

## Anyone for free Summer tennis in Epsom and Ewell?

25 March 2025



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will provide free morning tennis sessions in all council-owned tennis courts across the borough this summer, between 22 July and 29 August 2025. The decision, made by the Environment Committee last week, follows a similar initiative which took place last year. In addition to the summer program, starting April 1 residents can enjoy free Sunday morning sessions at Gibraltar and Poole Road Recreation Grounds. The council already offers two hours of free, bookable tennis sessions at courts every weekend throughout the year.

Epsom & Ewell moved to a pay-to-play model for tennis last year. The scheme aims to ensure that council tennis courts are well-maintained as well as providing funding for future improvements. Maintenance carried out so far includes clearing and treating all courts for moss; improved signage; new court-side benches at Poole Road and Auriol Park; and installing windbreakers at Court Recreation Ground, Gibraltar Recreation Ground and Poole Road. New laser line marking at Alexandra Park will take place later this year.

Councillor Liz Frost, Chair of the Environment Committee, commented: “We were really pleased with how well received the free tennis sessions were last summer and we’re very happy to be able to offer them again. They provide a great opportunity to give a tennis a try for free – whether you are a complete beginner, haven’t played for a few years, or just want to get some extra practise in.

“I hope residents will take advantage of the various free sessions on offer now and this summer. Booking details are available on the council’s website.”

Court sessions are available to book online 24 hours a day on the ClubSpark website, and paid coaching sessions are also available to book at Court Recreation Ground, Alexandra Park and Auriol Park: Find & book a tennis court near you | LTA.

Free summer tennis sessions are available up to midday (12 noon) from 22 July 2025 to 29 August 2025.

To take advantage of the free tennis offer, individuals must first register with ClubSpark and then use the platform to book their free sessions.

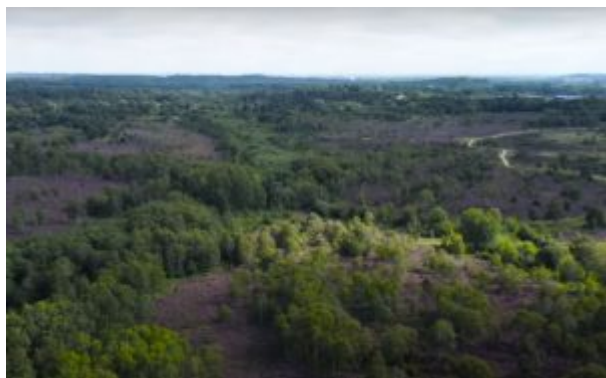
In addition to the free morning sessions available in the summer, free sessions are available year-round at the following times:

- Alexandra Park
  - Saturday: 9am-10am
  - Saturday: 10am-11am, this session is run by a coach or volunteer
- Auriol Park
  - Saturday: 9am-10am
  - Saturday: 10am-11am, this session is run by a coach or volunteer
- Court Recreation Ground
  - Saturday: 10am - 11am
  - Sunday: 10am-11am, this session is run by a coach or volunteer
- Gibraltar Recreation Ground
  - Saturday: 9am - 11am
  - Sunday: 9am - 11am
- Poole Road
  - Saturday: 9am - 11am
  - Sunday: 9am - 11am

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## Surrey County new land management framework

25 March 2025



Surrey County Council has launched a new Land Management Framework, setting out best practice guidelines for managing its own land as well as striving to aspire other landowners and stakeholders to adopt and deliver similar approaches. The new framework aims to ensure Surrey’s countryside is managed in a way that maximises its ecological, educational, social and economic value for the benefit of generations to come.

Like other counties, Surrey’s natural environment is under unprecedented pressure from climate change, biodiversity loss, and increasing demands on land use. The new framework provides principles and policies to guide evidence-based decisions, manage risks, and seize opportunities.

The county council owns and manages 10,000 acres of Surrey’s countryside and has a duty to manage its own land responsibly and sustainably. By implementing the new Land Management Framework, Surrey County Council will lead by example, inspiring other landowners and stakeholders to adopt sustainable land management practices.

**Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for the Environment comments:** “*The council’s ambition is to act dynamically to ensure the future sustainability of our land-based assets, both financial and environmental, through embedding nature-based solutions, community action, and new technology into*

our land management and decision-making.

*“The county’s countryside and water bodies offer numerous benefits, including recreation, wellbeing, livelihoods, food production, wildlife habitats, and community cohesion.*

*“Our land will be more resilient to economic and environmental shocks and climate change, support growing biodiversity, and have strong local community engagement and ownership.”*

Surrey’s new Land Management Framework is timely as Government has recently launched a national conversation about land use, encouraging feedback to a consultation that will inform the development of a national Land Use Framework later this year.

Read more about Surrey’s framework by visiting our website: **Land Management Framework - principles and policies - Surrey County Council.**

## Epsom break Weybridge Reeds

25 March 2025



**Reeds Weybridge 28 Sutton & Epsom RFC 33.** Saturday 22nd March.

The denouement of the campaign is rather lacking in a crescendo this season. This was the penultimate Saturday and it will be followed by yet another tedious blank Saturday. No doubt the boffins would argue that clubs need a rest before the frantic finale.

When these two teams met in December the nation was mopping up after Storm Darragh and everyone was grateful to avoid a postponement. A trio of Sutton tries edged out the visitors in a keenly contested match that ended 17-11. With Sutton lying fifth in the table and Reeds only a place below, expectations were for another even encounter. The crowd was not disappointed as Sutton & Epsom edged a game of fluctuating fortunes by 33-28.

Despite an ominous roll of thunder whilst the teams warmed up, the match was played on a dry afternoon on a very firm surface. The Whiteley Village location has arguably the most significantly advantageous slope in the league. Sutton kicked off with the advantage not only of topography but also the breeze.

The visitors started well, dominating possession in the opposition 22, running through their patterns. After a couple of penalties the pressure told as prop Callum Gibson forced his way over in the third minute for the opening try. Freddy Bunting converted for a 7-0 lead.

Reeds immediately illustrated the attacking potential of their illustrious back division as they ran back a kick and won a penalty. The chance to get on the scoreboard after winning the line out was squandered by a poor pass as the low ball was kicked through and a grateful S&E touched down for a drop out.

Five minutes later that attacking threat bore fruit with a sumptuous score from 40 metres out. Matt Stevenson was put into space by an initial break and finished with élan as he left defenders floundering in his wake. Joshua Clark converted to level the scores at 7-7.

The Black & Whites returned to attack mode aided by a penalty kicked into the corner. Yet again the hosts demonstrated not only superb defensive organisation but also cussed tenacity as Sutton launched wave after wave of attacks. Dan Jones was halted by a high tackle near the line. The result was a penalty and hooker Rhys Day getting ten minutes off for bad behaviour. From the penalty Sutton forced their way over and their leading try scorer Dan Jones got his rewards. Freddy Bunting added the easy extras to restore the lead with a 14-7 advantage near the end of the first quarter.

Everything was in Sutton’s favour — the slope, the breeze, and now the numerical advantage. However, they failed to convert pressure and a spirited Reeds continued to look to unleash their backs at every opportunity. The quality of the visitors’ play also deteriorated. They were held up over the line, they opted to kick to the corner and kicked it dead and were frustrated.

After the half-hour mark Matt Whitaker replaced Ben Tame as the back row reorganised to accommodate the talismanic Number 8. The malaise spread to the decision-making. A fatal failure of risk assessment saw a clearance from the 22 declined in favour of running the ball. Optimist tackled, penalty gifted and try conceded. The ruthless Reeds attack took the opportunity as prop Kerran Beavis muscled his way over. Despite the conversion failing the hosts only trailed 12-14.

A two-point advantage with less than ten minutes remaining in the first half was not only insignificant but also well below par for this particular location. Sutton urgency began to look like desperation as another attempt to counter from their 22 ended with poor passing. The situation deteriorated as Captain Bunting was given a yellow for a collision in the centres. Joshua Clark stepped up and knocked over the subsequent penalty for a 15-14 lead.

As the travelling support from Rugby Lane pondered how it had gone so heinously awry they were served up one final unamusing amuse bouche before the break. They were awarded a penalty in front of the posts on the 22. Declining a simple three points to retake the lead when playing with 14 they opted to kick to the corner. Their bearings were faulty as the ball was kicked dead.

The situation could have swiftly turned from trying to terminal as a Reeds counter threatened to score. Small mercies for the visitors as Mr Lipetz-Robic blew his whistle to end the half with Reeds Weybridge 15-14 up.

At the break the hosts held the advantage not only on the scoreboard but also on the pitch with favourable conditions, a man advantage and a back division that was on song. It was going to be an uphill struggle for Sutton & Epsom in every sense of the phrase. Their defence would have to be at its best and they would have to find a tactical approach to maximise their strengths whilst mitigating the slope.

Thomas Boaden replaced Dan Johnson in the visitors’ front row but the hosts turned the screw at the start of the second half. A flurry of penalties was followed by a warning to the Black & Whites as they were forced back in their 22. With a sense of inevitability a penalty was kicked to the corner and the Whiteley Village pack exploited the lineout to usher over lock Cameron Goodwin for their third try of the afternoon. Clark’s conversion failed but Reeds led 20-14.

Sutton regained possession at the restart and won a penalty that they advanced deep into the enemy 22. This signalled the moment that veteran Matt Whitaker began to impose his considerable talent on the afternoon’s proceedings. Playing his 201st game with all the hunger of his first he scored his 118th try — a typically abrasive carry leaving tacklers hanging off his powerful frame. Freddy Bunting inched Sutton ahead by 21-20.

The Black & Whites had appreciated that the road to glory on this afternoon would be on a path trod by their pack. The trio of Whitaker, Lennie and Gibson were at the forefront of a mighty effort to negate the slope as they carried relentlessly, compiling impressive statistics for yardage gained.

However, the quality back play of the hosts would remain a constant threat. Ten minutes later the partisan crowd were raising their glasses to salute their bonus point score as Reeds regained the lead. Once more it was superb back play with the excellent Will Jones at 15 creating the opening for replacement Nick Brown to score. It was advantage Reeds as they led 25-21.

In this fluctuating fixture the crowd did not have to wait long for another twist. Within five minutes S&E had their bonus point for a fourth try and had taken back the lead. Playing with renewed vigour and belief they demonstrated impressive efficiency as the pack turned pressure into points in the 22 with Rob Hegarty being the beneficiary on this occasion. The conversion drifted wide as the Rugby Lane team led by a solitary point 26-25 as the referee informed the protagonists that they had 15 left to play.

The visitors’ chances were dealt a blow at the restart as Thomas Boaden was issued a yellow and Sutton again had to play with 14. The hosts tried desperately to make the advantage count. The Black & White line held, repelling a 5-metre lineout as they kept the ball with their tireless pack.

With five minutes remaining Reeds Weybridge were awarded a penalty. Joshua Clark stepped up and calmly bisected the uprights from 45 metres for a 28-26 lead.

As the match entered time added on the referee intervened once more to flourish a yellow card. A high tackle on Dan Jones meant that the hosts would finish the match a man down.

A minute later S&E had scored. Demonstrating superb control from a lineout, first Matt Whitaker and then Sam Lennie carried towards the line. The ball was spun wide to prop Callum Gibson who was in splendid isolation. He ran home his second try of the afternoon, concluding with a celebratory dive that was less Tom Daley and more of a belly flop. Freddy Bunting added the vital extras for 33-28, meaning Reeds required a try to draw or a goal to win.

Almost inevitably Sutton conceded a penalty at the restart to ensure high anxiety for the conclusion. Penalties followed as the ball advanced to the 22. The hosts declined the kick to the corner and tapped from a central position, no doubt searching for a try that would have a more advantageous position for the conversion.

The S&E defence stood strong until the hosts knocked on and from the scrum they dispatched the ball into the neighbouring pitch for a hard fought win.

The season concludes on Saturday April 5th as the Black & Whites head to Horn Park where Old Colfeians will no doubt be a much improved outfit to the one that lost 50-7 on the opening day of the season. Whilst Sutton were winning in Whiteley Village the Old Boys had a significant 31-17 win at Gravesend that secured their Level status.

#### Sutton & Epsom:

Findlay, Nelson, Bibby, Bunting ©, Scott, Lennard, Munford, Johnson, Lennie, Gibson, McTaggart, Glanville, Tame, Jones & Hegarty.

Replacements: Boaden, Whitaker & Rea.

#### Reeds Weybridge:

Jones, Maitland, Stevenson, Forbes, Bennett, J. Clark, Beavis, R. Day, Agyapong-Ntrah, Goodwin, Finn, Ewington, Wastie & Corner.

Replacements: Howe, McKinley & Brown.

## Local Epsom LibDem leader leaves her Party

25 March 2025



An Epsom councillor who has been a leading Liberal Democrat in the area for over 20 years has defected to become an independent member. After several changes, including upcoming local Government reorganisation, Cllr **Julie Morris** has taken the decision to continue serving College Ward as an Independent councillor.

She has served on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council for almost 20 years, her old party described her as “experienced local champion”. A spokesperson for the party said on social media: “We want to express our gratitude for the years of service Julie has given to the Epsom and Ewell Liberal Democrats.”

Stepping into the well-worn shoes of the former leader, Cllr **James Lawrence** (also of the College Ward) will now take over. Only three Lib Dem councillors will now sit on the council, along with 25 Residents Association members, three Labour, two Conservative and now two Independent.

According to the Lib Dem website, Cllr Morris has led a number of environmental campaigns including: leading the charge against the Aldi food store plans for Epsom in 2015, a local campaign to stop builders developing back gardens, the campaign to preserve part of the Mill Road railway cutting as a wildlife sanctuary, as well as helping the residents of many roads in College ward deal with commuter parking problems.

“The Liberal Democrat group will continue to work closely with Julie for the residents of the college ward,” the spokesperson added.

Cllr Morris declined to make a statement at this time.

Related reports:

Prominent Residents Association Councillor leaves the fold

## Guidance to consumers impacted by Heathrow Airport incident

25 March 2025



**Selina Chadha**, Group Director for Consumers at the UK Civil Aviation Authority, said: “Passengers are advised not to travel to Heathrow at this time and should contact their airlines for the latest flight updates. We appreciate the difficulties that travel disruption causes, and we expect airlines to take all necessary steps to support and assist their passengers during this period of disruption. The Civil Aviation Authority remains in close contact with Heathrow Airport, airlines, and the Government during this time.”

Heathrow Airport is closed today due to a fire at a nearby electrical substation, affecting the supply of power to its terminals. Unfortunately, this means that today’s flights to and from the airport have been cancelled. The knock-on effect may also lead to delays and further cancellations over the weekend.

Flights that had already departed that were due to land at the airport had to be diverted to other airports.

### Air passenger rights

When flights are delayed and cancelled, we expect airlines to minimise the overall impact on you by keeping you informed and looking after you.

In many cases you will be protected by rights which are set out in UK legislation. The table below provides guidance on whether your flight is covered by UK legislation:



Flight Itinerary	UK or EU Air Carrier	Non-UK / Non-EU Air Carrier
Departing from Heathrow	<input type="checkbox"/> Covered	<input type="checkbox"/> Covered
Arriving to Heathrow	<input type="checkbox"/> Covered	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Covered

Whether these rights apply or not, we encourage airlines to do all they can to minimise the overall impact to their passengers.

## Flight Cancellations

### If your flight from Heathrow Airport has been cancelled

Please do not go to the airport and contact your airline for further advice.

Your airline is required to offer you the choice of a refund or find you an alternative flight (referred to as “re-routing”). Re-routing should be at the earliest opportunity or at a later date at your convenience, subject to availability.

Unfortunately, it may be challenging for airlines to offer re-routing during periods of major disruption, especially when an airport is closed at short notice. This may mean that your airline may not be able to get you to your destination as quickly as any of us would like. Nevertheless, if you still wish to get to your destination, we expect your airline to do all it can to offer you an alternative flight and keep you updated.

If your airline is unable to proactively offer you care, or offer suitable replacement flights, we expect it to promptly reimburse you for the costs you incur making your own arrangements. Make sure you keep receipts and avoid incurring excessive costs.

### If your flight to Heathrow has been cancelled

We realise that being unable to travel home as planned will be concerning for you. We expect your airline to update you and advise you of your rights.

If your flight is covered by UK passenger rights legislation, your airline will be required by law to get you home and look after you while you wait by providing meals, refreshments and hotel accommodation proportionate to the length of time you are delayed.

To get you home, your airline is required to find you an alternative flight (referred to as “re-routing”). Re-routing should be at the earliest opportunity or at a later date at your convenience, subject to availability.

Unfortunately, it may be challenging for airlines to offer re-routing during periods of major disruption, especially when an airport is closed at short notice. This may mean that your airline may not be able to get you home as quickly as any of us would like. Nevertheless, we expect your airline to do all it can to offer you an alternative flight and keep you updated.

If your airline is unable to proactively offer you care, or offer suitable replacement flights, we expect it to promptly reimburse you for the costs you incur making your own arrangements. Make sure you keep receipts and avoid incurring excessive costs.

Different rights apply if your airline is not a UK or EU carrier. Please speak to your airline or check its website for more information about your rights.

## Diverted flights

If your flight was diverted because it could not land at Heathrow and your flight is covered by UK passenger rights legislation, your airline should provide onward transportation (this may be by other means) to get you to Heathrow. It should also look after you and provide you with meals, refreshments and hotel accommodation while you wait, proportionate to the length of your delay.

If your airline is unable to proactively offer you care, or offer onward transportation, we expect it to promptly reimburse you for the costs you incur making your own arrangements. Make sure you keep receipts and avoid incurring excessive costs.

Different rights apply if your airline is not a UK or EU carrier. Please speak to your airline or check its website for more information about your rights.

## If you are travelling on a package holiday

If you booked a package holiday, you may also benefit from additional rights, particularly if this means that your original package cannot be provided.

If flight delays or cancellations lead to your holiday being cancelled, or new arrangements are made that result in a significant change to your holiday, then your travel company must offer an alternative holiday if they can, or a refund for the full price of your package holiday.

## Flight Delays

### If your flight from Heathrow Airport is delayed

Your airline should look after you and provide you with meals, refreshments and hotel accommodation proportionate to the length of your delay.

### If your flight to Heathrow Airport is delayed

If your flight is covered by UK passenger rights legislation, your airline should look after you and provide you with meals, refreshments and hotel accommodation proportionate to the length of your delay.

Different rights apply if your airline is not a UK or EU carrier. Please speak to your airline or check its website for more information about your rights.

## Fixed sum compensation

In addition to their obligations to look after passengers, as set out above, airlines are sometimes required to provide fixed sum compensation to passengers in certain circumstances.

Although we recognise the adverse impacts these delays and cancellations will have on passengers, the disruptions directly caused by the closure of Heathrow Airport are likely to be viewed as “extraordinary circumstances”. As a result, you are unlikely to be entitled to fixed sum compensation.

Extraordinary circumstances do not affect your other entitlements to replacement flights and care set out above — these are due regardless of the cause of your delay or cancellation.

## Notes

The Civil Aviation Authority’s interpretation of extraordinary circumstances is illustrative and for guidance only, rather than determinative of our view in any specific case that may arise. Each case will be context and fact specific. This does not mean that a passenger or group of passengers cannot try and claim compensation, including through the courts, if they disagree with our interpretation.

The protections set out above are based on Assimilated Regulation 261/2004 which collectively apply to all flights departing from the UK, and flights arriving into the UK on UK and EU carriers. Different rights may apply to passengers arriving on flights to the UK operated by non-EU carriers such as flights from the USA on US carriers.

**Civil Aviation Authority News**

Heathrow Airport. Mike McBey **CC BY 2.0**

## Expanding London airports “not an environmental trade off” - Minister claims

25 March 2025



Expanding Heathrow and Gatwick is “crucial” for this government after years of people sticking “their heads in the sand” over plans for new runways at south east airports, the Secretary of State for Transport said.

Heidi Alexander made the remarks as she outlined its vision to “modernise” the aviation sector at the annual AirportsUK dinner at a time when passenger levels at the country’s airports had grown by 7 per cent – and signs indicating 2025 would be a record breaking year.

She said: “It’s clear this is a trend, not an unusual year. In fact, everything points to a record-breaking 2025 – and it’s easy to see why.

“The world has never been more interconnected. The desire for travel never stronger. Global forecasts show a near doubling of passengers and cargo in the next 20 years. So the demand is there. It’s growing. And if we don’t seize it, we not only risk being outpaced by European competitors, but we will be on the wrong side of public aspirations.”

The Government has already announced its support for a third runway at Heathrow Airport – which has put in £2.3billion to overhaul its infrastructure – and more recently said it was “minded to approve” a second at Gatwick.

She added: “We see airports as a crucial pillar of our plan for change. And it’s why we’ve acted, and acted quickly, across three areas – starting with expansion. It’s no secret that long ignored capacity issues in the south-east, has meant some of our major airports are now bursting at the seams.

“And yet – when it came to expansion – too many people stuck their heads in the sand. It left the industry in a perpetual holding pattern, with decisions circling around Whitehall for years, waiting for a clear signal.”

Expansion at Heathrow would be the first new full-length runway in the country for quarter of a century with the transport secretary saying her job was now to balance “economic benefits of expansion with social and environmental commitments.”

She said this was reflected in her caveated support for Gatwick – with a “clear path for expansion” set out if certain conditions are met.

A final decision on whether to approve Gatwick’s expansion is expected to be made on October 27.

The transport secretary finished: “I will never accept the false trade off that pits growing aviation against protecting our environment. I honestly believe we can, and must, do both. And how we do that is already being answered...

“Firstly, we cannot hope for quieter, cleaner and greener flights if our most critical piece of infrastructure is stuck in the past. We must ramp up work on reducing emissions. Green flight isn’t only essential for the industry, it’s existential.”

Related reports:

[“Blocks away” from airport expansions](#)

[Gatwick Airport Expansion](#)

[Report against airport expansion](#)

[Heathrow expansion reaction](#)

[Heathrow Airport. Credit Heathrow Airports Limited.](#)

## Drowning in Debt: Epsom MP Demands Thames Water Takeover

25 March 2025



Thames Water should be put into “special administration” rather than given a £3billion bailout, Epsom and Ewell’s MP said after the utility company won a major court battle to stave off nationalisation.

In February, the embattled water firm won the right to go ahead with the huge loan despite some of Thames Water’s creditors opposing the costly 9.75 per cent interest rate. The decision was then challenged on appeal with the courts this week again finding in favour of Thames Water.

The company, which has overseen record sewage spills amid rising prices for customers – while paying out hundreds of millions of pounds in dividends to shareholders – says the £3billion loan puts them on a “more stable financial foundation”. From April, bills will increase by 31 per cent.

Thames Water CEO Chris Weston said they were pleased with the court’s decision “decisively refused” the appeal and allowed the loan to go through. He said: “We remain focused on putting Thames Water onto a more stable financial foundation as we seek a long-term solution to our financial resilience.

“Today’s news demonstrates further progress. We continue to work closely with our creditors, enabling us to access liquidity to continue to implement our turnaround plan so we can deliver better results for our customers and the environment while seeking to attract new capital into the business.

“As we have previously stated, the Company Plan will not affect customer bills but will provide continued investment in our network to fix pipes, upgrade our sewage treatment works, and maintain high-quality drinking water. We remain of the view that a market led solution is in the best interest of customers, UK taxpayers and the wider economy.”

The decision to reject Charlie Maynard, the Liberal Democrat MP for Whitney’s appeal has not pleased everyone.

**Helen Maguire**, the Lib Dem MP for Epsom and Ewell, described the bail out as “terrible news” for people “who have been paying the price for a company that is not fit for purpose.”

She said: “Thames Water is spending almost a third of my constituents’ bills on servicing their mountain of debt, instead of investing in vital infrastructure and stopping gallons of sewage from being pumped into our rivers.

“It is in the Government’s power to end this now. Thames Water must be put into special administration and we cannot allow failing water bosses to keep throwing good money after bad, while our regulators sit on their hands and customers’ bills go through the roof.”

Thames Water’s cash flow was set to run dry in March before the loan deal was agreed with speculation growing that it could come under government control. The network is also in need of major repair and modernisation expected to cost in the billions.

Related reports:

[Surrey’s LibDem MP majority take on Thames Water](#)

[Thames Water’s reputation going down the drain](#)

[Thames Water rebate](#)

[Epsom & Ewell households drowning as water bills rise?](#)

Image credit: By NegativeSpace in Travel (logo added).

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## Parliament motion to reinstate Surrey County May elections

25 March 2025



Surrey elections could still go ahead if a “fatal motion” (\**see below*) to overturn the decision to cancel the May 2025 ballot wins out. This year’s local elections were postponed until at least May 2026 after the Government passed legislation to delay the vote in order to allow councils to focus on devolution.

Its argument, backed by Surrey County Council, was that it would free officer time to focus on merging the lower layers of government while being overseen by more experienced politicians. It would also save millions of pounds as any newly created councils would need to hold their own polls soon after. Opponents to the delay argue that cancelling elections robs people of their right to vote and that elected officials only have authority by virtue of being backed by residents – and nobody voted for them to be in power this long.

Leader of the Conservative Party Kemi Badenoch had previously tried to stop the order passing in February, and now the fight has been picked up in the House of Lords with a debate set for March 24 to annul the government’s decision to cancel the election. Devolution would result in Surrey and its 11 boroughs and districts merging into either two or three mega councils overseen by a single mayor.

Two fatal motions put by Green Party Baroness Jenny Jones and the Liberal Democrats’ Baroness Pinnock will be debated, along with a Conservative Regret Motion. It calls on the order to be annulled as it “denies timely democratic representation to a substantial portion of the electorate; undermines local democratic accountability; disrupts established electoral cycles; lacks sufficient consultation; and erodes the democratic mandate for major restructuring of local government.”

Baroness Jones said: “I believe that a majority of peers are against the Government cancelling elections in May.” She added: “The government can’t guarantee that some areas won’t have a second year of cancelled elections as they try to impose mayors that will spend more time talking to ministers than local people. There has been no attempt to gather consensus within two-tier areas or to consult local residents about what they want. The government know that the elections in May would become a referendum of their plans to sideline local communities, and they might not like the answer that voters give.”

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\*Epsom and Ewell Times adds:

The phrase “**fatal motion**” is a specific parliamentary term used in the UK House of Lords. It refers to a type of motion that, if passed, effectively **annuls** or **blocks** a statutory instrument (a form of secondary legislation made by the government).

In this context, the “fatal motion” being debated on **March 24** aims to **overturn the government’s decision to cancel the May 2025 local elections**. If the motion succeeds, the original order delaying the elections would be nullified, and the elections could go ahead as planned.

This type of motion is distinct from a “**regret motion**,” which allows the Lords to express disapproval of a government decision but does not actually stop it from taking effect. The **fatal motion, on the other hand, has binding consequences** if passed.

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[Elections Delayed as Surrey Faces Uncertain Future of Local Government Shake-Up](#)

[Political furies over Surrey election postponement](#)

[Surrey County Council election delay stirring up a storm](#)

[Surrey County elections must go ahead clamour](#)



## Surrey’s BIG debt question in local government reorganisation

25 March 2025



Plans for what Surrey could look like in local government reorganisation have been agreed but questions remain over looming debt. Councillors demanded to know how debt would be managed before the county is divided up.

The government outlined plans for a major reorganisation of local government in December. Two tier councils will be dissolved into unitary authorities which will carry out all local government functions like planning, bin collections as well as education and social care.

Members of the County Council have agreed on March 18 two proposals for how Surrey could be carved up in the most dramatic reorganisation of local services in 50 years. Serving 1.2m people, Surrey’s current matrix – consisting of 12 borough and district councils and one county council – could be split into two or three new local authorities.

Leader of Surrey County Council, Tim Oliver, said he believes reorganisation is the “opportunity to turbo charge localism”. He said: “Single councils are clearer for residents, have greater accountability, are more efficient and effective for delivery and strip out unnecessary bureaucracy and duplication.”

Option 1, and the Conservative-run cabinet’s preference, is to cut Surrey in half to create an east and west, or north and south. Exactly which councils will be included in the new authority are still yet to be determined, for instance whether Spelthorne borough is either on the east or west side.

Option 2, put forward by the majority of district and borough councils, consists of three new local authorities in the form of north-west, south-west and south-east Surrey. Again, full details of which councils would be included is still in the draft stages.

The two outline plans will be submitted to the central government on Friday March 21, who will ultimately have the deciding power on the new face of Surrey. Meanwhile, the local authorities will keep working to produce a final proposal by May 9.

With over £5.5bn worth of crushing debt across the county, members publicly urged the government to solve Surrey’s financial issues before reorganisation. Cllr Catherine Powell said there needs to be “a clear path on the £5.5bn of debt” as it could create “significant imbalances” leading one council “more likely to fail”. The Residents’ Association and Independent Group Leader said she does not feel Surrey can propose new authorities without a solution.

Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Cllr Paul Follows, said the councils’ debt is “so toxic it will pollute the rest of this county”. He lamented that reorganisation will not be about what is best for residents but about how money will be spent.

Speaking to the council, the leader said the government has “made it clear it does not intend to write off all of Woking’s debt”. Cllr Oliver said he will be having detailed conversations and Surrey will “have to come up with plan B”.

Creating two councils in Surrey could save £27m after five years but three authorities could potentially make a loss of £8m, according to the county council’s report. But the district and borough councils argue three unitary authorities would only save slightly less money than two and not be in a deficit.

However, Cllr Oliver said they have not taken into account the cost of reorganising services, such as adult social care, which could add substantial added costs. The leader claimed splitting into two is the best value for money for residents.

“There is no desire for Ashford to sink in with Godstone should the boundaries be cut [one] way,” said Cllr Robert Evans OBE. He explained slicing Surrey into two would only reveal some towns would have little in common with villages they may have not even heard of.

Creating two unitary councils with a population of around 600,000 each, opponents slammed the proposal as bad for local democracy and eroding distinctive community identities. Members also flagged there would be significantly less councillors looking after greater areas.

But those batting for a dual council-led Surrey said few residents even identify with the council and local identity would be strengthened by working with community groups and local healthcare networks.

Questions about services like adult social care as well as children and education services were raised as major issues. Cllr Sinead Mooney said splitting the adult social care beyond two units would complicate the service and people could “fall through the gaps”. Cllr Clare Curran highlighted the potential difficulties in retaining and splitting staff to more than two councils, meaning experienced teams could leave.

Cllr Fiona Davidson called for a need to assess how many children homes, specialist school places and demand for foster children to ensure Surrey is covered with the right services. Members agreed it was not just about making services cheaper and simpler- they had to be run better than currently.

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## Epsom & Ewell’s Local Plan under the Green microscope

25 March 2025



**Epsom Green Belt Group Lodges Formal Complaint Against Borough Council Over Local Plan Submission**

The Epsom Green Belt Group (EGBG) has submitted a formal complaint to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) regarding the council’s Local Plan submission, raising concerns over procedural irregularities and transparency in the consultation process.

In a detailed letter dated 14 March 2025, EGBG congratulated the council for submitting the Local Plan before the 12 March deadline, ensuring it falls under the provisions of the December 2023 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). However, the group identified what it describes as significant flaws in the submission, particularly concerning documents that were not made available for public scrutiny before submission.

## Concerns Over Topic Papers

A key contention in the complaint is the inclusion of seven Topic Papers—covering areas such as the Green Belt, economy, housing, spatial strategy, heritage, and Gypsy and Traveller accommodation—without prior consultation or approval by councillors. EGBG argues that these documents were neither included in the consultation evidence base nor subjected to review by the Local Plan Policy Committee (LPPC) or Full Council before submission. This, they claim, violates the requirements of the *Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012*.

The group asserts that these documents were not made available to the public in accordance with regulatory requirements, including being published on the council’s website and made accessible at the Town Hall or local libraries during the consultation period. Furthermore, some Topic Papers were dated after the consultation closed, raising concerns about their legitimacy as submission documents.

EGBG has called on EEBC to take one of three actions: withdraw the Topic Papers from the submission, conduct a retrospective consultation, or submit an explanatory statement to the examiner clarifying the lack of prior consultation.

## Criticism of the Consultation Statement

EGBG’s complaint also highlights alleged shortcomings in the Consultation Statement submitted by EEBC. The group argues that:

- The statement underrepresents the weight of objections by counting consolidated group responses as single representations, despite EEBC’s guidance encouraging collective submissions.
- The narrative summary is not impartial, as it includes the council’s views rather than an objective summary of objections.
- Several key issues raised by EGBG in its formal response were omitted or misrepresented, particularly concerning specific development sites such as Hook Road Arena and Horton Farm.
- The Sustainability Appraisal was described as ‘robust’ despite extensive criticisms submitted by EGBG, including claims that certain rankings were ‘misaligned’ and descriptions ‘bore little or no relation to supporting evidence.’

EGBG has requested that EEBC revise and republish the Consultation Statement to accurately reflect public concerns.

## Council’s Response

When Epsom and Ewell Times approached for comment, EEBC provided a brief response, stating:

*“Any complaint made to Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will be dealt with according to our Complaints Policy, published on our website: Complaint Policy V1.pdf.”*

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