EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

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Cats come to Leatherhead

27 October 2026



Hairless cats, spotted Bengals and fluffy Ragdolls will be among the attractions when two sisters bring their international championship cat show to Leatherhead Leisure Centre on 14 and 15 November.

Velvet Rebellion is organised by Felinology, founded by sisters Jo and Emily Bell, who held their first small show in Edenbridge, Kent, in 2016. Ten years on, they run international championship shows under the auspices of The International Cat Association (TICA).

Last November, 121 breeders and around 650 visitors attended their Leatherhead show. This year's event has a fashion theme and is the first in a planned three-part "Fashion Trilogy".

Cats on show

Pedigree cats will be judged in 10 rings across the weekend by an international panel, with judges travelling from as far afield as Canada. Visitors will be able to watch the judging and meet breeds including Persians, Ragdolls, Bengals, Savannahs, Sphynx and Peterbalds.

Jo Bell said: "People picture a cat show as rows of cages and very serious people with clipboards. We wanted the opposite. It's glamorous, it's a bit mad, and it's the best day out you can have for twelve quid. Bring the kids, they get in free, and they'll go home wanting a hairless cat. Sorry in advance."

The free Cativity Zone will offer crafts and a breed hunt. Children can also take part in Gentle Paws, a short session with Ellie's Animal Academy on handling cats kindly. Each child taking part will receive a certificate.

A marketplace of independent cat businesses will run on both days.

Visiting the show

Velvet Rebellion takes place at Leatherhead Leisure Centre, Guildford Road, Leatherhead KT22 9BL, on Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 November, from 10am to 4pm. Last entry is at 3pm.

Tickets cost £12 for adults and £6 for concessions. Children under 12 and carers enter free, and family tickets start at £22. Tickets are available in advance at buytickets.at/felinology1/2298475 or on the door. There is free parking on site.

Mayor's casting vote sends Epsom and Ewell Local Plan changes to consultation

27 October 2026



Epsom and Ewell councillors have agreed by the narrowest possible margin to consult residents on proposed changes to the borough's Local Plan, after a contentious extraordinary council meeting yesterday evening.

The vote was tied at 13–13 before Mayor Cllr **Lucie McIntyre** (RA West Ewell and daughter of Cllr Dallen) used her casting vote in favour. The decision allows consultation on the Planning Inspector's proposed main modifications; it does not adopt the Local Plan or grant planning permission for individual developments.

The changes include additional Green Belt sites at Downs Farm and Priest Hill. An amendment seeking a formal council objection to Green Belt development was ruled out of order by the Mayor and was not put to a vote, although councillors

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were shown its wording and later referred to it during the discussion.

Why was the amendment ruled out?

Cllr **Kieran Persand** (Conservative Horton) submitted the amendment, seconded by Cllr **Shanice Goldman** (Conservative Nonsuch).

An earlier version supplied to Epsom and Ewell Times would have retained the recommendation to hold the consultation, while asking the council to oppose the proposed release of Green Belt land at Priest Hill, Downs Farm and Horton Farm. It also called for further scrutiny of brownfield alternatives and for the council's objections to be communicated to the Inspector.

After the version before the meeting had been displayed, the Mayor ruled it out of order. She described her decision as procedural, rather than a judgement on the merits of the proposed changes.

Her stated reason was that the item before councillors was concerned with whether to consult on the proposed modifications. She said that, under that item, the council could not determine whether the evidence base was adequate because that went beyond the scope of the recommendation being considered. She said individual councillors and residents could object to allocations through the proposed consultation and ask the Inspector to consider whether they were justified.

The distinction appears to have been between allowing the Inspector's proposed changes to go out to consultation and adopting a formal council position on whether particular sites were justified. The Mayor did not give a detailed explanation at the meeting of why the latter could not be added to the former as an amendment.

Persand challenged the ruling and asked for an opportunity to revise his amendment. The Mayor said her ruling was final and declined to adjourn the meeting. She indicated that another amendment could be considered if it was ready in writing; later, when Cllr **Alex Coley** (Independent Ruxley) asked whether he could put one forward verbally, she said it had to be written.

Persand said he had followed the procedure suggested to him and had corresponded with officers before the meeting. The Mayor later said there had been exchanges about suggested changes but that she had not had time to respond to the final version, which she said arrived at about 3pm that day. Persand disputed that account.

Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Horton) argued that the constitution allowed amendments to be amended. "I do not understand how you could preside over a matter of such import" and allow available procedures to be blocked, she told the Mayor.

Housing and the Green Belt

Persand said residents wanted councillors to protect the Green Belt, but insisted he recognised the need for housing.

"I was born and raised in this borough. I've lived here my entire life. I work in London alongside my council responsibilities. Yet I still can't afford to buy a home in the very place I grew up," he said.

He added: "Our green spaces provide amazing opportunities for biodiversity and carbon storage. And once they are developed, they are gone for generations."

He said he could not support consultation on the plan in its current form.

Muir said the Conservative amendment would not have stopped consultation. "Our residents have a democratic right to be heard," she said, but the council should also submit a corporate objection to the Inspector. She argued that opportunities in the town centre and commercial areas should be maximised "before a single blade of grass is cut".

Goldman questioned why Downs Farm had previously been considered unsustainable but was now included. "As far as I'm aware, nothing has changed. No infrastructure has changed," she said.

"An impossible dilemma"

Cllr **Steven McCormick** (Conservative Woodcote and Langley Vale), a former chair of the planning policy committee, said he had expected the amendment to be debated and was disappointed that Persand had not been able to revise it.

He challenged the position that councillors could not alter the schedule before consultation and argued that presenting it as an unchangeable document reduced Full Council to "an administrative rubber stamp".

McCormick also criticised the choice he believed councillors faced if they rejected consultation:

"The choice presented to this chamber is accept the Green Belt releases inside the plan, or developers will take them outside the plan on appeal. That is an impossible dilemma, not a genuine democratic choice."

He said elected members had been bypassed while additional sites were evaluated and argued that urban alternatives had not been properly considered. He added that the final decision on adoption belonged to Full Council: if the Green Belt releases remained when the plan returned, he would vote against adoption.

His legal interpretation was disputed by the position set out to councillors: that the Inspector's proposed main modifications had to be consulted on as presented.

A voice for residents

Cllr **Peter O'Donovan** (RA Ewell Court), chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee, proposed the

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consultation. He said councillors were being asked neither to add sites to nor remove them from the plan.

“We’re not asking you to comment on the local plan, what you like, what you don’t like. Are you happy to approve a public consultation?” he said. Responses would go to the Inspector, who would produce a final report before a subsequent council decision on adoption.

Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) urged residents to make their arguments through the consultation. He said many emails received from residents contained well-reasoned points about sites, but the Inspector would consider whether the modifications should change.

“What we can do tonight is we can start this consultation and give our residents a voice, give ourselves a voice.”

Woodbridge said he did not think the council should formally object while also acting as facilitator of the consultation. “I don’t think we should simultaneously say, but we’ve already made our mind up,” he said.

Cllr **Neil Dallen** (RA Town) rejected the suggestion that RA councillors had asked for Downs Farm and Priest Hill to be added. “We put forward a plan without it in,” he said. The Inspector had decided to include the sites in the proposed modifications, and residents and councillors could respond.

Divisions over procedure

Cllr **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch) said he would support consultation “through gritted teeth and under protest”, despite opposing the additional sites. “I hate the local plan with a passion,” he said, but feared that voting against consultation would leave the borough in a worse position.

Cllr **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) said he supported housing, including on Green Belt land if necessary, and would have opposed Persand’s amendment. Nevertheless, he could not support the recommendation because the amendment had not been debated and voted on. He described the handling of the meeting as “completely undemocratic”.

Cllr **James Lawrence** (Independent College) said he supported building at Priest Hill and Downs Farm because housing was needed. But he criticised the opportunities councillors had been given to influence site selection and said he would not support the recommendation.

Coley said councillors had not received all the information they needed, referring to correspondence and material exchanged during the examination. The Mayor said the information required to be published had been included.

O’Donovan said that, if consultation were refused, the matter would return to the Inspector for a decision. He urged councillors to let residents have their say and said consultation was expected to start on 3 November.

Following the Inspector’s consideration of responses, councillors are expected to be asked whether to adopt the plan. O’Donovan said that decision would probably come in March, shortly before Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is replaced by East Surrey Council.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Did Epsom and Ewell councillors approve more Green Belt release?

Image: McCormick speaks, Coley to his right and Goldman to his left. Woodbridge in foreground. EEBC YouTube

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Epsom to witness tomorrow’s world-beating violin virtuoso

27 October 2026

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A rising star of the violin will bring an hour of music to Epsom in a free early-evening concert on Monday 2 November.

Gáspár Kelemen, an international prize-winning violinist from Hungary and a student at the Royal Academy of Music, will perform at Epsom Methodist Church on Ashley Road.

His programme includes Bartók's *First Rhapsody*, Bach's *Andante and Allegro in A minor*, Paganini's *Caprice No. 13*, Ysaÿe's *Saint-Saëns Waltz Caprice* and Sibelius's *Violin Concerto in D minor*.

The concert begins at **6.30pm** and lasts for one hour—an opportunity to relax after work and before dinner while enjoying music from an exceptional young performer.

He wowed the audience at a Ukraine Music Evening at Epsom Methodist Church on 3rd October and this is a chance to hear this remarkable talent again as he returns to Epsom.

The event is organised by Lionel Blackman, director of Epsom Music, the charity that also runs Epsom Jazz Club.

Admission is free, all are welcome and no reservations are necessary.

When: Monday 2 November 2026, 6.30pm–7.30pm
Where: Epsom Methodist Church, Ashley Road, Epsom KT18 5AQ
Enquiries: epsommusicsoc@gmail.com

FULL DETAILS

East Surrey Council – Not Quite What We Were Promised?

27 October 2026



Dear Sir,

The Government's decision to move to unitary councils in Surrey was partly sold to residents as making local government simpler by removing two-tier local government, which apparently is confusing for residents.

It does seem strange, therefore, that three early decisions East Surrey Council has to make are whether to introduce Neighbourhood Area Committees below East Surrey Council (ESC), whether to set up a Strategic Foundation Authority above ESC, and whether to seek the introduction of an elected mayor.

The ruling group at East Surrey Council has committed to doing all three, so two councils will eventually become four local authorities, with only two democratically elected. And all four will be paid for by the council taxpayer.

Funding is another key issue. The Government's position has been that moving to unitary councils will save money, yet the cost of local government reform in Surrey is currently estimated to be £32.5 million.

In addition, Surrey has been hit hard by the Government's Fair Funding Reforms, which will see Government grants to ESC cut by £30 million over the next couple of years. We are heading to a position where most of East Surrey Council's expenditure will have to be financed by council tax, and almost inevitably by the maximum amount possible.

It must be a priority for East Surrey councillors to ensure value for money in service provision, appoint a lean senior management structure, and use every opportunity that a fresh start provides to look at more creative and effective ways to deliver key services.

The RA and Independent Group at ESC is the third largest group and, as the leader of the group, I used the first council meeting in May to map out some key priorities for ESC.

For example, closer-to-home SEND places for East Surrey's children, and a better system for dealing with potholes, with a

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guarantee of a “right first time” repair.

It is important too that there is no reduction in the funding and support in kind to voluntary and charitable groups that provide some of the most important services and support to some of our most vulnerable residents.

None of these are designed to produce huge savings, but they are ways in which we, as East Surrey councillors, can show we are serious about some of the key issues that affect our residents.

Yours faithfully.

East Surrey Councillor ***Eber Kington*** (Residents Association)

The cost to Surrey of sending SEND children to school

27 October 2026



The day Karissa Fisher turned 16, her parents found the vital transport support they needed to get her to school ended overnight.

Karissa, who has severe mobility impairments, had long received SEND help from the council – including with transport assistance in her daily journeys to and from a specialist school. This involved a round trip that, depending on the route, could stretch up to 50 miles across rural Surrey from Effingham to Cranleigh.

But she has become one of many young people facing the so-called post-16 SEND “cliff-edge”, where substantial amounts of statutory support is removed from when they hit this age.

Councils only have a legal obligation to offer free school transport for SEND children until they have reached the age of 16 – after which they have passed their compulsory years at school. Assistance can include specialist help in journeying to school as well as financial help towards travel costs.

Karissa’s mother Cassie Fisher and stepfather Ian Fisher are now locked in a battle with Surrey County Council to regain vital support to get Karissa to and from her specialist school.

They are among the many parents facing fraught and lengthy struggles to get support for SEND children across Surrey amid a tricky financial picture for many councils – with demand for these services continuing to climb.

“Where her school is located is miles from where we live,” Cassie told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS). “There is no public transport where we live. Even if we wanted to take her to school by public transport, we would not be able to do that anyway.”

“Unfortunately with these specialist schools, they seem to put them in the middle of nowhere. They are miles away.”

She and Ian said the council had refused their case for further transport support on the ground it would be “safe and reasonable” for working parents to escort their children to school – even though medical advice says Karissa requires a strict two-adult safety protocol on the journey.

While they had received a petrol allowance for the past five years, since Karissa turned 16 this support has been completely stopped.

However, procedural issues have stemmed their attempt to mount legal challenges against the council to get Karissa the support she needs. Many families struggle to prove “financial hardship” to claim post-16 support, but Ian told the LDRS there were no forms offered for him to present such evidence.

Not all claims for SEND support are assessed on the basis of financial hardship, with wider circumstances around a family’s needs usually being taken into account. But critics of the system argue it often leads to claims being assessed in an inconsistent manner.

“Because Surrey County Council now asserts that all internal appeal options for this academic year are exhausted, we are left in a position where we must wait for the upcoming school year cycle, at which point we intend to formally apply directly for funded taxi support,” Ian explained.

From observing school drop offs, he estimated that as many as four in ten of Karissa’s classmates receive this support. “It is impossible to understand how the council can claim to apply their policy consistently when nearly half her class receives funded transport, while Karissa is turned away,” he added.

Ian and Cassie are far from the only SEND parents in Surrey to have faced these problems in recent years. A freedom of

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information request by the LDRS found that Surrey County Council received 95 complaints about SEND transport in the 2025/26 financial year alone.

The data also laid bare the scale of the challenge facing the council as demand for support continues to soar. In the 2019/20 financial year, 4,586 children were receiving SEND transport support – a number that has consistently risen each year to a total of 7,243 in 2025/26.

Across the same time period, the council's expenditure on this service climbed from £35,463,148 in 2019/20 to £59,667,792 in 2025/26 – despite a small dip during the height of the Covid pandemic.

Surrey County Council's children and families lead Councillor Helyn Clack (Conservative: Dorking Rural) insisted that the council applies national guidelines and its own policy "consistently and fairly", but could not comment on individual cases.

"Each application is thoroughly assessed on individual circumstances, and that means cases which may appear similar can sometimes result in different decisions," she said.

But many parents' worries have been echoed by Guildford's MP Zöe Franklin, who told the LDRS: "The problem with Surrey's approach to SEND transport is that it is incredibly inconsistent. I have supported several constituents whose circumstances met many of the criteria needed by Surrey's policy, only for their applications to be refused.

"The arbitrary way that rules are applied leaves families confused and frustrated. Families deserve a fair, transparent and consistent process, not one that appears to depend on who is making the decision."

Emma, who asked only to be referred to by her first name, faced a two-year wait before the council acknowledged her child, who is aged under 16, required specialist support.

Her child is now attending a placement 17 miles from her home – and as a result, she applied for local transport given the distance. "It would mean driving an additional 340 miles per week, we couldn't manage that ongoingly," she told the LDRS.

"I also stated clearly in our application that there was already a council-contracted taxi that transports two other children to the specialist school which passes by our house each day. So I was requesting access to an existing resource that would not incur much – if any – additional cost."

Despite this, her application for home-to-school transport was rejected on the grounds the school is not a named placement in the child's EHCP.

The mother disputed this reasoning, citing the Education Act 1996 – and pointing out that other children at the same school receive this same support.

"My message to the council is that it is not acceptable to withhold SEND services regardless of financial pressures – this is a vulnerable and legally protected category of society. The law has not changed, families should not be subjected to rationing of support."

While Emma's own application was refused on EHCP placement grounds rather than employment criteria, she highlighted that rules around parental accompaniment have been a major hurdle for other local families.

She added: "They basically say work is no excuse for not taking your child to school. Their argument is every parent has to juggle their responsibility to take their child to school and their work.

"But that isn't necessarily the case. If you have a SEND child and travel is necessary because the local authority hasn't commissioned an appropriate setting for them nearby, the responsibility for mitigating the resulting travel burden sits with the council, not the family.

"Furthermore, their decision should also take into account what is 'reasonably practicable' for a family."

According to the Department for Education's guidance, councils will generally expect parents to accompany children, although authorities "must consider cases where the parent says there are good reasons why they are unable to accompany their child, or make other suitable arrangements for their journey, and make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of each case."

Emma added: "I was warned by other parents to expect that I would probably have to appeal my application at least once, maybe even twice before getting approval. It seems to happen so often that this is what families now expect."

Councillor Clack added that while demand continues to grow for SEND services, and that the council wants to use public money "responsibly and effectively" while ensuring that all eligible families get the support they need.

She told the LDRS: "For young people over compulsory school age, the rules for travel support are different and there is no automatic entitlement to funded travel support.

"We understand that this can be a significant change for young people with SEND and their families, and we consider each application carefully, according to a range of factors including the young person's needs, the journey and placement, the available travel options, family circumstances and any further supporting evidence.

"Similarly, where a placement is temporary or on trial, this is taken into consideration but not treated in isolation; the other factors are also taken into account.

"We appreciate that families may sometimes disagree with a decision, and we offer a two-stage appeal process where they can submit additional information or evidence for consideration."

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

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Photo: Cassie and Ian Fisher (Credit: Cassie and Ian Fisher)

Carer caught red-handed goes to prison

27 October 2026



Hidden CCTV caught a carer stealing jewellery from her elderly and vulnerable client’s home in Oxted, after his family noticed items were missing.

Lara Jones, 50, of Cowden Pound Road, Mark Beech, Kent, has been sentenced to three years in prison for burglary.

After Jones completed her first shift for the client, his family noticed an earring at the top of the stairs. When they went to return it to their jewellery box, they discovered that jewellery was missing. They suspected the new carer but could not be sure, so they installed hidden cameras in the bedroom.

On November 26, 2025, Jones entered the bedroom and was seen going through drawers and wardrobes and pocketing jewellery worth £8,000.

The victim’s daughter called police on Wednesday, December 3, saying her father was alone at home with his new carer, whom the family had seen on CCTV going through bedroom drawers and cupboards. Officers attended and arrested Jones on suspicion of burglary. She was searched and the jewellery was found.

The victim’s family said: “Having someone violate your trust in your own home, at a time when you are at your most vulnerable, is devastating. The emotional impact has been profound, and it has made an already difficult situation even harder.

“We are immensely grateful to Surrey Police and the Crown Prosecution Service for their dedication, compassion and determination in securing this conviction. Their support throughout has meant a great deal to our family, and we are relieved that justice has been served.”

Detective Constable Jen Trudel, the officer in charge of the case, said: “The family were so disheartened that someone they let into their home to care for a loved one could be so heartless as to steal from them at the first opportunity. This has made them wary of letting anyone into their home despite the much-needed respite required. It was an incredibly emotional moment for the family when the sentence was read out, and hopefully this will allow them some closure so that they can move on with their lives.”

Jones pleaded not guilty and the case went to trial in August, when a jury found her guilty of three counts of burglary. She was sentenced at Guildford Crown Court on Friday, October 9, and ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £228.

Surrey Police

Sutton & Epsom triumph over the elements

27 October 2026

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Gravesend 12 – Sutton & Epsom 17 | Venue: Rectory Field 24th October

After the drought and the heat came the rain and the wind, adding to the belief that, but for the weather, the British would have nothing to talk about. The elements played a considerable part as conditions deteriorated during the match, impairing handling but maximising the physical contribution made by all concerned in an enthralling encounter.

Sutton & Epsom held firm to gain an impressive 17-12 away win as the hosts secured a bonus point with their final play.

Sutton & Epsom made two changes from their victorious Bromley squad. Gareth O'Brien returned from injury and club stalwart Jack Howes was a late call-up for "Father Eric", who appropriately had paternal duties. Gravesend also had eleventh-hour disruption, so the versatile Ben Kite was left flying high at 10 rather than 9 when George Bruce withdrew.

Under leaden skies and a blustery wind, with a dire forecast, the game began. In the early exchanges S&E struggled with their lineout but had the edge in the set scrum, whilst number 8 Les Falefatu impressed with his carrying for Gravesend.

After ten minutes Gravesend failed to execute a move and the ball splashed down to the sodden turf. A Sutton & Epsom player reacted instantaneously and completed the hardest part by kicking the ball with commendable precision over the try line before being flummoxed by the bounce when first to arrive. It was a case of Wittgenstein's axiom "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must remain silent" in terms of the name of the enterprising but unsuccessful soul. No try, and back for a scrum from the initial knock-on.

The Rugby Lane men did not have too much time to wallow in self-pity as they opened their account a minute later. A powerful initial carry brought them to within five metres. Multiple phases later the stubborn home defence was breached as hooker Sam Lennie emerged from a mass of steaming humanity with the glory. Freddy Bunting was grateful for a conversion at the easier end of the scale of difficulty for a 7-0 lead.

At Rectory Field S&E have learned in the past that it is the Hope that kills. It took only a couple of minutes before Gravesend replied as Ben Hope secured his traditional stunning solo score with a run from near halfway. Unsurprisingly, in the conditions, the conversion from the flank faltered as the hosts trailed 5-7.

The home team were now enjoying a period of ascendancy. One assault was thwarted when a speculative kick resulted in a mark. Such exotic delights were shelved as they adopted route one and carried to the Sutton & Epsom line. Carry after carry and the Surrey men stood firm, with the ball adjudged to have been held up over the line.

Then it was Sutton & Epsom's time in the limelight. They advanced the ball with the boot and impressive catch and drives to encamp deep in the opposition 22. In addition, their scrum dominance began to bear fruit in terms of penalties. The visitors were soon to discover that the home XV were equally cussed and adamantine in defence as they forced a penalty when a stray S&E hand erred on the deck near the line.

As the interval approached, both teams searched for that telling moment. Gravesend had made light of the conditions, enterprisingly running back kicks from their 22. However, in time added on, Tipene Maxwell's chase was rewarded with a fine tackle that led to a Sutton & Epsom penalty.

The three-point option from 15 metres in front of the posts was declined. There was logic in opting for a scrum. When their attack floundered and they returned for another penalty, the senior supporters chuntered in unison as not only the kick at goal was declined but also the scrum. It was as incongruous as witnessing Johnny Rotten performing at an eisteddfod. The tap and go led to more rousing home defence and the half concluded with Sutton & Epsom 7-5 up.

Second-half surge

With the infallible value of hindsight, the opening 15 minutes of the second period were the key to the match. During this phase Sutton & Epsom played their best rugby and, with two tries, created a 12-point lead.

The Surrey men started the second half with renewed relish and it took only a couple of minutes for their pack to be rewarded with a try from towering lock Ewan McTaggart to put S&E 12-5 up. On this occasion there was to be no instant reply from the hosts.

The Rugby Lane eight increased the pressure at the scrummage. From one penalty the ball was drilled into the corner and, though the first lineout was disrupted, from the next the Sutton & Epsom catch and drive culminated in a Dan Jones try. The conversion failed but Sutton & Epsom extended their advantage to 17-5.

The playing conditions had deteriorated markedly, with heavier rain and the wind now blowing with increasing vigour in the hosts' favour. Gravesend rallied in search of a try to get within a score. It was no surprise that, when offered a kickable penalty with 15 minutes left on the clock, they opted for the tap penalty. It felt a bit like Groundhog Day as again the referee indicated the ball had been held up over the line.

To add to the drama, the game became one with uncontested scrums. This decision resulted in the traditional confusion, consternation and conniptions.

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The game became an increasingly truncated affair, with many stoppages the result of Sutton & Epsom infringements, and it was no shock when the referee issued yellow cards. The first to go was replacement Gareth O'Brien for being offside and he was soon followed by Tom Lennard. Despite Sutton & Epsom being reduced to 13, the game was already in time added on.

Sutton & Epsom had the chance to relieve the siege but their clearance failed to make touch. A fine arcing run from the 22 looked destined for a score but fell just short. After penalties and multiple carries, the hosts were belatedly rewarded when Brad Money added his five cents' worth to score. The successful conversion ended the game with Sutton & Epsom 17-12 victors.

A performance of character

Sam Lennie, rather like Matt Whitaker of yesteryear, was awarded Man of the Match by the hosts for the umpteenth time. In his current form he reminds one of William Hazlitt's comment on Cavanagh, the great fives player of his day: "there was not only nobody equal, but nobody second to him."

However, this Saturday, in truth, it was a performance of character, determination and defiance by the whole squad that was the source of the victory, and it was almost invidious to single out the likes of Josh Glanville.

For Gravesend, their back-row triumvirate of Money, Chahal and Falefatu revelled in the conditions and were only subdued by exceptional Sutton & Epsom defence on their line. As for the back divisions, they will be praying for more favourable conditions for the return fixture at Rugby Lane but, then again, the game is scheduled for 6 February.

Rectory Field, as ever, was a most convivial location after the game as juniors and infants rubbed shoulders or shins with players from as far back as the 1960s. This season there is an additional bonus, thoroughly appreciated by this correspondent: the game is shown on a big screen in the clubhouse, meaning that the less intrepid can avoid exposure, trench foot and desquamation and watch in luxurious comfort.

Next Saturday Sutton & Epsom return to the home comforts of Rugby Lane to play Horsham. In the rest of the league, Beckenham lost their unbeaten status but remain in pole position, although only five points separate the top eight clubs.

Sutton & Epsom: Lennard, Scott, Bibby, Maxwell, Findlay A, Bunting, Findlay E, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, McTaggart, Glanville, Rea, Jones and Hegarty (captain). Replacements: Howes, Tame and O'Brien.

Gravesend: Betts, Barnes, Hope, Sims, Cooke, Kite, Brady M, Brooker, Dadson, Steel, Mackenzie, Brett, Money, Chahal and Falefatu. Replacements: Laqeretabua, Sims and Brady C.

Bob Haimes

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Photo from a previous fixture – credit Robin Kennedy

Epsom artist's peaches win Surrey readers' choice award

27 October 2026



An Epsom artist has won a readers' choice award in the Surrey Artist of the Year 2026 competition with a painting of peaches.

Artan Jahaj's *Peaches on Navy* was voted the favourite among the work of 17 shortlisted artists in the Essential Surrey Readers' Choice Award.

Artan, a long-time Epsom resident, is a classically trained painter who began as an apprentice in a working studio in central Athens. He went on to spend more than ten years working there as a professional artist.

He remains drawn to Mediterranean light and travels in southern Europe, taking photographs that inspire paintings full of light, colour and warmth.

Speaking to Essential Surrey about the award, Artan said: "I am absolutely thrilled to hear that my work won the Readers' Choice Award. It means a great deal, especially as I have made Surrey my home and it is amazing to know that people here have connected with my work."

The readers' award was held alongside the Surrey Artist of the Year competition, organised by Surrey Artists Open Studios and the New Ashgate Gallery in Farnham. Own Art

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Artan’s work will have an extended display at the New Ashgate Gallery until 16 January 2027. The gallery is a not-for-profit organisation, and sales of artwork benefit both the gallery and the artist.

Lionel Blackman

Salts surrender lead on rain-soaked afternoon at Camberley

27 October 2026



Saturday 24 October 2026 | Krooner Park | Combined Counties League Premier South | Camberley Town 3–2 Epsom & Ewell

Epsom travelled to Camberley Town on a bleak Saturday, with Storm Boelo delivering a treacherous forecast. The game got underway in driving rain on a heavy, muddy pitch — the kind of traditional surface that demands long studs and true grit.

The Salts lined up in a revised 4-3-3 formation, boosted by the return of captain Brendan in the centre of midfield and the debut of young goalkeeper Aaron, signed from RPV. Epsom started brightly, dominating the midfield battles and distributing the ball with confidence.

In the eighth minute, the pressure told. A misplaced clearance from the Camberley goalkeeper fell to Blessing, who won the race against the hosts’ number five and calmly chipped the stranded keeper from inside the penalty area.

Camberley began to grow into the game and, in the 26th minute, a contentious decision went against the Salts. Foord was penalised with a questionable free-kick and a yellow card. The resulting pressure led to a disputed corner, from which the ball was flicked on at the near post for Hoppit to level the scores.

Epsom responded excellently. A second corner quickly followed a period of fine midfield passing, and Brendan delivered a pinpoint cross to the back post. Toby rose highest to power his header home, restoring the lead just before half-time.

Debutant Aaron had enjoyed a flawless, composed first half in goal.

After the break, Toby came agonisingly close to a third, rattling the crossbar with another powerful header from a corner.

The turning point arrived shortly afterwards. Naz appealed for offside, but the flag stayed down. As Camberley’s number three cut inside, Miller, tracking back, made shoulder-to-shoulder contact and the referee pointed to the penalty spot.

Tempers flared, resulting in Max being sent off from the sidelines. Camberley’s number 10 converted the penalty despite Aaron guessing the right way: 2–2.

The game became increasingly scrappy on the worsening surface, although Foord came close when he curled an effort just over the bar.

Disaster struck following another disputed free-kick. Steadman curled the ball into the box and Aaron came out to claim it, but was caught in a heavy collision involving Naz, Toby and Camberley’s number 15. The ball agonisingly ricocheted off a head and into the empty net.

Epsom threw everything forward in the closing stages, but there was to be no way back. A frustrating afternoon was compounded after the final whistle when Oba received a yellow card during the post-match arguments.

We wish Camberley well with their pitch renovations during the summer and look forward to playing on a perfect surface next year.

Up the Salts.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media

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Spelthorne leaders play musical chairs in Council's dying days

27 October 2026



A Surrey district council has chosen to replace its council leader just months before the council's abolition next spring. Councillor Joanne Sexton (Independent Spelthorne Group: Ashford East) will now lead Spelthorne Borough Council until next April, when the authority is absorbed into the new West Surrey council.

It came after the now ex-leader, Greg Neall (Liberal Democrats: Ashford Town), faced a no-confidence motion, despite having led the council since May. The motion was tabled by another former council leader John Boughtflower (Conservative: Shepperton Town), who sought to return to the post following Councillor Neall's removal from office.

But the meeting quickly turned bitter and acrimonious as Councillor Neall fought to defend the record of his brief spell in the job. Opening the debate, Councillor Boughtflower said: "We voted in the current leadership with high hopes, but this has quickly faded."

The former council leader attacked the current executive over ongoing asset sales amid the authority's precarious financial picture, saying "we just don't have the confidence".

He added: "With some major challenges left, I'm not filled with any confidence. We need to get the last part of this council right before it moves to West Surrey."

Spelthorne is currently overseen by government-appointed commissioners, who were brought in last year to close the council's budget gaps after it amassed significant debts.

Deputy leader Councillor Chris Bateson (Liberal Democrats: Staines South) blasted the no-confidence motion as an "act of self-indulgence by the opposition".

Addressing Councillor Boughtflower's criticisms of asset sales, he said: "Let's not be under illusions when we talk about property. We are under government direction for asset sales.

"And behind the scenes we have our arguments with the commissioners, but at the end of the day they trump everything – and whoever sits in these seats will face the same issues and get the same answers."

Councillor Neall also stood up to back up his record and echo his deputy's sentiments about the motion.

"Contrary to the absence of evidence in this motion, there is plenty of evidence that my leadership has been successful," he said, citing housing targets, morale among service teams and the performance of planning officers as among his achievements.

"Anything less than voting against this motion is electing a leadership team who don't even know where their confidence lies from one month to the next.

"Whether I am leader of the council after this meeting or not, I will hold my head up high knowing that my leadership was successful and I have the evidence to prove it."

It comes as Spelthorne Borough Council enters its final few months of existence before the abolition of the current two-tier council structure in Surrey in favour of two new unitary councils in the West and East.

The current system has an overarching county council alongside several borough councils, both of which carry out different functions.

Under the incoming system, all local government services will be provided by each of the two new councils in their respective areas.

Accusations of "personal attacks" were frequently levied throughout the confidence debate, with the chair intervening on multiple occasions to insist that councillors refrain from "aggravation" and stick to the specifics of the motion.

Members ultimately voted to remove Councillor Neall from the leadership, with 12 votes in favour of a motion to declare no confidence, 9 against, and 12 abstentions. No one party has a majority on Spelthorne Borough Council, with the Conservatives being the largest group – holding 14 of the council's 39 seats.

The next step of the motion would have been a vote to install Councillor Boughtflower as council leader in his stead. However, Councillor John Turner (Liberal Democrats: Halliford and Sunbury West) interjected to table an amendment suggesting Councillor Sexton as the replacement leader. His amendment also proposed Councillor Bateson be brought back as deputy leader.

Councillor Turner said: "We had a successful partnership there for many months, and hopefully we can heal a few wounds tonight and get on with what we have to do."

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Spelthorne has seen a high turnover of council leaders over the past decade, with 10 different councillors having held the role since 2011.

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

Image: Epsom and Ewell Times

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Remembrance and Armistice Day activities

27 October 2026



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is proud to announce that Remembrance and Armistice Day services, parades and activities will take place across the borough to honour the fallen and give thanks to those who have served past and present in the armed forces.

Formal Acts of Remembrance will include the council's annual Garden of Remembrance at Bourne Hall Park on Wednesday 4 November, Remembrance Sunday wreath laying and procession on 8 November and an Armistice Day Service in Epsom market place on 11 November.

Garden of Remembrance:

Wednesday 4 November at Bourne Hall Park, Ewell

On Wednesday 4 November at 10.30am, the Mayor of Epsom & Ewell and local school children will officially open the Garden of Remembrance at Bourne Hall Park in Ewell. Children will perform songs and poems before placing poppy tokens at 11am to honour and remember all those who have died in the service of their country.

The Garden will be open to the public until 29 November, giving people the opportunity to visit, take time to reflect and pay their respects.

Remembrance wreath laying and procession:

Sunday 8 November in Epsom and Ewell

At 9.30am, the Mayor of Epsom & Ewell will lay two wreaths at the War Memorials in Ashley Road, Epsom. At 10.30am, the Remembrance Day procession will begin at the Army Reserve Centre, Welbeck Close, and proceed to St Mary's Church, Ewell. This will be followed by an Act of Remembrance, wreath laying and a church service. A Remembrance Day service will also take place at St Martin of Tours Church, Epsom, where a wreath will be laid by Councillor James Lawrence, representing College Ward.

Armistice Day Service 11.11.11:

Wednesday 11 November at the Clocktower in Epsom Market Place

Members of the public are invited to join a ceremony on Wednesday 11 November at the Clock Tower in Epsom Market Place alongside the Royal British Legion, armed forces personnel, veterans and local school children. The ceremony will begin shortly before 11am and will culminate in the nationwide two-minute silence at 11am, providing an opportunity for the community to come together in remembrance.

Jackie King, Chief Executive, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, said:

"Each year, our Remembrance and Armistice Day commemorations give us the opportunity to pause, reflect and remember. We honour all those who have served their country with courage and dedication, particularly those who made the ultimate sacrifice. I encourage residents to join us at these events as we come together to pay our respects and ensure that their service is not forgotten."

For more information on Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Remembrance Day activities – Remembrance in the borough of Epsom & Ewell | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

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Epsom War Memorial Ashley Road Google Maps

Surrey to support nature activity for health

27 October 2026



A new countywide programme has been launched to help more Surrey residents improve their health and wellbeing through spending time in nature.

Surrey County Council has launched the Surrey Green Health and Wellbeing Programme in partnership with the Community Foundation for Surrey. Backed by a £170,000 investment, the programme will support voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations that provide nature-based activities and services across the county.

The programme which forms part of SCC's work to improve health and wellbeing, strengthen communities and help prevent poor health was officially launched on Wednesday 7 October at an event bringing together organisations from across Surrey to share ideas, make new connections and find out more about the support available through the programme.

Across Surrey, organisations already deliver activities such as community gardening, conservation volunteering, walking groups and outdoor wellbeing sessions. The new programme will help these organisations grow, work together and reach more people. More information on existing services is available on the Healthy Surrey website.

Mark Nuti, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Health and Communities, said: "We know that spending time in nature can have a positive impact on both physical and mental wellbeing. Across Surrey, local organisations are already doing fantastic work to help people connect with nature and improve their health."

"This new programme will help strengthen those organisations, encourage greater collaboration and ensure more residents can access the benefits that Green Health can provide. By investing in community-led solutions, we're helping to create healthier communities and a stronger, more connected Green Health network across Surrey."

The Community Foundation for Surrey will manage the new Green Health and Wellbeing Grant Fund, providing financial support to eligible VCSE organisations. The programme will also create a Surrey-wide Community of Practice, bringing organisations together through workshops, networking and shared learning opportunities.

Beccy Bowden, Chief Executive of Community Foundation for Surrey, said: "We are delighted to launch this new fund in partnership with Surrey County Council, helping more people across Surrey benefit from the positive impact nature can have on health and wellbeing. Together, we want to support local organisations to extend this important work, helping more residents connect with nature and access the benefits of green and blue spaces."

"By working alongside Surrey County Council and community partners, we can help improve health and wellbeing while strengthening people's connection with the natural environment around them."

The programme includes:

- A dedicated Green Health and Wellbeing Grant Fund for eligible VCSE organisations
- A Surrey-wide Community of Practice for organisations working in green health
- Workshops, networking events and opportunities to share learning
- Collaboration with partners to help shape the future of green health in Surrey

Information about grant funding opportunities and how organisations can get involved will be shared through Surrey County Council and Community Foundation for Surrey channels.

Surrey County Council

SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

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Surrey Fesitival: Winnie-the-Pooh, refugee histories and music-making machines and more...

27 October 2026



How did a Surrey town help people fleeing the Nazis? What can Winnie-the-Pooh's woodland tell us all about belonging? And what does a mechanical piano teach us about music in the age of AI?

The University of Surrey is inviting the public to explore these questions through ten free events during the Being Human Festival, running from 5 to 14 November 2026. Held across Guildford, Dorking and Compton, its programme brings archives, performances and hands-on activities together under this year's theme, 'Crossroads'.

At Refugee Voices from World War II, visitors will discover how ordinary people in Dorking helped those escaping the Nazi regime. A pop-up exhibition at Dorking Museum on 7 November, 10am–4pm, draws on the Dorking Refugee Committee's archive from 1938–1949, documenting both the difficulties refugees faced and the support they received. Visitors can explore a new website developed by Surrey academics and speak with historians, curators and teachers about this local history of solidarity.

On 8 November, 11am–4pm, Into the Hundred Acre Wood: Queering Space in Children's Literature offers a different perspective on some of Britain's best-loved fictional landscapes. At the University's Library, Dr Amy Louise Morgan will explore how children's literary spaces open up possibilities for imagination and transformation through queer theory. Visitors will receive guided access to archive materials relating to E. H. Shepard, illustrator of Winnie-the-Pooh and The Wind in the Willows, before creating their own literary worlds in a workshop with award-winning author Ally Sherrick. The event is for ages 16 and over.

The relationship between human creativity and machines takes centre stage at The Evolution of Musical Creativity, at the Guildford Institute on 11 November, 7pm–8pm. Composer and music technologist Milton Mermikides will trace a history stretching from ninth-century programmable machines in Baghdad to today's AI-driven music. Historical demonstrations and musical examples will explore how technology has repeatedly changed the way people compose, perform and listen.

Dr Lucy Ella Rose, Lecturer in Victorian Literature and event lead at the University of Surrey said:

"These events show how stories from the past speak directly to questions we face today: how we welcome people seeking refuge, who feels a sense of belonging and what happens when machines become part of the creative process.

"We're inviting people to get close to the archives, meet the researchers and try things for themselves. Whether you come for Winnie-the-Pooh, wartime history or a live performance, there's an opportunity to discover something unexpected about Surrey and the wider world."

Elsewhere, families can explore Lewis Carroll's Surrey connections through immersive Alice in Wonderland storytelling, performance and 'imagination stations' at the Guildford Institute on 7 November. Dorking Museum will also host refugee-history zine-making workshops that day.

Music events include a live pianola concert with Rex Lawson on 5 November, an online player-piano exhibition throughout the festival and an interactive schools' session on 9 November.

Another event, Older LGBT+ Housing and Care at a Crossroads and Beyonde, explores how housing and care can better support LGBTQ+ people in later life. Taking place at the International Longevity Centre in London on 5 November, 5pm–7pm, the event combines a short animation, conversation and an interactive theatre workshop inspired by Surrey's Life House Project. Open to anyone aged 16 and over, no theatre experience is needed.

Creative writers can explore Turner's life and art at Watts Gallery on 13 November, while a family concert celebrating composer Richard Stoker at Guildford United Reformed Church on 14 November will bring together opera, literary song settings and music from Pirates of the Caribbean.

Explore the full programme and booking details. Advance booking is required for most events.

Surrey University

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Residents invited to help shape the future of East and West Surrey councils

27 October 2026



Residents across Surrey are being invited to have their say on the future priorities of the new East Surrey and West Surrey councils and help shape how services will be delivered from April 2027.

As preparations continue for the launch of the new councils on 1 April 2027, both organisations are developing their long-term plans for the future. These plans will guide the services they provide, the investment they make and the outcomes they want to achieve for local people and communities.

Residents, businesses, community groups and local organisations are being encouraged to share their views on the draft strategies and priorities, including what matters most in their local area, what is working well and where improvements are needed.

The new councils will be responsible for a wide range of services that support everyday life, from helping vulnerable children and adults, maintaining roads, supporting local businesses and communities, planning for new homes and infrastructure, protecting the environment and ensuring residents can access the services they need.

- People can take part through separate online surveys for East Surrey and West Surrey between Monday 19 October and midnight on Sunday 15 November.
- A programme of local drop-in events will also take place across Surrey, giving residents the opportunity to ask questions and speak directly with representatives from the new councils.

Further information can be found on the Future Surrey website.

East Surrey Council surreylgrhub.gov.uk/east-strategy

West Surrey Council surreylgrhub.gov.uk/west-strategy

At a time when councils across the country are facing increasing demand for services, rising costs and changes to government funding, feedback from residents will help ensure future resources are focused on the issues that matter most to local communities.

Councillor Steve Wotton, Leader of East Surrey Shadow Authority, said: “The creation of East Surrey Council gives us a unique opportunity for a fresh start and new ways of working that better meet the needs of local communities.

“Our vision is for East Surrey to be an inclusive place where people are heard and supported, communities are strong, people are proud of where they live and growth is sustainable. The decisions we make now will help turn that vision into reality.

“The strategy is built around three key priorities: people, place and council. That means helping people access the support, education, housing and opportunities they need, as well as improving the places where people live and work.

“We will be delivering this in a challenging financial environment, with reduced government funding and growing demand for services. That is why a clear and robust delivery plan is so important, helping us focus resources where they can make the biggest difference and ensuring East Surrey remains financially sustainable for the long term.

“Whether your priorities are stronger communities, better access to services, homes that meet local needs, supporting businesses, tackling climate change or improving local neighbourhoods, we want to hear from you. Your feedback will help shape our delivery plan for 2027 to 2032 and ensure East Surrey Council is ready to deliver from day one.”

Councillor Paul Follows, Leader of West Surrey Shadow Authority, said: “The creation of West Surrey Council is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a council around the needs of residents, communities and businesses.

“We want West Surrey to be a place where people thrive, communities flourish, opportunity is shared and residents can trust their council to deliver. As we develop the council’s vision and priorities, it is important they reflect what matters most to local people.

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"We're asking residents for their views on our draft ambitions for West Surrey: a place where people can access the homes, opportunities and support they need; where communities and businesses can thrive; and where a trusted, well-run council listens, delivers and makes the best use of residents' money.

"Like councils across the country, we will face significant financial challenges from day one. That makes it even more important that we understand local priorities and focus our resources where they can have the greatest impact. Whether you complete the survey online or attend one of our events, your views will help shape the future direction of the new council and the services it provides."

Surrey County Council

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

Start-up loans heat up as sauna entrepreneur takes ambassador role

27 October 2026



A Government-backed loan scheme which has already helped more than 100 businesses in Epsom and Ewell has chosen a sauna entrepreneur as its new ambassador for the South East.

Amelia Sweeney, founder of Ojas Sauna, has been named the 2026/27 South East Ambassador for the British Business Bank's Start Up Loans programme.

Sweeney left an 11-year career in construction project management after turning what began as a weekend interest in saunas and cold-water swimming into a growing business.

She launched Ojas Sauna in 2024 after obtaining a £13,000 Start Up Loan, supplemented by her own savings. She initially continued working full-time while establishing the business before leaving her previous career as demand increased.

A second Start Up Loan, together with profits reinvested from the business, subsequently helped finance another venue. The company now offers communal and private sauna and cold-plunge sessions as well as a portable operation used for home hire, retreats and festivals. It employs eight flexible sauna hosts, while its established Buckinghamshire site can accommodate up to 50 customers a day at weekends.

The ambassador scheme is intended to put successful recipients of Start Up Loans in front of prospective entrepreneurs so they can pass on some of what they learned while establishing their businesses.

Sweeney said perseverance had been particularly important. Before securing a site she approached around 450 possible venues looking for somewhere from which to operate.

Her advice to would-be entrepreneurs was essentially not to be discouraged by rejection: eventually, she said, "one person will say yes".

£20 million lent in Surrey

The announcement has a more local relevance than the sauna business itself.

Figures published by Start Up Loans in July showed that more than £20 million had been lent to Surrey entrepreneurs since the programme began in 2012, through more than 1,500 loans.

Epsom and Ewell borough accounted for **116 loans**, equivalent to 126 loans for every 100,000 residents. Elmbridge topped the Surrey table with 241 loans.

Separate British Business Bank figures, calculated by parliamentary constituency rather than borough boundaries, record **145 Start Up Loans worth £1,702,161 in the Epsom and Ewell constituency** up to June 2026.

Across the South East as a whole, more than £150 million had already been lent to almost 14,000 entrepreneurs by March this year. Surrey was then among the three counties with the largest numbers of recipients, alongside Kent and Hampshire.

The latest ambassador announcement says the regional total has since passed **£170 million**.

Nationally the Start Up Loans programme has provided more than £1.4 billion in finance since its creation in 2012,

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according to the latest figures supplied with the announcement.

What is a Start Up Loan?

Despite its name, the scheme does not simply distribute Government grants.

It provides **personal loans for business purposes**, together with business-planning assistance and mentoring. First and second loans can be worth up to £25,000, and eligibility for a first loan has been extended to businesses which have already been trading for up to five years.

The programme is operated by the Start-Up Loans Company, a subsidiary of the Government-owned British Business Bank.

The Bank says repayments and interest received through the programme are recycled to help finance further businesses.

Sweeney is one of 14 entrepreneurs selected as ambassadors for 2026. They are expected to spend the coming year sharing their experiences with people considering starting or developing their own businesses.

Lionel Blackman

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Related Reports

- Epsom company among Surrey businesses backed by £20m Start Up Loans funding – 1 July 2026. EET reported on Epsom-registered craft distillery Silhouette Stills, which had received two Start Up Loans, and on the wider £20m lent to Surrey businesses through the scheme

Photo: Amelia Sweeney, founder of Ojas Sauna

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