



No Place Like Home - Until Surrey Sells It

Families have been left worried sick and children devastated after Surrey County Council decided to sell their homes “to ensure best value” in the “disposal of public assets”.

Residents say the council is putting profit before people as it seeks to cash in on their homes through its private company—insisting upon selling them as vacant possessions and giving them until July to move out.

They claim the council is refusing to consider offers from the families who have built their lives there and instead told them they must leave so the properties can be placed on the open market.

One family has lived in Norbury Park, Mickleham, since 2003 under a long-term lease when it was owned by Surrey Wildlife Trust, prior to being taken over by the county council’s private company, Halsey Garton Residential Ltd (HGR). In that time, the family invested significantly in repairs and improvements, believing their tenancy was secure. They say they even made an offer to buy the property, but it was rejected, with Surrey insisting the house must be vacated first.

Helen Wood, who lives in one of the Norbury Park homes said she the council-created company took on the properties from the Surrey Wildlife Trust in 2022. Families have been left worried sick and children ‘devastated’ ...”

Mrs Wood said: “Our children are devastated at the thought of losing the house, their home. My 12-year-old has asked why this is happening, and we have tried to explain it to him, but even he says it makes no sense—they want to sell and we want to buy. We can’t move on with our lives or plan anything and are just stuck in limbo. It is pretty hellish and worse than that, it just seems really unfair and nonsensical.”

She added: “We saw other neighbours were being evicted and had to force a meeting to find out our own situation. Ridiculously, we can’t buy it. I’m a fit and healthy 54-year-old with two kids but I’ve ended up on blood pressure tablets. I’ve never had an issue and now I’ll be on them for the rest of my life. It’s horrendous. All I’m doing is thinking we’re another day nearer, and another week nearer, another month nearer, to losing our home. We can’t buy in the area. We’ll lose our workshop and my husband will lose his job. I’m just trying not to think about it as it just makes us anxious.”

The families are asking Surrey County Council to allow an independent valuation of the homes and to be given first refusal to purchase and remain in the properties.

Charles Maxlow-Tomlinson, managing director of Halsey Garton Residential Ltd—a company registered at Surrey County Council’s headquarters and specialising in the letting and operating of owned or leased real estate—responded: “Surrey County Council is the freeholder of various properties which are managed by Halsey Garton Residential Ltd under a strategy approved by SCC’s Strategic Investment Board. HGR is a subsidiary of the council and has a long leasehold interest in the properties. HGR was established to help generate commercial returns, providing an alternative revenue stream that supports the Council’s broader financial resilience.

“HGR remains deeply committed to responsible and balanced property management. We have been actively engaging with tenants to listen to their concerns regarding the proposed sale of properties and lease arrangements. We understand how unsettling this situation can be for families and, where appropriate, we have offered new lease terms with more tenant-friendly conditions, extending occupancy until June 2026.

“We fully acknowledge the personal impact this may have on individual tenants. While HGR and SCC are not housing authorities and do not retain residential properties for long-term housing provision, we are committed to treating all tenants with dignity and respect throughout this process. Tenants have been informed of the proposed sales, and we want to clarify that there are no current eviction notices for the properties in Norbury Park. To ensure openness and transparency, when properties are placed on the open market for sale, anybody can make an offer to purchase, and the most proceedable offer will be accepted.”

Councillor Natalie Bramhall, cabinet member for property, infrastructure and waste, said: “Surrey County Council has a statutory duty to ensure best value in the use and disposal of public assets. In fulfilling this responsibility, and to maintain transparency and fairness, the council and its subsidiaries have followed a consistent approach over the past five years: selling its properties on the open market with vacant possession. This ensures that we can secure the best possible return, which is vital for delivering essential public services to the wider community.

Helen and Grant Wood together with their dog (Image Helen Wood)



Today's racing at Epsom racecourse

This afternoon's first race is a two-year-olds' seven-furlong novice (1.37). Each of the seven runners have been seen before, with the best currently presenting as Ollie Sangster's Red Tsarina, who won a fillies' race at Chelmsford most recently. She makes her turf debut today, while the best with turf form is St Anton, who placed on debut at Newmarket and will be a big player once again.

*Courtesy of Boyle Sports, who provide all the latest **horse racing odds**.*

Next is a seven-furlong handicap (2.12). Rod Millman's Cypriot Diaspora seeks a hat-trick, having won her last two starts at Ffos Las, but may not be so well suited to this track, so it may pay to look elsewhere. Dylan Cunha's Valley Of the Kings went well over course and distance last time out and, running off the same mark again, could pick up at least a place, but David O'Meara's 10-year-old veteran Orbaan looks the most likely candidate given his good track record and recent strain of form.

Race three is a handicap over a mile and a quarter (2.47). Racing Demon should have a good chance after a recent pair of places and the addition of a visor for today. Didaar also should be able to run a good race off the same mark which saw him place last time at Ffos Las, and has a useful five pounds from his rider. Questionable could be the winner, though, now just one pound above his last winning mark.

The Jump Jockeys Derby is next - a handicap over a mile and a half (3.18). Balhambar could have a good chance for Paul O'Brien, now two pounds below his last run on the Flat, in which he finished a respectable third of 11 last October. Returning from a break, he could win this, but will have to watch out for Alan King's Westerton, who has dipped down to a very workable mark.

Race five is another handicap over a mile and a half, this time for three-year-olds (3.53). Owen Burrows' Girls Night Out could go well, having come down a couple of pounds in the weights. She is ridden by a five-pound claimer, which helps her case. Drawn next door, though, is Love You Back, who makes more appeal with a good bit of course form from July and a workable mark for Gary and Josh Moore.

The penultimate race is a handicap run over the extended mile (4.25). Another for Gary and Josh Moore, Oj Lifestyle goes well at this track and is on a mark which should lend itself to winning here. Magical Merlin could run for a place under claiming rider Millie Wonnacott, while Beau Jardine could do the same from the innermost draw.

Last of all is another handicap over the same trip, this time for three-year-olds (5.00). Nigel Tinkler's Amidst The Chaos travels a long way for this and seeks a hat-trick today, while Pink Azalea - who also has a long drive from Malton to Epsom - looks more likely on a mark which may be winnable from under a five-pound claimer.

Epsom selections - Thursday:

1.37 - St Anton

2.12 - Orbaan

2.47 - Questionable

3.18 - Balhambar

3.53 - Love You Back

4.25 - Oj Lifestyle

5.00 - Pink Azalea

Horses racing Image: Credit Paul. CC BY 2.0

Epsom library opening to register births and deaths

Surrey's Registration & Nationality Service has been undergoing changes over the past year with the aim of providing an improved experience for residents at important life moments. Dated and non-energy efficient buildings have undergone a makeover, and the council is increasing the number of locations where people can register births and deaths, all to make the service more accessible, modern and fit for the future.



Denise Turner-Stewart, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities, said:

"We are committed to ensuring that our Registration Services are accessible, sustainable, and reflective of the needs of our communities.

"The improvements at Rylston in Weybridge and the expansion of services into our modern Library Hubs demonstrate our ambition to deliver high-quality, convenient services for residents across Surrey.

"These changes are part of our wider vision to modernise council services and create ceremony venues that are fit for purpose and truly special. We want every couple, every family, and every individual marking a significant life event to feel that they are in a space that reflects the importance of the moment.

"Whether it's welcoming a new life, registering the death of a loved one, or celebrating a union in marriage or civil partnership, our venues are designed to provide a warm, friendly, and memorable setting for these cherished occasions."

Rylston, Weybridge reopens

Refurbishment works are now complete at Rylston Register Office. These were undertaken to preserve its future as a premium ceremonies venue in Weybridge. The whole building has benefitted from new carbon-efficient heating systems and windows and newly decorated ceremony rooms, ensuring it is a sustainable ceremonies venue for the county in the long term.

The redecoration works complement the historic building's elegant style, enabling couples to exchange their vows in a classic and beautiful space.

More locations to register births and deaths

Epsom Library Hub and the new flagship Library Hub at Staines-upon-Thames now offer additional locations in Surrey to register births and deaths. Both library hubs have undergone major refurbishment offering multi-functional spaces in the heart of communities. Registrations are now part of that, helping to bring together complementary services all under one roof.

By October 2026, it is expected that Guildford Library will also be offering a registrations service for births and deaths, making sure residents can access key services in places and locations that are convenient to them.

Ceremonies in Guildford

To provide better value and more efficient services for residents, the council is moving towards the use of modern, efficient, multi-purpose buildings that allow multiple services to operate from a single location.

Guildford Register Office, also known as Artington House, does not meet the criteria to support this approach. It is a building which is not carbon efficient and where the ongoing costs of maintenance and necessary upgrades have significantly increased.

Following careful consideration, the decision has been made to vacate and sell Artington House. Bookings for ceremonies at this location will continue to be taken up until 31 October 2026. It is expected there will be alternative local provision in place for the registration of births and deaths at Guildford Library from October 2026. Customers will still be able to book appointments online as usual.

Surrey is home to over 100 licensed ceremony venues across the county where couples can marry or form a civil partnership. This includes two council register offices in Weybridge and Leatherhead, each offering a range of different ceremony options. Other council venues are also being considered for ceremony use to increase the offer available for residents.

Further information

Frequently Asked Questions about the closure of Artington House can be found here: [Guildford Register Office as a ceremony venue - Surrey County Council](#)

A full list of registration services can be found here: [Birth, death and ceremonies - Surrey County Council](#)

Surrey County Council

Image: Epsom Library



Surrey Police HQ development dogged by flood risks

Plans to redevelop Surrey Police's Mount Browne headquarters in Guildford — including a new dog training school — have been green-lit for a second time despite fresh flood risk modelling showing “pockets of high surface water flooding” across the site.

Guildford Borough Council's Planning Committee approved the scheme in November 2024, but since then national planning rules have changed and the Environment Agency has issued new flood maps.

As a result, Surrey Police and the council agreed to bring the scheme back to committee.

The updated modelling shows parts of the site, including the former bowling green earmarked for the new dog school, face a high risk of surface water flooding.

Councillors raised concerns about what that actually means in practice at another planning committee meeting on September 9.

“On one hand we say there's a high risk of flooding — and then we say the infrastructure will support that regardless,” Cllr Stephen Hives said. “So I'm a bit confused: is there a danger to welfare or not?”

Planning officers insisted the scheme still passes the required “sequential test” — which means no safer, alternative sites are reasonably available — and that the approved drainage strategy will prevent increased flood risk.

“In practical terms it will make no difference to this development,” an officer told the committee. “The drainage strategy already approved is sufficient even with the updated flood risk.”

The development does not fall within the newly created “Grey Belt” category introduced in the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), but it was judged to still harm the Surrey Hills National Landscape.

With no new highways flooding issues identified and no change to the approved drainage plan, officers confirmed the project remains compliant with planning rules. Plans to redevelop the police HQ and build a new access road was unanimously approved.

Mount Browne has been the headquarters of Surrey Police for more than 70 years. The current campus contains a large number of buildings which have been constructed mainly on a piecemeal basis and are judged no longer fit for purpose.

Emily Dalton

Proposed Redevelopment of Mount Browne, Surrey Police's HQ. (Credit: Surrey Police)

Surrey County Council flags up the flag issue

Surrey County Council has set the record straight about whether residents can hang flags from lampposts.

In a statement shared with councillors and online, the authority said: “We recognise the importance of the Union flag and flag of St George as symbols of national pride, and we proudly fly the Union flag from our council headquarters in Reigate.”

But the county council reminded people that anything fixed to a lamppost or painted on roads needs official permission first.

Without it, the council warns, flags and other attachments can pose safety risks for drivers and pedestrians. Unauthorised flags or paint markings will be removed during routine inspections.

Waverley Borough Council leader and Godalming county councillor Paul Follows, who shared the council's advice online, said residents should also be mindful about putting flags on property they don't own. “Please don't be surprised if it's taken down or reported by the owner,” he said.

He added that removing graffiti or markings from public spaces costs money that ultimately comes out of taxpayers' pockets. “You can of course always fly a flag from your own property if you want to,” he said.

Anyone keen to display a flag on public land is encouraged to apply for permission first. Details of how to do so are available on the Surrey County Council website.

Emily Dalton



Image: Union Jack flags on Ruxley Lane lampposts

Should Epsom's Derby revert to Wednesday?

Epsom-based trainer: make the Derby "London's Race" as town's training revival gathers pace

"There's a genuine feel that Epsom is back on the map"

Epsom-based trainer George Baker says the town is poised for a racing revival and has urged The Jockey Club to reposition the Derby as "London's Race". Baker, who trains from Downs House "a furlong from the Derby start", told Boyle Sports that Epsom's facilities are comparable with Lambourn, Middleham and Newmarket and that the missing ingredient is simply more horses in training.

Baker points to the recent investment and new capacity at Downs House and Jim Boyle's redeveloped South Hatch yard as signs of renewal: "There's a genuine feel that you can have good horses trained at Epsom again."

Call to engage London — and fill the yards

With "a huge catchment area over the hill called London," Baker says his team will be "rolling the dice" at upcoming sales and persuading owners to put horses into training at Epsom. Jockey Club Estates highlights the gallops' proximity to the capital and the convenience of the Epsom Downs facilities.

Attendance slump sharpens focus on Derby's future

Baker argues the Derby needs a reset after a tough year for crowds. Official figures for the 2025 Betfred Derby put paid attendance at 22,312 — a modern-era low and down on 2024 — even as TV audiences remained significant.

Midweek return mooted

Baker suggests returning the Classic to a weekday. Historically, the Derby ran on a Wednesday until 1994, before moving to Saturday in 1995, and he believes a midweek slot would give the race clear air and avoid clashes with other major sport.

"Make it Epsom's party"

His prescription: "strip it back", keep the Hill accessible and festive — "come for free... bring a picnic, have a bet" — and aim to make the 250th running in 2029 a city-wide celebration drawing London "up the hill".

Deep roots: Churchill and Epsom's heyday

Epsom's heritage includes Sir Winston Churchill's long association with South Hatch trainer Walter Nightingall and periods when hundreds of horses were stabled and trained around the Downs. In the 1950s around 800 horses were said to be in training on the Epsom Downs.

Who actually holds the Downs' long lease?

The long lease underpinning Epsom's training grounds dates to 1969, when a 999-year lease of Walton Downs was granted to the Horserace Betting Levy Board to secure the future of training on the Downs, with management overseen via the Training Grounds Management Board. This is often conflated with The Jockey Club, but the leaseholder is the Levy Board.

Editor's note: EET requested comment from The Jockey Club on 3 September 2025. No reply had been received at the time of publication.



Image: Author David Jones from Isle of Wight. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic licence

Surrey Police tax set to rise

Council tax bills could keep climbing despite warnings residents could be getting less bang for their buck. Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner has insisted she "will not ask the public to be less safe" as she defended plans to raise council tax for policing.

At a Police and Crime Panel meeting last week (September 4), PCC Lisa Townsend explained the decisions on the annual precept rise were driven by the Chief Constable's assessment of what the force needs to keep the country safe.

"It's not me plucking a figure out of thin air," she told councillors. For Ms Townsend, the choice is clear: "Surrey Police are cutting their cloth, but what I am not prepared to do is ask the public to be less safe."

Surrey Police must find £14.8m savings by 2029 with pay (which makes up 80 per cent of its spending) ramping up costs, a report states. Each 1 per cent pay rise for police officers adds £2.4m to the budget, equivalent to £4.80 on the average council tax bill.

The report revealed: "Whilst the force is making every effort to not impact services as a result of savings required, there is a risk that this will not be possible".

Ms Townsend's comments came after councillors questioned whether constant tax rises could be justified when Surrey Police must still deliver sweeping budget cuts to balance its budget.

Cllr Richard Wilson challenged: "At some point Surrey Police has to cut its cloth. You can't keep asking the public for more and more money when it's a regressive tax." He asked the PCC to "give the public a break" from the ever-increasing tax bills.

But finance officers warned that the ability to make further cuts "become more difficult every year" despite efforts to standardise IT systems, renegotiate contracts and improve procurement. They warned if Surrey Police do not increase the precept in a particular year then it has "missed that chance" in every following year to raise funds for the Force.

Although the Government has promised to fund some police pay rises above 2.8 per cent, Surrey is still waiting for clarity on how much of this money it will actually receive. The long-awaited Police Reform Bill could also see some functions stripped away to a national body or Surrey forced into merger talks — changes with potentially "major financial implications."

Surrey remains one of the lowest government-funded forces in the country, leaving residents to shoulder more of the burden through local taxation.

The young of Epsom and Ewell can be legends

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is proud to announce its new local initiative - Epsom & Ewell Young Legends - an exciting programme of sports and creative activities taking place from 11 October to 24 November 2025. Designed for children aged 9 to 11, this free programme is open to children who live within the borough. Places can be booked on the council's website and spaces are limited.

The Epsom & Ewell Young Legends programme aims to help children boost their confidence, develop new skills, make friends, and ease the transition for those preparing for secondary school.

A diverse range of activities such as Arts & Crafts - with dedicated sessions for children with special needs, Basketball, Girls Rugby, Judo, Musical Theatre (song and dance), Rap Therapy, and Yoga & Meditation. Delivered by trusted and skilled professionals in a safe and supportive environment, the programme encourages children to try new things and have fun.

The Epsom & Ewell Young Legends programme forms part of the council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and follows on from the Specsavers Surrey Youth Games.

Councillor Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee, commented:



"We're proud to launch our first-ever Epsom & Ewell Young Legends programme – a key step in delivering our Health and Wellbeing Strategy. By offering free access to sports and creative activities for 9 to 11-year-olds, we aim to inspire, build confidence and support them as they take their next steps – including the transition to secondary school."

"Bringing the Epsom & Ewell Young Legends programme in-house has allowed us to tailor it to the needs of local children and align it with our Health and Wellbeing Strategy. We've made a conscious effort to reach those facing barriers to participation, including children supported through the government-funded Holiday Activities and Food programme."

"A huge thanks to the coaches and practitioners from Body & Brain Epsom, Cagers Basketball Club, Creative Minds, Laines Theatre Arts, Rap Therapy, Sutton and Epsom Rugby Club and Westcroft Judo Nork, for their support in delivering the Epsom & Ewell Young Legends."

"Whether a child is sporty, creative, or simply curious, Young Legends is about helping children to feel confident in trying new activities, and we warmly invite parents to encourage their children to take advantage of this exciting opportunity."

Programme timetable & sign-up information

Up to two activities can be selected per child and places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. More information including the timetable and sign-up information can be found here – [Epsom & Ewell Young Legends | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council](#). Forms can also be completed at Epsom Town Hall during opening hours.

For any questions, email the council's Community Development team: cdevelopment@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

About Epsom & Ewell Young Legends programme 2025

More information is here – [More information about the Epsom & Ewell Young Legends programme: Epsom & Ewell Young Legends | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council](#)

Activity	Session Date & Time	Venue
Arts & Crafts	10:30am – 12:00pm Saturdays, 11 & 18 Oct, 1 & 8 Nov	Epsom Library
Arts & Crafts (for children with SEN)	2:00pm – 3:30pm Saturdays, 11 + 18 Oct, 1 + 8 Nov	Epsom Library
Basketball	9:00am – 10:00am Every Sunday, from 12 Oct to 16 Nov	Epsom & Ewell High School
Girls Rugby	6:30pm – 7:30pm Every Wednesday, from 15 Oct to 19 Nov	Sutton & Epsom Rugby Club
Judo	6:00pm – 7:00pm Every Tuesday, from 14 Oct to 18 Nov	Rainbow Leisure Centre
Musical Theatre (Song & Dance)	4:30pm–6:00pm Every Monday, from 3 to 24 November	Laine Theatre Arts
Rap Therapy	4:00pm – 5:00pm Every Thursday, from 16 Oct to 6 Nov	Epsom Library
Yoga & Meditation	3:30pm – 4:30pm Every Friday, from 17 Oct to 21 Nov	Body & Brain Epsom

About the EEBC Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2028

The strategy is designed to support all residents, with particular attention given to children and young people, older adults, individuals whose health is affected by broader social and economic factors and those whose personal circumstances may disproportionately increase their vulnerability to poor health and wellbeing. The strategy also includes specific references to those who are disproportionately impacted by isolation, disability, digital exclusion and people with long-term health conditions. (Public Pack) Agenda Document for Community and Wellbeing Committee, 08/07/2025 19:30

About Body & Brain, Epsom

Body & Brain Epsom Centre offers classes in deep physical, emotional and spiritual healing through meditative movement, deep stretching and shaking exercises. The practice originates from Korea where it has a rich 5,000 year old history of holistic healing and mind-body practices. Devoted to helping individuals better manage and utilize their brains, this beautiful discipline is suitable for people of all ages and levels, and it is the perfect way to increase your physical activity and gain a greater sense of peace. Body & Brain | EPSOM | Class Schedule

About Cagers Basketball Club

Cagers Basketball Club is committed to fostering a love for the game and providing competitive basketball for players of all ages



and abilities. Their core values include hard work, respect, discipline, and enjoyment. Through teaching correct fundamentals and improving basketball knowledge and skills, we prepare players for the next level, emphasising individual success within a team-oriented framework. Epsom and Ewell Families » Cagers Basketball Club

About Creative Minds

Founded in November 2012, Creative Minds has been delivering accessible and empowering art sessions for over a decade, earning a reputation as a highly trusted and respected service provider across the UK. Their Creative Minds (CM) Artists bring creativity, expression, and human connection to every session they deliver. We work with a wide variety of venues, including care homes, schools, learning disability services, day centres, and many more, ensuring art is accessible to people of all ages and abilities. About Us - Creative Minds - Accessible Art Sessions For Everyone!

About Laines Theatre Arts

Since its inception in 1962, Laine Theatre Arts has been dedicated to the fostering of creative talent. Among their alumni are some of the most highly regarded performers, teachers, choreographers, and director-choreographers in the world. The College's outstanding reputation in the performing arts has been built on its unique identity as a training provider, exceptional employment records, and the company values instilled in its students which are noted, time and again by employers. Those familiar with Laine Theatre Arts agree unanimously that it is a unique environment. Who we are - Laine Theatre Arts

About Rap Therapy

Their focus is to complement the UK education sector by improving the mental health and creativity of students using rap. They equip students with transferable skills that provide benefits inside and outside of the classroom through unique rap based activities, mentorship and practical applications. Rap Therapy

About Sutton and Epsom Rugby Club

Founded in 1881, Sutton & Epsom is one of the oldest active Rugby Clubs in England with a proud and magnificent history. We first played against Saracens as far back as 1883/84, as one of their very early opponents, and in 1901 beat Stade Francais on their home turf.

Today the Club is one of the largest amateur Rugby Clubs in the Country and from its main ground in Rugby Lane, Cheam, remains run by enthusiasts for enthusiasts. They have over 30 teams with 1,200 current and former playing members, plus 1,800 social members. suttonrugby.co.uk

About Westcroft Judo Nork

Their martial arts store offers an extensive selection of high-quality gear and apparel for practitioners of all levels. With products sourced from reputable brands, they ensure that both beginners and seasoned martial artists find the equipment they need to excel in their training. Westcroft Judo Nork

Sutton and Epsom rugby season opener

Having enjoyed their first winning season since lifting the Level 5 title in 2018-19 Sutton approached this new campaign with renewed vigour, optimism and purpose.

The opening fixture was a delight for those with a sense of history. It may have been the first league encounter with Bromley, but they were originally the formidable Catford Bridge who first crossed swords with Sutton in 1897. Bromley had gained a thoroughly deserved promotion from Counties 1 Kent by avenging their opening day defeat at Ashford with a final day 22-7 win over the Toucans. It was a notable campaign with only two other losses, against the second strings of Canterbury and Sevenoaks, and a draw at Dover. Indeed, Sevenoaks II lost their last three matches including a crucial 28-30 epic against Bromley. On this opening afternoon of the new season it was Sutton who excelled, running in eight tries in a 49-19 win.

First half dominance

Agu Benson was the only debutant in the Black and White ranks. Bromley were weakened by a wedding but could still call upon the experience of centurions Hawkins, Scott and the Griffiths brothers. On a sunny but breezy afternoon at the Warman Sports Club the hosts kicked off against the genteel backdrop of Hayes CC 2nd XI v Chislehurst CC 2nd XI.



With the regular pitch unavailable the home team dominated early possession and territory despite playing against the slope. The pattern of the game in the opening ten minutes was excellent continuity by the Kent team being neutered in the Surrey 22 by aggressive and organised defence. Almost the visitors' first visit into the hosts' territory resulted in a penalty. Tom Lennard, making his 50th league appearance and deputising in the kicking duties for the absent Bunting, made it 3-0.

The opening try followed a bizarre incident. A long Lennard clearance went straight to an opponent on halfway but its trajectory was in perfect alignment with the sun. The catcher lost sight of the ball which struck his shoulder, ricocheted and rolled into the in-goal area for a Sutton 5-metre scrum. Grateful for the celestial assistance Sutton scored as Gareth O'Brien jinked through the defence. The Rugby Lane men led 8-0 but soon offered Bromley a chance to open their account.

A poor kick out on the full just outside the 22 was followed by a penalty and in the blink of an eye the Warman crowd were anticipating a score from a 5-metre throw. The ball was overthrown and recovered by Dan Jones allowing Tom Lennard to lift the siege. Bromley's wastefulness was punished as Sam Lennie made a telling break that released Laurence Wise near halfway and the scrum-half did exceptionally well to evade the cover to score. At the end of the first quarter the Black and Whites led 13-0, rather against the run of play.

A spirited Bromley once more put Sutton under the cosh as wave upon wave of attack ran into the adamant defence deep in the visitors' 22. The defence was rewarded with a penalty which Wise took quickly and sprinted off down the touchline. The ball was switched to the open side and the ubiquitous Dan Jones carried it deep into the 22. The pack trundled towards the line before releasing the backs as Agu Benson walked in for a debut try in the corner. From touch Tom Lennard impressively added the conversion for a 20-0 advantage.

Moments later the Lennard boot created the next try as a 50/22 was followed by a penalty kicked into the corner. From the ideal attacking platform Sutton scored their bonus point try just after the half hour. Sustained pressure resulted in a 5-metre penalty and Gareth O'Brien scored his second for 25-0.

The scenario did not improve for the home side in the remainder of the first period. Ewan McTaggart, deputising as captain, stole a lineout ball. Sam Lennie made the break and was ably supported by fellow Kiwi Adam Bibby who weaved his way through the defence with a mesmeric 40-metre run to gift Kyren Ghumra his first try. Lennard added the extras for 32-0.

The mighty McTaggart once more seized a loose ball and the visitors, oozing confidence, opted to run out of defence. Agu Benson took it into enemy territory and passed to fellow wing Ghumra to run in a stunning score. The first half ended with a chastening score reading Bromley 0 Sutton & Epsom 37.

Bromley's fightback

It was imperative for the hosts to rally and ideally get the opening score of the second period to gain a foothold in a match that had rapidly gone against them. However, Sutton resumed where they had left off and created a perfect scoring opportunity after a minute. The final pass was intercepted with the line begging and Bromley survived.

Buoyed by the reprieve the Kent team were soon on the attack. Securing the ball from a 5-metre line their overwhelming pressure from the pack led to a try from close-range to open their account. Jonathon Griffiths added the conversion as the Warman crowd applauded a much-deserved score.

A determined opposition was frustrating the Black and Whites and ten minutes later they had conceded a second try. Once more the pack powered over with lock Harrison Pullen the beneficiary and Griffiths' boot making it 14-37. A stunning comeback victory was very unlikely but a bonus point for four tries was certainly achievable at this stage.

To the great credit of the Warman warriors the Black and Whites never regained the fluency and dominance of their first half performance. However, they did add two further tries after butchering another golden opportunity with a wayward pass. The seventh try was of the popular but mundane variety as the excellent Sutton lineout ushered Sam Lennie over the line for a catch-and-drive score.

The eighth, and final try from the visitors, was far more spectacular. Kyren Ghumra gathered a kick and evaded the close attentions of two tacklers to run the ball back 35 metres to complete an impressive hat trick. Tom Lennard added the simple conversion for 49-14 and his personal century of points for the Rugby Lane team.

Bromley, however, had the final say in this highly entertaining match. Full-back George Hawkins scored following some wonderful attacking play. The conversion came back off the upright and referee Oliver Munn concluded the match with Sutton victors by 49-19.

Reflections and next fixtures

Last season Sutton opened their account with a 50-7 triumph over Old Colfeians at Rugby Lane. This was another impressive first outing with eight tries. Captain McTaggart led from the front not only carrying powerfully but disrupting the Bromley lineout. Hooker Lennie once more excelled in a sterling performance in the loose by a mobile Sutton pack. Laurence Wise at scrum-half injected a high tempo into the match creating one try with his tap penalty and scoring another with a marvellous solo run.

Adam Bibby was devastating whenever allowed any space and the wingers benefited with four tries. Debutant Agu Benson impressed whilst veteran Ghumra took the plaudits with a hat trick.

Bromley's preparations had been hindered by the drought and additionally they were short of key players. Their forwards carried with power but the telling offload was frequently prevented by a stubborn Sutton defence. Their lineout had an afternoon to forget under pressure from the opposition. The back line took every chance to run the ball with Harvey Young prominent. The hosts demonstrated great character to win the second half 19-12 and were competitive to the last.

Next Saturday, 13th September, Sutton host Dartfordians at Rugby Lane at 3pm. The Bexley club opened their account with a home game but endured an horrific afternoon against Sidcup. The Crescent Farm club denied Sutton top spot by annihilating Dartfordians 80-14 in a brutal display. Meanwhile, Bromley will travel to Beckenham in search of their first win of the season.

Teams

Sutton & Epsom: O'Brien, Benson, Scott, Bibby, Ghumra, Lennard, Wise, Johnson, Lennie, Hilton, McTaggart (c), Finney, Rea, Jones, Hegarty. Replacements: Howes, Tame, Munford.

Bromley: Hawkins, A. Griffiths, Young, Rice, Richardson, J. Griffiths, Friday, Milne, Leach, Withers, Pullen, Walder, Laws, Scott, Brown (c). Replacements: Das Neyes, Rowley, Rushton.

Image: Rugby action from a previous game.

New Centre at Nescot gives vision impaired students “the best of both worlds”

A new Centre of Excellence for vision impaired young people has opened at the North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot) in Ewell.

The initiative is run by the Royal Society for Blind Children (RSBC), which has until now only operated its post-16 education hub at Dorton College in Orpington, Bromley. The Surrey launch marks the charity's first step in expanding its unique “hybrid” model of education beyond London.

A hybrid model of learning

The RSBC approach combines mainstream college life with specialist support tailored to blind and partially sighted students aged 16 to 25. Lessons at Nescot are shared with RSBC staff in advance, allowing them to adapt materials into Braille, large print, coloured text or raised diagrams.

Students also take specialist sessions in Braille, mobility and assistive technology, supported by dedicated Learning Support Assistants. The aim is not only academic success, but building the confidence and independence to prepare for adult life.

Under the model, learners divide their time between their local college and the RSBC hub. It is a system that has delivered strong results in Orpington, where 98% of students achieve good educational outcomes despite half having previously experienced unsuccessful placements elsewhere.

Partnership with Nescot and Surrey County Council

Julie Kapsalis, Principal and Chief Executive of Nescot, said:

“We are delighted to partner with RSBC to host the new Centre of Excellence. Our college community is enriched by its diversity, and we believe all young people should be able to access quality education and support. This partnership is a fantastic step



forward.”

RSBC Education Director and Executive Principal Josie Grainger-Francova added:

“Young people with vision impairment are so often excluded from the full education experience. Combining RSBC’s specialist expertise with Nescot’s broad curriculum and inclusive environment, we’re creating a blueprint for what high-quality, person-centred provision should look like. We’re proud to be expanding and supporting even more young people to thrive.”

From Surrey County Council, Eamonn Gilbert, Assistant Director for SEND Commissioning, said:

“The new Centre of Excellence marks a significant step forward in how we support learners with visual impairments in Surrey. RSBC’s proven track record, combined with Nescot’s welcoming and ambitious culture, creates an exciting new post-16 offer for young people with visual impairments.”

A student view

For learners like 19-year-old Lee Roake, the new centre is already making a difference. He said:

“It’s so much more convenient for me to travel to Nescot – previously, I had to commute four hours a day to college. It’s a really inclusive space and I’m supported to be as independent as possible. It’s nice to meet people who are similar to me, too. For me, it’s the best of both worlds.”

About the organisations

The Royal Society for Blind Children is the only specialist post-16 education provider for vision impaired young people in London and the South East. More details: www.rsbc.org.uk

Nescot, based in Ewell, provides a wide range of further and higher education courses from vocational training to degree-level programmes. More details: www.nescot.ac.uk