There was time to see Craig Dundas trying a cheeky throw in off the back of a retreating opponent in an attempt to get the ball straight back, but he was pulled up for the foul throw! However, it didn't take much time before we restored our lead and it arguably came from an unlikely source. Miller had missed three good opportunities against Casuals on Tuesday and hadn't troubled the scorers for a few months, but this time he was far more clinical and when he ran on to Ethan Brazier's great pass over the top of a static defence, he ran in on goal before cheekily flicking the ball, again with the outside of his foot like Murphy-McVey had, to send the ball beyond Etukado's left hand and into the far corner of the net in the 64th minute.

We then posed a tricky problem for the referee when substitute Kionte Gillfillian-Waul made good ground on the left before colliding with the keeper. It wasn't clear to see who was at fault here, but despite our appeals, the man in black waved away the penalty appeals. Again though, it didn't matter as we made the game safe in the 80th minute. This time Gillfillian-Waul did well down the right flank and his pull back enabled Adam Green to strike a low shot at goal from just outside the area. Etukado got down to make the save, but couldn't hold on and Miller was there at the far post to firstly win the ball off a defender before tucking it in from a narrow angle just a couple of yards out.

Etukado was badly injured in making the save and required treatment for a lower leg injury before being replaced in some pain. This required the home side to throw in an outfield player and as they had used all their substitutes by then, they were also down



to ten men as a result. I thought the same was going to happen to our Captain Green in the 89th minute after he needed treatment, as we had also used our subs by then, but he recovered to rejoin the action and Miller wrapped things up in the third minute of injury time with a cheeky lob from an angle, only twelve yards out, that went in off the far post to give him his third hat trick in Epsom colours, and his first one away from home after registering triples against Mile Oak and Billingshurst, both at our temporary home ground of Fetcham Grove in 2021/22.

Spelthorne will now take a season or more out in Division One of the Combined Counties League, having fallen away quite badly this season, while Corinthian-Casuals will surely dispense of their Manager at season's end having just about survived at this level, when they will have been hoping to bounce straight back. What I will say in our favour is that these two wins were pivotal and you can only beat who is in front of you. We'll get a better idea of whether we have really turned the corner on Tuesday against in-form Balham, but either way, assessing the performance is not really important right now; it was all about the points, and as it was at the end of last season we have made it count just when we needed to. The same could also be applied to Miller, who now jumps five places on our Club Hall of Fame list to 42nd after not moving for such a long time. I think he would agree, it was overdue!

Epsom & Ewell: Sami Nabbad, Ethan Brazier, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Adam Green (c), Toby Young, Anthony Nazareth, Luke Miller, Niall Stillwell, Craig Dundas, Brendan Murphy-McVey, Jason Bloor

Subs: Kionte Gillfillian-Waul for Stillwell (63), Ali Fofahan for Bloor (75), Jack Torbett for Murphy-McVey (83), Stefan Aiwone for Nelson-Roberts (85), Nicolas Bostan for Brazier (85)

Report Source: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk)

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## Surrey Uni leads microbe recycling of lithium batteries

A microbial electrochemical technology capable of recovering 90-95% of lithium from spent lithium-ion batteries has been developed by scientists at the University of Surrey.

The breakthrough offers a more sustainable and cost-effective alternative to conventional recovery methods and could be expanded to reclaim other valuable battery metals, like cobalt.

Funded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), the BioElectrochemical Lithium rEcoVery (BELIEVE) project set out to tackle one of the biggest challenges in lithium-ion battery recycling - reducing the environmental and economic costs.

Professor Claudio Avignone Rossa, Professor of Systems Microbiology at the University of Surrey and principal investigator on the project, said:

"Lithium-ion batteries power so much of our modern technology, from phones to electric vehicles, but current recycling processes remain energy-intensive, costly and inefficient. Our goal was to develop a bioelectrochemical system (BES) that uses microbial electrochemical technology to extract high-purity lithium from used batteries - which is currently very difficult to do."

Traditional methods recover small amounts of lithium, sometimes as little as 5%, while more advanced techniques achieve higher yields but rely on corrosive chemicals.

Professor Jhuma Sadhukhan, Professor of Engineering and Sustainability at the University of Surrey and co-lead on the project said:

"This project is timely due to stringent legislation for material security, particularly tech-metals like lithium. With this respect, extraction-precipitation, electrosynthesis and crystallisation have been tried to recover lithium from brines; however, the methods have posed specific challenges, including low recovery of lithium compounds.

"Biotechnology-based biorefining is needed to close the LIB loop and thereby improve product grades and recovery rates, process robustness, social justice, economic returns, health, safety, environment and legislation. In this research, we optimised a biological system to recover high purity lithium from industrial black mass, a used lithium-ion battery material after thermal and mechanical processing, separating aluminium and iron."

Dr Siddharth Gadkari, Lecturer in Chemical Engineering at the University of Surrey and co-lead on the project, said:

"By harnessing specially selected microorganisms to transfer electrons and extract lithium, we have developed a cleaner, more





sustainable approach that dramatically reduces reliance on harmful chemicals.

“Our next steps will focus on proposals to expand the technology to recover and separate all valuable metals from batteries, including high-value cobalt, nickel and manganese. While challenging, this is a crucial step toward establishing a truly circular battery economy.”

Developing a scalable process that efficiently recovers lithium, cobalt and other valuable metals will not only reduce waste but also lessen dependence on environmentally damaging mining practices.

It also closely aligns with EU Green Deal 2020 regulations, which aim for a 65% recycling efficiency for lithium-ion batteries and a 70% material recovery rate for lithium by 2030. Similar regulations are anticipated in the UK, underscoring the significance of the BELIEVE project's contributions to sustainable technology and resource management.

The team now plans to put forward new proposes to explore how they can recover all metals from lithium-ion batteries.

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## **Notice regarding RAWLINSON & HUNTER LIFE & ASSURANCE PENSION FUND**

### **NOTICE UNDER SECTION 27 TRUSTEE ACT 1925**

To members and others claiming a right to benefits under the Rawlinson & Hunter Life & Assurance Pension Fund (the Scheme).

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 27 of the Trustee Act 1925 that the Trustees of the Scheme have commenced the process of winding-up the Scheme (commenced wind up on 1 April 2025).

The Trustees wish to trace anyone, including former employees (whether full-time or part-time) of Rawlinson & Hunter LLP (“the Firm”) or their spouse or dependant who believe that they have a claim against the Scheme or an entitlement or interest in the Scheme and have not heard from the Trustees recently.

If you think that you have a claim, entitlement or interest in the Scheme please write with full details of your claim, interest or entitlement including your full name, address, National Insurance Number, date of birth, dates of employment with either of the Companies and any relevant papers to:

The Trustees of the Rawlinson & Hunter Life & Assurance Pension Fund

c/o Claire Petzer

Cartwright Benefit Consultants Limited

Marlborough House

Victoria Road South Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1LN

Email: [claire.petzer@cartwright.co.uk](mailto:claire.petzer@cartwright.co.uk)

All claims must be made by 1 June 2025 so they may be considered by the Trustees before the Scheme is wound up.

After that date, the Trustees will commence the distribution of the Scheme's assets process, as part of the winding-up of the Scheme, to provide benefits for its members and beneficiaries, having regard only to the claims, entitlements and interests of which they have prior notice. The Trustees will not be liable to or in respect of any person whose claim, entitlement or interest have not been notified.

Any individuals who have already been contacted by the Trustees about the matters above should not respond to this notice as the Trustees already have details of their claims and entitlements.

For and on behalf of the Trustees of the Rawlinson & Hunter Life & Assurance Pension Fund 1 April 2025

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# RA councillor replaces Independent member as scrutiny row erupts at Epsom Town Hall

A stormy Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council on Thursday 27 March has ignited a political row, as Councillor **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch) controversially replaced Councillor **Alex Coley** (Independent Ruxley) on the committee. The change, made by the ruling Residents Association group, prompted accusations of “gerrymandering” and “Trumpian politics” from opposition members, particularly Labour Councillor **Chris Ames** (Labour).

The chair of the committee, Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley), presided over what quickly became a fractious meeting, with procedural disputes dominating its early minutes. The substitution of Cllr Coley – a former Residents Association member who resigned from the group and now sits as part of a two-member independent group – triggered a fierce exchange over the legality and transparency of the move.

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## “Nonsense on stilts”: Labour mounts strong objection

Rising on a point of order almost immediately, Cllr Chris Ames condemned the replacement as illegitimate:

“A member of the committee who was appointed by full council last year... has been excluded from attendance by diktat from the Residents Association... It’s a gross example of gerrymandering by the administration, by a Residents Association clique that will sink to any depths to gain revenge on the former member.”

Cllr Ames declared that no constitutional rule allowed for such a substitution, emphasising that committee membership was determined by full council, not party whips. He went on to challenge the very presence of Cllr Leach at the meeting, describing it as: “The worst kind of gerrymandering... resorting to Trumpian politics... shocking, absolutely shocking.”

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## Chair defends decision with constitutional reference

Cllr McCormick responded by reading from Appendix 5 of the Council Procedure Rules (CPR 15.4), arguing that: “A member of a committee... may designate as their substitute another councillor... The substitution happened by the leader of the RA group earlier today.” He added: “This is not to be debated... If you want to take it up with the monitoring officer, then please do.”

Despite Cllr Ames’s repeated interventions, the chair refused further discussion, insisting that proper constitutional advice had been followed.

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## Legal officer backs the administration

Cllr **James Lawrence** (Lib Dem College) attempted to elicit further legal clarity, but the deputy monitoring officer succinctly backed the chair: “I’ve got nothing further to add to what the monitoring officer has provided today.”

That led Cllr Ames to vent: “You have no explanation as to why a member of this committee who was appointed by council has been excluded from this committee.” He warned that the substitution would “nullify the whole proceedings”

Despite the protest, the meeting proceeded with Cllr Leach continuing in place.

Epsom and Ewell Times contacted Cllr Coley after the meeting and he said: “I did not request a substitute for either the meeting of S&R [strategy and resources committee] on the 25th March or A&S [Audit and Scrutiny committee] on the 27th March. Neither was I told that I would be substituted. I was however provided with a legal steer by the Council’s Monitoring Officer in which it was anticipated that the RA Group Leader might substitute me as the seat was allocated to that political group.”

“My reflection is that there seems to be a fear of robust scrutiny happening in committee meetings. Training on committee procedure is almost non-existent, with a lack of confidence and understanding creating a fait accompli when reports are brought to committee. It is my understanding that smaller opposition groups will be blocked from oversight of strategic financial decisions





in the near future.” He added: “This bodes very poorly for the governance of the Council at such a critical time, with Local Government Reorganisation, a multi-million pound Town Hall move and an expected deficit in the Council’s finances in 2026.”

The relevant words of the rule are: “A member of a committee may..... designate as their substitute another councillor. .... The nominating member, Leader / Chair of their Group, or Deputy Leader / Chair of their Group, shall inform the Democratic Services Manager of the substitute in writing prior to the meeting in question.”

There appears to be no rule allowing for any person other than the councillor himself or herself to designate a substitute.

Cllr Alex Coley and recently resigned group leader of the Liberal Democrats, Cllr **Julie Morris** (College), have formed a new 2 member Independent Group. The new Group pledges to allow its members freedom to vote and speak at Council independently from any “group position”.

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## Complaints report:

Following the dramatic opening, the committee did manage to turn to the rest of its business, including a review of council complaints between April and December 2024.

Members noted the learning from complaints data. Operational Services were responsible for 57% of complaints, mainly about refuse collection, although this was a 19.5% decrease compared to the previous year.

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## Treasury and transparency

The committee also received the Financial Strategy Advisory Group’s report on treasury management. There were no contentious issues here, and the recommendation to note the annual report passed unanimously.

But concerns over transparency re-emerged during discussion of previous minutes, particularly relating to responses to the external audit. Lib Dem Cllr James Lawrence criticised omissions in how verbal statements were recorded:

“If I’m looking at the minutes and I didn’t sit at the committee... that doesn’t tell me anything that adds to the debate.”

He also challenged the failure to record examples he had raised regarding “a failure to be transparent” in council decisions.

Cllr Ames returned to the theme, questioning why statements by officers in a previous meeting were vague or misrepresented. He called for: “An accurate description of what was said last time... because that is quite an important thing.”

Director of Corporate Services acknowledged this and promised to amend the minutes for accuracy.

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## RIPA and policy clarity

In the RIPA (Regulatory and Investigatory Powers Act) annual report the officer was candid:

“This is a report we’re obliged to bring to you every year to tell you about any covert surveillance... and we haven’t done any.”

The Council had nonetheless updated its surveillance policy after external inspection. The chair added that the report would be shared with community safety stakeholders to ensure open oversight.

Cllr Lawrence pointed out that a senior officer’s name in the report was “to be confirmed,” and officers clarified it was awaiting the arrival of a successor to Mr Sebastian.

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## Closing with caution

The meeting concluded with a subdued atmosphere after its turbulent beginning. No public questions had been submitted, and most agenda items passed without dissent.



But the confrontation over Cllr Coley's removal – and the unresolved questions about process, transparency, and political fairness – are unlikely to fade quietly.

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## Commentary

The drama surrounding Cllr Coley's substitution is more than a procedural quibble. It raises fundamental concerns about how power is exercised by the ruling RA group. When committee appointments, made by full council, are seemingly overridden without transparent explanation, the spectre of executive overreach looms.

Cllr McCormick's constitutional cover seemed dubious at best and the tone and timing of the move – coming after Coley's defection from the RA – understandably fuel suspicions of retaliation. The refusal to debate or justify the decision in open session further deepens the sense of opacity.

This episode may yet prompt a broader review of how Epsom and Ewell's committees are constituted, and how scrutiny can be safeguarded from political manipulation.

Until then, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee risks becoming the subject of its own audit.

Image: Audit and Scrutiny Committee – Epsom and Ewell Borough Council YouTube channel.

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## Epsom & Ewell athletics legend remembered

### Remembering Don Turner: A Legend in Local Athletics

Epsom and Ewell's athletics community is mourning the loss of **Don Turner**, who passed away on Sunday, 9 March. A dedicated member of **Epsom and Ewell Harriers** for an incredible 70 years, Don was not only an accomplished athlete but also a respected official and administrator who left an indelible mark on the sport, both locally and nationally.

Don's career in athletics was nothing short of remarkable. An international-standard distance runner, he completed 65 marathons, but his true talent shone in even longer races. He broke the world record for a six-hour track run in challenging conditions at Stompond Lane, won the grueling Isle of Man TT course race twice, and was part of a Surrey trio who dominated the 1962 Comrades Marathon in South Africa, finishing within the top four.

His dedication to the sport extended far beyond competing. Don was a pillar of athletics officiating, holding key roles within Epsom and Ewell Harriers, Surrey Athletics, the South of England AA, and South of the Thames Cross Country Association. His expertise in timekeeping was widely recognized, and he became a mentor to many officials in the region.

A true pioneer in race technology, Don played a crucial role in introducing photofinish techniques in an era when timing relied on manual stopwatches and wet film processing. He was a key figure in international athletics, including officiating at the prestigious Crystal Palace events and working with Seiko at the Barcelona Olympics test event in 1991.

Perhaps one of his most well-known contributions was his involvement in the founding of the London Marathon in 1981, working alongside Chris Brasher and John Disley to organize the race's finish and timekeeping. Yet, despite these high-profile roles, Don remained dedicated to grassroots athletics. Well into his 80s, he could be found officiating at local youth competitions, including the Ebbisham League at Ewell Track.

**Helen Maguire**, MP for Epsom and Ewell and an Epsom and Ewell Harriers runner, paid tribute to Don's immense contribution:

"Don officiated in many a race I've taken part in during my 14 years running for Epsom & Ewell Harriers. Don also helped start the London Marathon alongside Chris Brasher in 1981. He lived in Stoneleigh. His contribution to the sport of running has been enormous and he will not be forgotten. Thanks, Don, for everything you have done for the sport."

### A Club with a Rich Heritage

Don Turner's legacy will live on through Epsom and Ewell Harriers, one of the oldest and most successful athletics clubs in Surrey. With a membership of approximately 250 athletes of all ages and abilities, the club competes in a range of track and field, cross country, and road running events at regional, national, and even international levels.

The club's facilities include a six-lane track and provisions for high jump, long jump, pole vault, hammer, discus, and javelin



training. It is a strong competitor in the Surrey Cross Country leagues, Area Cross Country Championships, and road running events. Additionally, the club actively supports and encourages coaching and officiating qualifications among its members.

Epsom and Ewell Harriers also play a vital role in the local running community, including their well-established link with Nonsuch parkrun, where they frequently provide volunteer support. As a registered charity (number 1187959), the club continues to promote athletics and nurture future generations of athletes.

Don Turner's passing marks the end of an era for Epsom and Ewell athletics. He will be remembered not just for his achievements and contributions but for his unwavering passion and generosity in supporting the sport at every level. The athletics community will deeply miss him, but his legacy will continue to inspire for years to come.

Image courtesy England Athletics