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

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Surrey taking care of your future care

6 March 2025



Residents in Surrey and surrounding areas are being invited to take part in the first ever **Planning for Your Future Day** aimed at helping people plan for the later life they want.

Two free events – one in Guildford and one online – are being held on 11 March to equip people with information to make the right decisions at a time when they may need extra support.

Planning for Your Future Day – part of a campaign run by Surrey County Council in partnership with local charity Age UK Surrey – aims to raise awareness of care and support options, costs of social care and ways to maintain independence. By understanding options and starting conversations with loved ones early, people can make informed choices and avoid rushed decisions in a crisis.

Resident research shows that 88 per cent of adults in Surrey are concerned about needing future support and 81 per cent of local people are moderately, or really, concerned, about paying for care. This is an increase on the figure from just two years ago.

Separate figures show that, each year, around 300 to 400 Surrey residents who are paying for their own care run out of money, putting them at risk of having to move to a new care home, or their families needing to contribute a top-up to cover the costs of the home.

Planning for Your Future Day is believed to be the first of its kind in the country and is already gaining regional momentum, with three other local authorities – Hampshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire – also inviting their residents to join the online event.

In Surrey, more than 2,000 people have already attended a Planning for Your Future presentation held in a community location or joined an online webinar, and nine in ten people would recommend it to a friend.

The event on 11 March – at Guildford Baptist Church in Millmead – is set to be the biggest public event yet and will be followed in the evening by the online webinar.

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said: "It's great to see Surrey at the forefront of helping people take control of their future so they can make confident, informed decisions. This initiative offers a wealth of useful tips and advice on everything from independent living to care costs, while also directing people to the vast range of local support provided by charities, voluntary organisations, faith groups and neighbourhood networks.

"The Government commission on social care won't report until 2028 so it's vital that we equip people to navigate the system that's in place now. By getting out into the community with information and support, we can help people make the right choices for them and avoid making decisions in a crisis which may not be suitable in the long run."

Planning for Your Future aims to help those who will need to pay for care themselves or whose family pay members pay. The events will cover key topics such as care options, typical costs of care, Powers of Attorney and practical steps to stay independent for longer, including equipment and technology in the home.

The in-person event starts at 11am on 11 March and will include a talk, Q&A and some light refreshments, with everyone who comes along able to leave with a checklist containing a reminder of the key points.

Alongside the council's adult social care team and Age UK Surrey, the event will be attended by other organisations such as Mole Valley Life, who can help respond to falls, and the Society of Later Life Advisors, who are financial planning experts.

There will be an online version of the presentation the same evening at 7pm. Both sessions can be booked by visiting the Planning for Your Future information hub on the Age UK Surrey website.

The in-person event will be held from 11am – 1pm on Tuesday 11 March at the Guildford Baptist Church, Millmead, Guildford GU2 4BE.

Parking available at Portsmouth Road, Millmead and other local car parks.

The evening's online presentation will take place on 11 March from 7pm.

Both sessions can be booked by visiting the Planning for Your Future information hub on the Age UK Surrey website.

Local LibDem view on Epsom and Ewell Council's

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future

6 March 2025



Epsom and Ewell Times has invited representatives of The Residents Association, Liberal Democrats, Labour and Conservative Party to share their policies on local government reorganisation. Here is the second from Cllr Julie Morris (College Ward) of the Liberal Democrat Party.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is a recurring theme in British politics. Government which is fit-for-purpose contributes to overall efficiency. Proportional Representation would be by far the best change central government could make toward this. However, the removal of two tier authorities is what we have to deal with and there are undoubtedly economies of scale to be had from the edict that Surrey should become two or possibly three unitary bodies, instead of one county council and eleven districts/boroughs.

It is really important to create new unitaries using current boundaries as far as possible. The logistics and costs of any other scenario are complex and could lengthen the process by years. Debt needs to be spread so that no new authority is immediately bankrupt (as some existing councils are heavily in debt) and, ideally, areas of wealth and deprivation should also be fairly distributed so that each new unitary begins life as both fair and financially viable. Amalgamating services such as refusal collection, recycling and disposal makes sense as for small boroughs the costs of energy-efficient collection vehicles are prohibitive and it's worth remembering that some councils already share staff such as legal, chief executive, IT, etc. Working in partnership is not an entirely new thing, so amalgamation might be relatively straightforward in some areas. Redistributing services covered entirely by the existing county council could be the key to success in the eyes of local residents, and there are some sensitive areas here e.g. social services and education, to say nothing of potholes.

We do not as yet know the preference of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, and the Liberal Democrats in Surrey as far as I am aware have not yet come out in favour of any particular scenario. I personally favour three new unitaries over two, but I'm sure there is room for manoeuvre once the fuller picture is known. For Epsom, a new Town Council would probably find favour with local people. Even though it has limited power particularly when it comes to planning applications, it can do a good job of keeping residents informed and, most importantly, involved. This does nicely lead onto the tricky bit which is how to make sure residents themselves are not further disengaged from local politics (and politicians) and feel they have no say or contribution to make. Decisions taken many miles away and a local councillor who represents a much wider area could impact voter turnout (and apathy) even more. Only around 40% of the electorate currently vote in local elections anyway.

Cllr Julie Morris

Leader of the Liberal Democrat group

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

Related reports:

Local Labour view on Epsom and Ewell Council's future

Epsom and Ewell appeal to owners of empty homes

6 March 2025



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To mark National Empty Property Week, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) is getting in touch with owners of properties that have been empty for more than two years, to try to bring them back into use.

Empty properties are considered a wasted housing resource, can attract anti-social activity, and can even create environmental problems.

There are currently more than 250 families from Epsom & Ewell in temporary accommodation, with a further 1,336 people on the council's housing needs register, and many others looking for a property to rent or buy. Bringing empty properties back into use will help households facing homelessness find accommodation within the borough, closer to their schools, jobs and local support networks.

There are currently 64 properties that have been empty for more than two years in Epsom & Ewell. Homeowners still pay council tax on empty properties council tax on a property that has been empty for more than two years increases to 200%, while those empty for more than five years increases to 300%.

There are several options available for empty homeowners:

- Leasing a property to the council via EEBC's Private Sector Lease (PSL) scheme for a period of 3-5 years. The homeowner receives a guaranteed rental income, and the council manages the property on their behalf. Where the property requires renovation before it can be leased, the council may even be able to assist with the cost of works.
- Letting the property privately.
- Selling the property to provide residential accommodation within the borough. In some instances, the council may even be interested in purchasing the property.

Councillor Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said:

"Across the country, the lack of affordable housing has put massive pressure on local authorities, and Epsom & Ewell is no different. The council's housing team work extremely hard to house people in need but supply continually outstrips demand.

"I would implore anyone with a long-term empty property in the borough to consider getting in touch with the council or letting it out privately. Not only would you be providing much needed accommodation but, by bringing your property back into use, you can avoid an additional council tax burden."

Anyone interested in contacting the council with a property to let can fill in the form on the council's website – Do you have a property to let? | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council operates a private sector leasing scheme which allows us to assist local families in housing need whilst reducing the risks and hassle of letting for landlords. We offer:

- to manage your property
- guaranteed rent
- a lease of three to five years.

Find out more at Private sector leasing scheme | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Photo by Jonathan Cooper

Toyota Epsom donates electric carriers to local hospital

6 March 2025



Epsom HQ based Toyota UK has strengthened its support for the local community by providing two Proace battery-electric people carriers to the Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People (QEF). The Leatherhead-based charity, which helps disabled individuals achieve greater independence, will use the vehicles to enhance its transport services.

The electric people carriers will assist QEF's retail teams across its network of 15 charity shops and at The Grange in Kent, where residents with learning disabilities will benefit from group outings. The donation is part of a wider strategic partnership between Toyota and QEF, aimed at improving mobility for disabled people.

Toyota's commitment extends beyond vehicle provision, with plans to collaborate on fundraising events, volunteer

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opportunities, and awareness campaigns. Proceeds will support QEF's Mobility Services, which help individuals increase their independent mobility through driving assessments, lessons, and mobility advice.

Michelle Giles, QEF's Mobility Services Manager, expressed her gratitude for Toyota's contribution: "The electric vehicles will enable supported individuals to enjoy outings and engage more with their local communities. They will also make our retail operations more sustainable by reducing vehicle emissions."

She added: "This partnership will make a significant difference to those who rely on our Mobility Services, whether for driving assessments, mobility advice, vehicle adaptations, or accessible transport."

Scott Thompson, President and Managing Director of Toyota (GB), highlighted the importance of the collaboration: "Improving mobility for all is at the heart of what we do at Toyota. It's wonderful that QEF, a charity close to our head office in Epsom, will benefit from our Proace Verso electric people carriers. We look forward to continuing our support for QEF as one of our dedicated charity partners."

QEF, a Surrey-based charity with 90 years of experience, provides expert services to nearly 10,000 disabled people annually. Its work includes mobility services, neuro rehabilitation, specialist assistive equipment, and residential care for people with learning disabilities. The partnership with Toyota marks another step in enhancing the charity's ability to support those who rely on its services.

Jekyll's Ashtead garden plan can no longer hide

6 March 2025



Recently unearthed plans of an **Ashtead** garden, designed by the renowned Gertrude Jekyll, have been donated to the Surrey History Centre.

Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) of Munstead Wood, Godalming, is celebrated as one of the greatest English garden designers. Though she described herself as an 'artist-gardener,' Jekyll was also a painter, embroiderer, interior designer, author, and photographer. As an early exponent of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Surrey, her legacy includes significant garden plans, watercolours, photographs, and publications, all held at the Surrey History Centre.

The newly unearthed plans, detailing the garden at Warren Hurst in Ashtead, were thought to be lost but were discovered inside a copy of Richard Bisgrove's book, *The Gardens of Gertrude Jekyll* (1992). They were returned to a former property owner, who brought them to the attention of the Surrey Gardens Trust. The plans have been donated to the Surrey History Centre to enhance its extensive Jekyll collections.

The discovery of these two plans is important. While other plans of Warren Hurst exist in the Gertrude Jekyll Collection at the University of California, Berkeley, and can be accessed through the Surrey Gardens Trust website, these newly found plans offer more detailed evidence of Jekyll's work.

One plan is a tracing made by the house architect, Percy Leeds, to communicate with Jekyll. He wrote notes on it, asking her questions about planting and plant sourcing, and she responded with her own instructions. The other plan is a rough pencil copy of one of Jekyll's detailed herbaceous border designs, given to the architect for reference.

Together, these plans show that the garden project was active in July 1914, just before the First World War began. They capture the creative exchange between Jekyll and the architect as they brought her designs to life. These documents offer a fascinating insight into Jekyll's methods and types of plants and shrubs, confirming that the garden was fully planted.

The Surrey History Centre's Conservator, with funding from the Surrey Gardens Trust, has meticulously conserved the garden plans. The conservation process included surface cleaning, light humidification and flattening to remove creases, and repairing torn or fragile areas using wheat starch paste and Japanese paper. Once conserved, the plans will be mounted on sturdy boards and protected in archival polyester sleeves. The plans will be featured in an exhibition of archive treasures at the Surrey History Centre's Open Day on **Saturday 8th March**.

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

"The donation of these plans is a remarkable addition to our collection. Gertrude Jekyll's work continues to inspire and educate, and we are thrilled to preserve and share these historical documents with the public.

The upcoming Open Day on 8th March is a fantastic opportunity for residents and visitors to explore these plans and other fascinating collections. With our friendly and helpful staff, we would like to see as many residents as possible using the Surrey History Centre for research and discovering the fascinating history of the county of Surrey.

Whether you're a history buff or simply curious about our work, the day will offer something for everyone, so do come along and explore our diverse collections."

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Sarah Dickinson, Chair of Surrey Gardens Trust, added:

“It is a rare moment when lost Gertrude Jekyll plans come to light. These are working drawings, the tools of her trade. They enhance our understanding of Jekyll’s garden design practice. They narrate a moment in history, the Summer of 1914, when a Jekyll design and its planting is being implemented.

We are transported to Jekyll’s desk and witness her tenacity as she responds to questions from the architect who is overseeing the planting of this garden. Surrey Gardens Trust is equally thrilled to be part of this revelation and to support the preservation and presentation of these unique documents.”

For more information on the **Open Day** and to book a place on a behind-the-scenes tour, please visit the **Surrey History Centre website**.

Discover more about **Gertrude Jekyll sources** at the Surrey History Centre.

Explore **Gertrude Jekyll’s Surrey Archive** on the **Surrey Gardens Trust’s website** for additional insights.

Epsom Schools Lead the Way in Pioneering Mobile Phone Pilot

6 March 2025



Glyn School and **Rosebery School** in Epsom are at the forefront of a groundbreaking initiative aimed at tackling smartphone distractions in the classroom. The schools, both part of the GLF multi-academy trust, are participating in a pilot scheme that restricts social media and messaging apps during school hours.

The initiative, which also includes Meridian High School in Croydon and Merstham Park School in Surrey, will see all students in Years 7-9—around 2,300 pupils—install an app called Blackout. This app blocks access to non-essential apps such as social media, games, cameras, and web browsers while still allowing calls, SMS, maps, and calendars. The restriction will only apply during school hours and term time.

Glyn and Rosebery schools, both well-respected within the Epsom community, have been chosen to help test whether this technology can improve student wellbeing and classroom focus. The rise in smartphone usage has been linked to increased anxiety and reduced concentration, and educators are keen to explore solutions that promote healthier digital habits.

A parent at Rosebery School voiced strong support for the initiative, saying: *“Well done to Rosebery and GLF Schools for trialling the Blackout technology. Teachers are on the front line every day, dealing with the disruption caused by smartphones. If this helps students focus and reduces distractions, I’m all for it.”*

The pilot will continue after the February half-term, with students required to install the app if they bring a phone to school. Glyn and Rosebery’s existing phone policies will remain in place, with additional checks to ensure compliance.

Julian Drinkall, CEO of GLF Schools, emphasised the trust’s commitment to exploring new approaches to mobile phone use in education: *“We understand why some schools have introduced outright mobile phone bans, but we believe technology can be part of the solution rather than just a problem. Blackout offers a way to encourage positive digital habits while still allowing essential communication between students and parents.”*

Amy Anderson, Headteacher at Meridian High School, echoed this view: *“This pilot allows us to take a more refined approach to phone management. Instead of just confiscating devices, we can use technology to help students engage more fully in their learning environment.”*

The effectiveness of the trial will be assessed through student, parent, and staff feedback, with key metrics including improved concentration, reduced classroom disruptions, and enhanced student wellbeing. If successful, the initiative could be expanded to more schools in the GLF network and beyond.

Privacy concerns have been addressed, with Blackout confirming that the app does not access personal data such as messages, browser history, or location tracking. It simply blocks non-essential apps during school hours.

Glyn and Rosebery’s participation in this pilot reinforces their reputation as forward-thinking schools, willing to embrace innovative solutions to enhance student learning and wellbeing. As local pupils and parents adjust to the new system, the Epsom community will be watching closely to see if this pioneering approach proves to be the key to a more focused and productive school day.

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Sutton & Epsom rugby's thorough victory

6 March 2025



Thurrock 28 Sutton & Epsom RFC 53. Saturday 1st March.

Back in November, Thurrock were very unlucky to lose 33-29 at Rugby Lane as the mighty McTaggart crashed over for a try on the final play. The Black & Whites had only ventured once to Thurrock for a league fixture this millennium, and that was in November 2000 when they won 28-13 – not even Steve Munford was playing then. So, a return to Oakfield was long overdue. It is a wonderful facility, not only offering a magnificent pitch but also live streaming of their matches. Whether watching in situ or remotely, it was a superb spectacle with a dozen tries, with Sutton prevailing 53-28.

Having accommodated the stag weekend against Medway, the Sutton social calendar encompassed the wedding this weekend. Good news – I understand that none of the players will be attending the honeymoon of their erstwhile hooker. It is enough to make coaches pray for agamists. On the plus side, it was a delight to welcome back Kyren Ghumra to the colours. The hosts kicked off on a chilly but sunny afternoon on the occasion of Number 8 Matt Whitaker's 200th 1st XV league appearance.

It did not take long for Thurrock to open their account. The visitors conceded a penalty for not rolling away, and the ball was advanced to the 22. A controlled catch and drive and considerable pressure from their sizeable pack put Sutton back on their line. A delightful overhead pass enabled prop Josh Buller to walk in under the posts. Henry Bird added the extras for a 7-0 lead.

Sutton pressed hard to level the scores as they spread the ball wide but were thwarted by poor execution. It was a case of third time very lucky. Matt Whitaker marauded into the 22 and chose the exotic rather than the practical with his pass. The ball went loose, bounced off a defender, and ended up in Adam Bibby's arms, and he sauntered in under the posts. Tom Lennard converted for 7-7.

Within five minutes, S&E had the lead. In the absence of Freddy Bunting, Steve Munford had the armband and did not hesitate in taking three points for a kick in front of the posts. It might have been anachronistic, but it was much appreciated by the travelling supporters. Minutes later, Kyren Ghumra's arcing run was stopped by a high tackle. Playing the advantage, Tom Lennard lofted a kick into the grateful hands of Angus Findlay on the wing to score in the corner. The challenging conversion failed, but Sutton & Epsom led 15-7 at the end of the first quarter.

For those who thought that Thurrock's opener was going to be a blemish on a processional afternoon for Sutton, they soon had a reminder that this was very much a contest. The hosts took a scrum against the head near halfway, and Henry Bird made a devastating break – only a superb cover tackle from Adam Bibby prevented a try. However, some chicanery on the deck led to the Kiwi getting a yellow card. The 14 men escaped as the Essex pack were held up over the line.

The hosts sensed their chance, and a superb weaving run by Harry Reynolds enabled Kodie Holloway to score from close range. Henry Bird added the extras to trail by a solitary point, 14-15. The host's revival was undone by a penalty for crossing that enabled the visitors to return to the Tees 22. Formidable lineout control had the hosts on the retreat, and Sutton scored.

What a popular try it was as Matt Whitaker crossed the whitewash for his 116th league try on his 200th outing. Tom Lennard converted, and the referee blew for the interval. Spectators gazed at the time and could only conclude, 'a good game is a quick game,' as S&E led 22-14 at the break.

The second period opened with a flurry of penalties being conceded by Thurrock. Sutton punished their lack of discipline with a classical catch and drive, with hooker Dan Jones ushered over the line. The touchline kick was missed as the visitors extended their advantage to 27-14.

It was now the turn for the Oakfield men to have a penalty and kick it towards the corner. Their fearsome forwards moved ever onwards, making a score look inevitable. Rather surprisingly, it was spun wide, but the excellent Henry Bird stepped through the cover to score, and he added the conversion for good measure. The scoreboard read 21-27, and the Essex men were refusing to lie down.

But a minute later, the Black & Whites had their fifth try as Josh Rea linked with winger Matt Symonds, who cut back inside for support, and prop Sam Lennie popped in under the posts. Tom Lennard made it 34-21.

The spirited hosts were rewarded for their fighting spirit and their determination to run the ball when they collected a bonus point for their fourth try 15 minutes into the second half. Having won a penalty in the Sutton 22, they opted for a scrum and spun it wide for Harry Reynolds to complete a thrilling score. Henry Bird made it four from four, and at 34-28, the game was once more in the balance.

The comeback was stymied when Thurrock were temporarily reduced to 14 for a late tackle, though it was a case of

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mistaken identity for the bemused miscreant who trudged off, no doubt to plead his innocence to the coaches. Then a dazzling run by Kyren Ghumra was denied by a superb covering tackle, but it was a temporary stay of execution. Soon after, it was the familiar catch-and-drive routine, with Dan Jones once more the beneficiary with his second score.

Trailing 28-39 with fifteen left on the clock, the valiant Thurrock team started to fade as Sutton looked to stretch the game. The Oakfield men were unable to gain the quick retort that had been the case earlier in the contest. Sutton & Epsom started to monopolise territory and possession and were eager to increase the score.

The next try came from the most familiar source as Matt Whitaker collected his second. If it is appropriate to get a try on one's 100th appearance, it is only logical to get two on your 200th. Tom Lennard split the uprights as the Surrey men led 46-28.

The match concluded with captain Munford deciding that Mr Whitaker should not hog all the glory for the old guard. He gathered a loose ball by the ruck 40 metres out, saw a gap, and scuttled his way in under the posts. An appreciative Tom Lennard made his personal tally 13 points, and Sutton had a 53-28 victory.

It was a splendid occasion – a magnificent St David's Day lunch preceded a thoroughly entertaining match on an excellent pitch, overlooked by the superb Howie Evans Stand. Regional 2 South East will be much the poorer without Oakfield and Thurrock RFC.

Next Saturday, 8th March, Sutton host Gravesend in their last home league fixture of this campaign.

Sutton & Epsom:
O'Brien, Ghumra, Scott, Bibby, Findlay, Lennard, Munford ©, Lennie, Jones, Gibson, McTaggart, Tame, Hegarty, Rea & Whitaker.

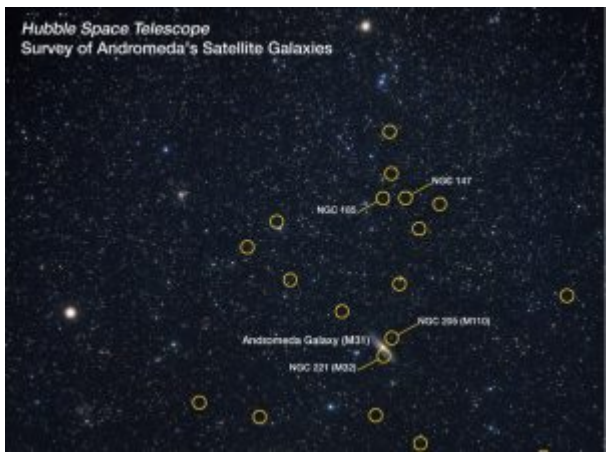
Replacements: Madadangoma, Hilton and Symonds.

Thurrock:
Frear, Aminu, Bird, Holloway, Reynolds, Clifford, Chew, Cowman, Percival, Buller, Catchpole, Locker, Watts-Adams C, Lewis & Jennings.

Replacements: Worster, Ulph & Watts-Adams M.

Surrey University boldy go to the next galaxy

6 March 2025



A collaboration of more than 30 international institutions, including the University of Surrey, has observed vast differences in the dynamic ecosystem of smaller satellite galaxies orbiting our neighbour galaxy, Andromeda. Surveyed using images from over 1,000 Hubble Space Telescope orbits, the findings have given scientists new insights into the evolution of galactic systems.

The study, published in The Astrophysical Journal, found that Andromeda's satellite system is notably different from our own Milky Way, 2.5 million lightyears apart. While both galaxies are surrounded by a flotilla of smaller dwarf galaxies, Andromeda likely hosts three times as many – offering a rare glimpse into their unique history and formation.

Dr Michelle Collins, Associate Professor at the University of Surrey's School of Mathematics and Physics and co-author of the study, said:

"What we've discovered is that these tiny systems have evolved quite differently from those around the Milky Way. Whether this divergence stems from a massive merger – a slow, gradual collision in Andromeda a few billion years ago – or whether it reflects the natural diversity of the smallest galaxies remains a mystery we're working to unravel."

One of the study's key themes is how Andromeda's dwarf galaxies have formed and sustained stars in unexpected ways compared to those around the Milky Way. Researchers had long assumed low-mass galaxies would follow similar patterns, but the Andromeda system tells a different story. These satellite galaxies appear to have experienced a more complex evolutionary history, with some continuing to form stars far longer than anticipated.

Lead author of the study, Dr Alessandro Savino, from the University of California, Berkeley, said:

"Star formation really continued to much later times, which is not at all what you would expect for these dwarf galaxies. This doesn't appear in computer simulations. No one knows what to make of that so far."

To explore these differences more closely, researchers at the University of Surrey are working to understand the forces driving these unexpected evolutionary patterns. A follow-up study will investigate the mass profiles and dark matter

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distribution of Andromeda's satellite galaxies, integrating data from this paper with new observational measurements.

Dr Collins, who will lead the research, said:

"We've established that there are clear differences, but what I'm really interested in now is why these differences exist. What factors have shaped Andromeda's satellites in ways we don't see in the Milky Way?"

Combining the latest Hubble data with ongoing studies at Surrey, the team plans to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms shaping galaxies across the universe. Additionally, Hubble is providing the first set of imaging that allows astronomers to measure the motions of Andromeda's dwarf galaxies – offering a rare opportunity to track their movements and reconstruct their past interactions.

To find out more, visit the Space Telescope Science Institute's news page.

Image credit: NASA, ESA, Alessandro Savino (UC Berkeley), Joseph DePasquale (STScI), Akira Fujii DSS2

Epsom & Ewell FC caught knapping at the end

6 March 2025

Knaphill 2-1 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Saturday 1st March.

At half time at Knaphill's Redding Way ground, we led 1-0 after one of our better halves of football in recent weeks, but a combination of us losing our way and an improved performance from the home team ensured that we would end up defeated by two goals to one, which was, I felt, a very harsh result for our boys.

Visits to Redding Way have not been successful in recent years, with our boys conceding six times in each of our last two matches there. Throw in the lack of a programme for the second successive season (time for a League fine, surely) and the fact that it is frequently cold and damp when we visit, and I'll be honest I wasn't particularly looking forward to this match, yet on arrival, we found a picturesque ground bathed in spring sunshine and everything looked much better! The sun had brough people out and there seemed to be a fairly large number of spectators present; far more than the official figure of just 83.

From a playing perspective, clearly something needed to change after our dreadful midweek showing against Balham and some changes were made. Anthony Nazareth and Callum Wilson returned at the back and we went with three players there and the unusual sight of Luke Miller playing at left wing back with the right wing back role being entrusted to Niall Stillwell.

Whether it was down to the formation or just an attempt to restore some pride after our home loss to one of the relegation favourites is hard to know, but we came out of the blocks in much better shape and actually started to pass the ball around quite a lot. We were looking like a team, rather than the group of individuals that had taken the field against Balham and we made the first chance when following some good pressure Craig Dundas received the ball, but he was a little wide and couldn't wrap his leg around the ball enough to get the shot on target.

Admittedly, we did nearly go behind a minute later when a superb right wing cross took out Kevin Kardel and was met by a thumping far post header which sent the ball against the underside of our crossbar and the follow up strike was then well blocked. This was an isolated attack though and we were soon back on the attack when a great crossfield pass from Miller found Stillwell running into the penalty area and he lashed a shot that was heading just inside the post and Sam Gray in the Knaphill goal had to be alert to keep out. From the subsequent corner Stillwell rose again at the back post but couldn't keep the header down. It may have gone out of play off a defender, but the goal kick was given.

Stillwell was the best player on the park in this first half and it was his left footed cross in the 15th minute that led to our opener, as the delivery was perfect for Carl Oblitey to head at goal. It would have gone in but was almost immediately blocked by the hand of James Glover. After he received a yellow card we then had a lengthy delay after the Knaphill Captain Dale Burnham suddenly required treatment in the penalty area; a cynical move that the referee fell for. However, our own Captain Adam Green kept calm and thumped the penalty out of Gray's reach in the 18th minute.

Although we never again had the dominance of those opening stages, we remained on top for the remainder of the opening period and Ali Fofahan broke through on goal but Gray tipped his early shot wide. He then had an even better opportunity after Oblitey put him through once again just before the half, but instead of smashing his shot at goal from about six yards, he chose to cut back onto his stronger left foot, by which time a defender was able to get back and block his shot. As we went in at the half, we held a deserved lead and nobody could have argued had that lead been greater.

There was only one concern in that opening forty-five which was when Jason Bloor went down with an ankle injury a few minutes before the interval, but he recovered after treatment and was back on the field for the second half, only to break down again within a couple of minutes. Ethan Nelson-Roberts came on in his place, but we missed Bloor's all round game and were never quite as strong in this match again. It is worth pointing out at this stage that the last match Bloor started was the last one we won, against Abbey Rangers, and right now we are not quite the same side without him.

Having said that, we nearly extended our lead in the 51st minute after Oblitey set up Fofahan once again on the right

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wing and although the delivery was just too far ahead of Oblitey, the ball struck Glover and bounced inches wide of his own goal, almost in slow motion. Despite our superiority, within seven minutes of this chance the hosts drew level. Matt Copland unleashed a powerful long range strike that was heading for the top corner until Kardel pulled off a fantastic save. Unfortunately from the corner Burnham was able to volley the ball in from close range.

From this point the match began to get a bit niggly. The Knappers had clearly been given a talking to at the break and were fighting for everything. Our boys seem quite happy in those situations and battled back, leading to a flurry of stoppages. Wilson picked up a yellow card for a fairly agricultural challenge too, and whilst a Miller shot curled just beyond the far post and Oblitey sent a header from a hanging Nelson-Roberts cross towards Gray, it was the hosts who were next to score in the 75th minute after their new signing Sid Cannon ran through our defence and planted a shot beyond Kardel from around 15 yards to register his second goal in his second match for them. It would prove to be the winning goal as the game degenerated further. A foul on Nazareth earned a card and this was followed by another for Jack Watts after he clattered into Kardel, leading to the obligatory scuffle between a number of players and things also threatened to kick off between the benches too.

In the 92nd minute we then had an incident of rank stupidity from the Knaphill sub Ben Mitchell. Despite having been on the field only for a short period of time, he then also smashed clumsily into our young keeper, despite already having picked up a yellow for a foul on Nazareth, leading to the clearest “second yellow” you may ever see at this level. However, there was little time to take advantage of the extra man and after seven minutes of injury time the final whistle blew to confirm that the points were staying at Redding Way for the third straight time.

It’s hard to know exactly how we didn’t come away with at least a point from this match. We were the more superior side in the first half and although we seemed to run out of steam in the second half, maybe we struggled with Knaphill’s second half intensity a little, so credit must also go to our opponents for their fightback. Certainly the loss of Bloor didn’t help us either. At this stage of the season and with little to play for, Warren will probably be trying to find out which players he wants to retain for next season and which formation works best. Although Stillwell produced an excellent hour on the right in his advanced wing back role, I’m not sure that we learned much else from this defeat, even if it was an undeserved one.

Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Anthony Nazareth, Luke Miller, Adam Green (c), Callum Wilson, Stefan Aiwone, Niall Stillwell, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Ali Fofahan, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Ethan Nelson-Roberts for Bloor (48), George Owusu for Fofahan (67), Ethan Brazier for Stillwell (71), Conrad Essilfie-Conduah for Dundas (83), Campbell Scott for Wilson (84)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

THE STATION, IN STONELEIGH, REOPENS FOLLOWING MAJOR SIX-FIGURE INVESTMENT

6 March 2025



SPONSORED ARTICLE:

Popular Stoneleigh pub, The Station, on The Broadway, has reopened to the public following an exciting six-figure renovation designed to revitalise the existing site and give it a brand-new look and feel.

The Station closed its doors in January and is now reopening following completion of major works both inside and out, reaffirming the popular pub as a central community space.

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The inside of the pub has received a complete makeover to create a modern, welcoming atmosphere with new refreshed décor and an open plan layout divided into zones for various occasions, including a cocktail area, a TV-free restaurant/dining area, and a sports bar, with plentiful TVs including ones situated in the new outdoor pergola.

Customers will find comfort and convenience at the pub with the new layout, including bookable booths and a champagne table, providing a cosy and private space to enjoy time with friends and family. The pub can cater to gatherings of varying sizes in its revamped function room and the refurbished toilets offer improved facilities for all.

Anna Carrier, General Manager of The Station said: “Our brilliant team at The Station, are excited to showcase our new and improved pub to the local community. We’re looking forward to welcoming both new and old customers!

“The renovation has given the pub a new lease of life, and we’re confident that customers will love our improved facilities, whether they’re looking for a drink with friends, a meal with the family, are booking a party, or enjoying a sporting event, there really is something for everyone!”

The stunning gardens have undergone a huge transformation too and now offer a variety of comfortable seating from booths, high seats to normal tables, along with mood lighting and heating. The outdoor areas now offer even more space for relaxation or to dine and drink with friends whilst watching the sport on new outdoor TVs.

The pub offers Sky and TNT Sports, showing all major matches throughout the year, so sports fans need never miss a second of the action. The venue is also registered on the Greene King Sport App for countless deals.

Alongside seasonal events, The Station will host a regular programme of activities, including bingo every Tuesday, Thursday quiz nights, and live entertainment every Friday.

The Station reopens with a delicious menu, with many deals including irresistible small plates, perfect for sharing, priced at three for £15, or five for £22.50. Plus, there is a dedicated kids’ menu, a Lunch Club menu, and a fabulous weekly Steak Thursday ensuring there’s plenty of variety for everyone to enjoy. A Sunday menu is also available serving traditional roasts for all the family.

The investment has provided multiple job opportunities to the local community and the pub team has grown, offering around 10 new jobs for locals.

The Station reopened on the 21 February and is located on The Broadway, Stoneleigh, Epsom, KT17 2JA. For more information visit: https://www.greeneking.co.uk/pubs/surrey/station

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Nescot Students Celebrate Success at Epsom Downs Ceremony

6 March 2025

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Ewell based **Nescot College** students marked the culmination of their hard work earlier this month at the institution's annual Higher Education (HE) Awards ceremony, held at Epsom Downs Racecourse on 7 February. Around 90 graduands, accompanied by 250 guests, gathered to celebrate their achievements.

The event had a distinct Nescot touch, with students from various disciplines contributing to the proceedings. Travel and Tourism students welcomed attendees, while Music Production students provided DJ sets and live music throughout. Two Performing Arts students delivered solo performances during the formal ceremony, adding a special touch to the occasion.

Principal Praises Student Achievements

Addressing the graduates, Nescot Principal and CEO, **Julie Kapsalis**, described the event as "a wonderfully uplifting and poignant occasion," bringing together students of all ages.

"Higher education at Nescot attracts learners from diverse backgrounds, whether school leavers or those returning to education later in life. Many of our students have taken an alternative route to university, using our courses to embark on a new career or reignite a passion for learning. What unites them all is their inspiring journeys of personal and professional transformation," she said.

Degrees Awarded Across a Range of Subjects

Awards were conferred by Nescot's university partners, including the University of Greenwich, Kingston University, London South Bank University, The Open University, and the University of West London. Courses spanned subjects such as teacher education, osteopathy, animal management, sports therapy, counselling, healthcare play specialism, business, creative media, public services, and sport and exercise science.

Inspiring Guest Speaker Shares Career Journey

Among the guests of honour was **Dee Mathieson**, Senior Vice President and Managing Director of Elekta, a global leader in medical technology. A former Nescot student, she shared her career journey in the science and medical sector, highlighting her contributions to cancer treatment. Encouraging graduates to seize opportunities, she advised: "Take a chance. If it isn't the right opportunity, look for another."

Also in attendance were Cllr **Steve Bridger**, (RA Stamford) Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, **Helen Maguire** MP for Epsom and Ewell, Julie Giles MBE, Chair of Phab, and representatives from the Rotary Clubs of Epsom and Ewell, along with business leaders and other guests.

Annual Awards Recognise Outstanding Students

A number of special awards were presented during the ceremony:

- **The Olatunde Idowu Memorial Prize**, awarded to Holly Stuart for outstanding business awareness.
- **The Richard Maryan Prize**, recognising excellence in osteopathy, awarded to Luke Tanner.
- **The Dr John Osborn Memorial Cup and Prize**, awarded to Michaela Joseph in honour of the late Dr Osborn, who played a key role in Nescot's HE provision.
- **The Rotary Club of Epsom Raj Amodia Trophy and Prize**, awarded to Spencer Holmes.
- **The Rotary Club of Ewell Cup and Prize**, awarded to pre-degree HE student Jackie O'Connor.
- **The Principal's Prize**, awarded to Sienna Campbell, selected by Principal Julie Kapsalis.

Honorary Fellowships Recognise Exceptional Contributions

Two Honorary Fellowships were awarded at this year's ceremony, an accolade introduced in 2023 to mark Nescot's 70th anniversary.

The first was presented to **Yvonne Spencer**, Director of Science Capability at the Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA). A former Nescot student, Spencer has been instrumental in developing the college's Level 6 Degree Apprenticeship in Laboratory Science. Her work has strengthened the partnership between Nescot and APHA, providing career development opportunities for science professionals.

The second fellowship was awarded to **Val Neame**, a former Nescot staff member, in recognition of her 47 years of

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service to the college. Described as a mentor and friend to many, Neame was praised for her dedication and the lasting impact she has had on both staff and students.

A Student's Perspective

Delivering the student vote of thanks, Jackie O'Connor, who graduated with a Foundation Degree in Supporting Teaching and Learning, reflected on the encouragement she had received throughout her studies. Paying tribute to her tutor, Mark Warner, she said: "I believe that if you have someone who helps you rethink how you see yourself and how others see you, that is a truly special person."

A Silver-Rated Institution

Nescot's Higher Education provision has been recognised with a **Silver rating in the 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)**, including Silver ratings in the new categories of Student Experience and Student Outcomes. The accolade highlights the college's commitment to high-quality teaching and student support.

For more information about Nescot's university-level courses, visit their website.

Photo: Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO with Nescot Class of 2024 graduates at the HE Graduation Ceremony held at Epsom Downs Racecourse

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Local Labour view on Epsom and Ewell Council's future

6 March 2025



Epsom and Ewell Times has invited representatives of The Residents Association, Liberal Democrats, Labour and Conservative Party to share their policies on local government reorganisation. Here is the first from Cllr Kate Chinn (Court Ward) of the Labour Party.

The government has directed a total reorganisation for two-tier local authority areas across the whole country. This was planned by the previous government and outlined in the Labour manifesto. Surrey County Council will cease to exist and will be divided up into, what Surrey Labour Party hopes, will be three unitary authorities.

Labour in Surrey has long argued that twelve councils, twelve civic centres or town halls, with twelve chief executives and a top-heavy administration is not the most economical way to deliver essential services. Small boroughs all with their own legal teams, revenue teams, housing teams, procurement staff—all duplicating roles unnecessarily. On completing the process, unitary authorities will soon start making efficiency savings.

Surrey Labour has been discussing for years how unitary authorities could be most effectively organised to best serve the residents of Surrey. Unlike the Liberal Democrats, who are hardly engaging, or the independents, burying their heads in the sand and calling for elections to be held in 2025, as did some council ruling groups. How they can claim good financial management whilst wanting an unnecessary election to go ahead makes no sense. Wasting taxpayers' money on a soon-to-be irrelevance would be unforgivable.

Surrey Labour has embraced the process, made a case for three unitary authorities, and carefully examined how they could be organised, taking into account the guidance from the white paper:

- **Sensible economic geographies**
- **Travel to work areas**
- **The ability for local residents to engage and hold their devolved institutions to account**

The Case for Three Unitary Authorities

We believe that there is an overwhelming case for three councils based on existing geography, taking into account expected population growth and recognising the political, economic, and social challenges faced by the county.

Surrey is to be divided into unitary authorities (UAs), with the government suggesting a **population of 500,000 or more**

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as ideal but recognising that there *may be exceptions to ensure new structures make sense for an area*. The population of Surrey is **1.25 million**, which implies **two or three authorities**.

Dividing Surrey into two UAs would mean both would be oversized and geographically challenged in an area of anticipated population growth, whereas three would be initially undersized. The likely divisions would be:

- **Two UAs** – (East/West) – as proposed by the Conservatives
- **Three UAs** – (North/South-West/South-East) – as proposed by Labour and supported by all the boroughs and districts

Proposed Unitary Authorities

With service delivery to residents being the most important issue, we suggest the following councils:

Middlesex-Surrey Borders

- Elmbridge, Spelthorne & Runnymede
- **Population:** 334,000

Surrey Hills

- Guildford, Surrey Heath, Woking & Waverley
- **Population:** 478,000

North Downs

- Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead, and Tandridge
- **Population:** 416,000

These names and details are **provisional** and will be decided later. However, they best fit geographically and population-wise.

All these areas would have much stronger geographical links and community ties than the larger, two-unitary authority model. While all three are under the government's ideal **500,000 population** threshold, Surrey Hills is closer to that figure, and all are areas of **population growth**.

These three UAs could provide a more **local and focused** delivery of key services, ensuring better support for **adult social care and SEND needs**, both priorities for Surrey. It would give greater clarity for residents, with one authority being responsible for all local services. Service delivery would be **more efficient, more accountable**, and **free from disputes** over which council has responsibility in an area.

Local Voices Must Be Heard

It is essential to establish a close relationship between Surrey County and district councillors in shaping their new unitary authorities as they are formulated. The reorganisation process must not descend into factional disagreements but remain **focused on communities and democratic engagement** at a local level.

Other unitary councils, such as London boroughs, often have **local committees** to represent community views. Boroughs and districts in Surrey should now begin **engaging residents**, examining the options, and organising forums to ensure local voices are represented in the new UAs.

Conclusion

The devolution offer in the white paper suggests a **Surrey Mayor**, offering **priorities for funding that suit their areas** and providing **strategic leadership**. This could positively impact key Surrey priorities, including:

- **Skills and employment**
- **More housing**
- **Increased local investment**
- **Making Britain a clean energy superpower**

Surrey's approaches to neighbouring areas for a joint strategic mayor have not been successful.

A **Surrey Mayor** would automatically represent an area that aligns with the **current police and crime commissioner** and the **Surrey Fire and Rescue Service boundaries**, as envisaged by the white paper's goal of **"reforming and joining up public services"**.

Overall, we believe that our **three-unitary authority model** will best serve the needs of Surrey residents going forward.

Much of this is based on previous contributions by **Robert Evans & Arran Neathey (2019), Cllr Catherine Powell**

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(2025), Tony Rooth & Michael Moriarty, with additional input from **Cllr Robert King**, but it does not necessarily represent all of their individual views.

Cllr Kate Chinn
Leader of the Labour Group
February 2025

Epsom and Ewell Leads South East in Small Business Growth

6 March 2025

Region	% Growth in Small Businesses (2023 to 2024) in the Region	Top Authority	Small business number 2023	Small business number 2024	% Growth in Small Businesses (2023 to 2024)
East Midlands	-1	Oadby and Wigston	2060	2155	4.61
East of England	0.4	Harlow	3215	3360	4.51
West Midlands	-1.35	Solihull	7815	8145	4.22
London	0.55	Camden	33930	35290	4.01
South East	**-0.09**	**Epsom and Ewell**	**3470**	**3570**	**2.88**
North West	-0.53	Fylde	3250	3330	2.46
South West	-0.24	Tewkesbury	4180	4280	2.39
Scotland	0.39	Na h-Eileanan Siar	1170	1195	2.14
Northern Ireland	0.85	Mid and East Antrim	4990	5085	1.9
Wales	-1.72	Isle of Anglesey	2610	2650	1.53
North East	-0.77	Stockton-on-Tees	5285	5350	1.23
Yorkshire and the Humber	-1.51	Kirklees	15070	15070	0

Epsom and Ewell has emerged as the fastest-growing local authority in the South East of England for small businesses, according to new data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) analysed by BusinessFinancing.co.uk. The borough gained 100 new small businesses in 2024, representing a 2.88% increase—the highest growth rate in the region.

This growth is particularly significant given that the South East as a whole experienced a slight decline in the number of small businesses, with a recorded drop of -0.09%. Epsom and Ewell's performance stands in contrast to this regional trend, highlighting the borough's resilience and business-friendly environment.

The latest analysis was conducted by BusinessFinancing.co.uk, which examined data from the ONS to determine small business growth rates across local authorities in the UK. Their study identifies the areas where entrepreneurial activity is thriving, despite the economic challenges of recent years, including Brexit-related trading difficulties and the lingering impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The strong performance of Epsom and Ewell may be attributed to its strategic location, well-connected transport links, and the continued support for local enterprise initiatives. Business owners in the borough have also benefited from improved access to credit, as financial institutions report an increase in successful loan applications for small firms.

Local business leaders have welcomed the findings, seeing them as an encouraging sign that Epsom and Ewell remains an attractive destination for entrepreneurs. "It's fantastic to see our borough leading the South East in small business growth," said **Richard Excell** of Epsom based **Excell Design & Marketing** and the **Epsom Business Club**, "This reflects the hard work and resilience of our local entrepreneurs who continue to drive innovation and employment in our community."

BusinessFinancing.co.uk has also created a nationwide map showcasing their findings across the UK, which illustrates the varying rates of small business growth. Their analysis highlights Aberdeen as the UK's leading city for small business expansion, with a 1.95% increase.

With Epsom and Ewell bucking the regional trend and proving to be a hub for entrepreneurial activity, the future looks promising for small businesses in the borough. Continued investment in local infrastructure and support networks will be key to sustaining this momentum and ensuring long-term prosperity for the area's business community.

Another Surrey Borough under financial strain

6 March 2025



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“Hard” times are coming to Surrey Heath Borough Council residents as millions of pounds are being cut from services, with many reduced to minimum standards, as its bleak financial situation became clear. The borough is saddled with high debt repayments to cover the cost of loans it borrowed to finance and purchase Camberley Square and the House of Fraser. The costs of servicing the debt are said to be almost as much as the council brings in through tax.

Plans to sell the town hall for housing and move into the House of Fraser building have also been put on ice due to the imminent restructuring of local government and the likely abolition of borough and district councils. It leaves the council having to rely on rapidly depleting reserves while it guts services to residents – or face going bust.

At the February 19 full meeting of Surrey Heath Borough Council, members agreed to make cuts of £2.143 million in ‘transformation savings’ while drawing down £21.67 million from earmarked reserves. This comes after years of uncertainty over the council’s finances – which have finally been audited for the first time since 2019.

The budget papers read: “The council now has a greater understanding of its level of reserves, the figures contained within its base budget and the overall size of the deficit. This is not a palatable situation and requires some significant transformational savings, efficiencies and additional income generation just to remain solvent over the period covered by this Medium-Term Financial Strategy (the next four years). Over the previous budgets, the council has applied some of its reserve balances to support regeneration and continued delivery of services to the local residents and businesses; however…this is not sustainable in perpetuity. Previous years have seen an annual base budget review exercise which generated £2.1 million overall savings to the council. These have not been sufficient to bridge the budget gap and have only succeeded in ‘buying more time’ on reserve usage; the council is now embarking on a council-wide transformation programme.”

This includes a full review of all discretionary services and a restructuring of what it provides to residents. The report read: “The desired outcome of reducing the cost of delivery through reduction in the non-statutory element level of service, ensuring compliance with only the minimum statutory requirement and ensuring appropriate cost recovery in the discretionary chargeable services offered.” There will also be a full review of the staffing structure as this makes up the majority of controllable costs of services.

The council has also said it would look to sell off assets and has identified some that could be disposed of. However, its two largest assets, and the ones that are primarily the root cause of much of the council’s financial problems, are now worth significantly less than what Surrey Heath paid. Selling these would result in huge losses.

Councillor Shaun Macdonald, leader of Surrey Heath Borough Council, said: “As expected, the view is not pretty. We are now clear that the numbers we inherited were fundamentally misstated, with the reserves being confirmed as £16m lower. That’s about a third of a haircut versus the total. Therefore, our ability to provide the same services to residents that they’ve been used to is nonexistent.”

He told the meeting: “Putting the properties to one side, our core income is about £13m and our core cost of services is roughly £15.8m. It does not take an accountant to understand that’s a difference of £2.8m a year – and that is before net indirect costs of roughly £5.3m, which is predominantly made of interest and debt repayments – less property income – to pay for the reckless purchases made in 2016 and which will remain a significant number for future generations. So what are our choices to address this longer term? Well, there are only two options: reduce costs and increase income further.

“Our ability to increase income is extremely limited, therefore the budget increases council tax by the permitted maximum of 2.99 per cent.” He said the maximum contribution must come through cost-cutting, through efficiencies, and through transformational change.

He added: “This is easier said than done. Not least with the cost of change to factor in. We simply have to stop doing things that we do today if it can’t pay its way or it’s not a statutory service, and that is hard. It’s hard for us collectively in this chamber, it’s hard for the officers who work very hard to provide our services, to provide our residents with the best services they can. It’s hard for our residents who are used to having what they’ve had as a service or the support that they’ve been given through grants.”

Related reports:

Guildford Borough Council keeps its lights on

Will Epsom and Ewell be bailing out Woking?

Will Epsom and Ewell be bailing out Guildford?

Will Epsom and Ewell be bailing out Spelthorne?

Surrey to get new recycling centre?

6 March 2025

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Newspapers, cardboard, plastic bottles and tins of tuna could have a new home to go to in Surrey. Plans for a new recycling centre are on the cards on farmland in Chertsey as the existing infrastructure is “under strain”, a new report says.

Surrey County Council is proposing to build a dry material recycling centre on Trumps Farm, just off the M3. An outline planning application has been submitted and an outline business case has been developed, with a decision hopefully being made in May 2025.

Waste like metal, cardboard and plastic would be collected at the kerbside and then separated from mixed items like paper, card, plastic, metal and glass into single material streams. These streams are then sent on to reprocessors to turn into new products.

Trumps Farm, owned by the county council, was identified as the most suitable location for a recycling facility as it is North West Surrey, closest to where the highest levels of waste are produced, according to the council report. The size of the proposed facility will provide capacity for Surrey’s dry recycling now and into the future, the document said.

The county’s ability to recycle and get rid of waste is under “significant strain”, according to a council report. A report in 2023 highlighted a strain on the current recycling infrastructure and a lack of dry mixed recycling centres in the county.

“If we’re going to build and invest in a recycling centre, we need to up our recycling rates,” said the Leader of the council, Tim Oliver at a cabinet meeting on February 25. He urged members to “renew their energy” for recycling around the districts and boroughs.

The Conservative leader said recycling rates around Surrey had stagnated at around 50 per cent and perhaps residents were not sure what can and cannot be recycled. He added: “I have persuaded my wife to look at a package before she puts it in the bin because it does tell you whether it’s recyclable or not.”

Responsible for around 90,000 tonnes of recycling in Surrey, the council is hoping to find an operator to process all this material without changing the current district and borough collection regimes. These authorities are Epsom & Ewell, Elmbridge, Guildford, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Tandridge, Waverley and Woking.

Use of third-party sites to manage recyclable materials collected by the District and Boroughs on the county’s behalf has been increasingly expensive and the service has no control over costs or the separation processes. “Surrey County Council will need greater control over its supply chain and associated infrastructure,” according to a new report.

Imminent waste legislative changes could put the county council at risk of not meeting its duty as the Waste Disposal Authority. The new legal rules include: collection packaging reforms and extended producer responsibility (meaning the need to collect and recycle a broader range of materials) and a new levy on fossil fuel waste which could cost the council up to £10m a year.

The report said: “The delivery of a Surrey material recycling facility will work to mitigate these financial pressures by increasing recycling, particularly with regard to plastics and provide revenue savings which can offset these costs.”

In the event that Surrey was split into a number of unitary authorities that were responsible for waste disposal, the county council said the continued use of strategic waste management facilities would be managed through agreements between local authorities.

Image: Surrey Recycling Centre. Credit Surrey County Council

An Epsom 17th century pub to become supermarket?

6 March 2025



A 17th century pub could be transformed into a Sainsbury’s Local. Plans have been submitted to refurbish the Grade II-

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listed drinking establishment, on Dorking Road in Epsom, to a convenience store.

If approved, a Sainsbury's convenience store would take over the ground floor of the historic building and install an ATM machine outside. Plans also include resurfacing and reducing the car park to just 13 spaces, four of which will be reserved for delivery vehicles.

The former White Horse Public House was converted into Lava Lounge, a restaurant and cocktail bar, in 2020. Lava Lounge closed in January 2024, having been on the market for at least two years according to planning documents.

Used for centuries for drinking, the former purpose of the pub is no longer viable according to Sainsbury's. "Given the wealth of drinking establishments in Epsom, not just in the town centre, it is unlikely that the loss of a facility which has already been closed for a year could be considered a detriment," the application said.

Serving a specific catchment area, the proposed Sainsbury's is said to be conveniently located for nearby residents, visitors and employees at Epsom hospital as well as passing trade. The development will also create around 20 new jobs, a mixture of full and part-time.

"Very little appears to have survived" from the 17th-18th century on the ground floor, planning documents state, perhaps only the thick walls around the chimney breasts. The timber framed structure at first floor level appears to be correctly placed for a historic building but, the report says, the timbers appear to be modern.

Sainsbury's heritage statement states the proposals would have a "neutral effect" on the special interest of a listed building. The report says the vast majority of the building's internal heritage value has been lost from modern adaptations.

Planning documents read: "The core of the building has a hipped slate roof and is of timber framed construction, some of which is evidently modern, but which may form the altered remains of the 17th or 18th century building referred to in the Listing description. The pub has a parapeted brick frontage which likely dates from the middle of the 19th century."

The scheme proposes removing the replacement of the Victorian-style sash window, as well as reconfiguring and refurbishing the insides of the former pub. Demolishing the covered yard at the back of the site, Sainsbury's plans to build an extension to form a 'back of house' for the convenience store.

Minor modifications to the historic part of the building are needed to use the original pub building for the back office part of the shop. The application clarifies the historic part of the building is not being used for a sales area.

Neighbours can comment on the application on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's website. No decision date has been listed yet.

View outside the Lava Lounge, and former White Horse Pub, in Epsom. (Credit: Sainsbury\'s/ Epsom and Ewell Planning Documents)

What Epsom could do with Woking's £75 million bail out?

6 March 2025



Critical front-line services will be spared after a huge government 'bail out' was agreed, bankrupt Woking Borough Council has said. Officially referred to as Exceptional Financial Support for local authorities, Woking Borough Council has been given £74.9 million for the 2025/26 financial year on top of the £96.5million agreed for 24/25.

Woking declared itself effectively bust in 2023 with debts of about £2 billion. It forced the council to cut new spending, axe non-statuary services and increase tax by 10 per cent.

It used the money to build up what it hoped would be a significant investment portfolio but instead saddled itself with huge debt repayments costing tens of millions of pounds every year that it simply can not afford.

It has left the council relying on the Government to cover the cost of its heavy borrowing, known as minimum debt repayment. And this week came the news that it would receive all the money it has asked for – including a further £ 2.8million to cover the cost of providing services this year.

Had the Government refused completely the council would have ground to a halt. Councils also have to, by law, balance their books each year, and the £2.8m above and beyond debt repayment was agreed as it was viewed that Woking Borough Council has been doing what it can to reduce its spending.

This has included mass layoffs, the sale of assets, and finding partners to take over the running of others. Had any further

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cuts been made in such a short period of time, the results would have been ‘catastrophic’ to both the council and residents it had been said.

The government cash comes as part of 30 councils overall that have been given support to manage financial pressures – such is the widespread problem of local government finance.

Cllr Ann-Marie Barker, Leader of Woking Borough Council, said: “I welcome the Government’s decision to provide exceptional financial support. Critically, this will ensure that the council can meet its financial obligations relating to its £2.1 billion legacy debt without impacting front-line services and will allow us to set a balanced budget at a meeting of Council on Monday 3 March.

“We continue to urgently address the council’s legacy debt through work being undertaken as part of our Improvement and Recovery Plan on asset rationalisation, debt reduction and improved commercial governance.

“We remain committed to working alongside Commissions and Government to find a lasting resolution to our complex and challenging financial situation.”

In January 2023, an external assurance review covering Woking Borough Council’s governance, finance and commercial issues was carried out. It provided an external assessment of Woking Borough Council’s governance arrangements, financial situation, commercial investments and its capacity and capability to manage these.

The Secretary of State was not satisfied that the pace or scale of the council’s response was proportionate to the issues it faced and decided immediate urgent government action was required, – and On May 25, 2023, he decided to intervene and appointed the review team as commissioners.

By June that year the council declared itself bankrupt and by October, the Commissioners spoke of the gravity of the situation in Woking and the scale of the challenge the council faced.

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