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

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Examination of a Surrey Borough’s 2nd highest UK debt

8 December 2024



The review into Spelthorne Borough Council’s £1 billion debt and whether it is upholding its duty to provide best value to residents has been extended. In May, the government wrote to the heavily leveraged local authority, the second most indebted borough council in the country, over concerns surrounding its debt conditions and financial management arrangements. It has now written again to say it is extending its deadline until January 31, 2025, with the scope of the inspection remaining unchanged. The Government first began engaging with Spelthorne Borough Council in May 2022 over its capital risk, and the review covers concerns over how the council is governed, the strength of its audits, scrutiny and risk arrangements, and in particular its finances. Its debt is second only to bankrupt Woking among borough councils.

A Spelthorne Borough Council spokesperson said of the delay: “The snap general election earlier this year interrupted the appointment of the Best Value Inspection team. The delayed appointments have had a knock-on impact on the original timeline, which has resulted in this extension.” The council’s extremely high levels of debt and borrowing, as of March 2023, stood at £1.1 billion, which is 87.1 times the borough’s core spending power (CSE) and 52.4 times its total service expenditure. By comparison, the average CSE for councils such as Spelthorne is 5.6. Spelthorne has followed a similar path to other Surrey authorities such as Woking, Runnymede, and Surrey Heath, borrowing vast amounts to fund regeneration projects in the hope of creating long-term revenues. Many councils have used this to stave off real-term cuts to their spending power and maintain services residents value. The problem arises, as in Woking’s case, when local authorities can no longer afford to pay back their loans, or if income from the investments is too low. While Spelthorne Borough Council has not yet reached that stage, the Government is seeking assurances that its long-term position is secure.

Between December 2016 and August 2018, Spelthorne Borough Council bought eight investment properties for a cost of about £1 billion. It borrowed largely from the Public Works Loans Board to generate income that supports its revenue budget, enabling it to maintain a wide range of discretionary services. As of December 31, 2022, the council’s total borrowing stood at some £1.1 billion, with £1.08 billion from the Public Works Loans Board—the same body that lent to Woking Borough Council and numerous others. The council plans to borrow a further £332 million between 2023 and 2027, with most of this spread across the next two financial years, and has set its authorised borrowing limit at £1.45 billion for the next four years. The Government has also highlighted a KPMG Public Interest Report on the council’s 2017/18 accounts, published in November 2022, which raised concerns about Spelthorne’s investments and stated the auditor’s view that the authority acted unlawfully in borrowing to purchase three properties in 2017/18.

The vast majority of Spelthorne’s property portfolio, 95 percent, consists of office buildings, with just ten tenants accounting for 75 percent of its lettings income, and one tenant—BP—providing £18 million in rental income annually. About half of its leases end within 10 years and 94 percent within 15 years, creating pressure to retain key tenants. This reliance was highlighted when the loss of a previous tenant resulted in a £4 million loss, including £2.4 million linked to a Russian-owned tenant affected by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. A July 2023 report noted: “Although Spelthorne Borough Council has effective mitigations in place, this cannot provide complete protection. The loss of a major tenant can impair commercial income.” The council is projected to face an income shortfall of £10 million over the next two years due to these challenges. Additionally, the devaluation of its assets adds to its risks. Spelthorne spent £952 million on eight major purchases that collectively were worth £882 million as of 2022, with only the Sunbury Business Park increasing in value, rising from £384 million to £387 million. However, this gain is overshadowed by losses, such as the Charter Building in Uxbridge, purchased for £135.98 million but valued at £99 million. These devaluations mean that if the council needs to sell assets, it could face a significant deficit.

Despite these challenges, the council insists that the rental income from its commercial property portfolio exceeds financing costs and contributes significantly to discretionary services. “Annually these contribute approximately £10 million net to the council’s revenue budget, enabling the council to continue delivering services that would otherwise have to be cut, including valued services such as Meals on Wheels or community centres,” stated a Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy report. The same report, titled the Spelthorne Borough Council Review of Debt/Investment Risk Profile July 2023, also warned of a significant budget deficit of £9.306 million projected over the next three financial years. Responding to the original best value review, a council spokesperson said: “We welcome the independent review and will work with the inspector and her team. This administration has taken many decisive and positive steps since the May 2023 election, including instigating a full external independent review of our commercial property portfolio. Additionally, we have reduced future borrowing requirements by nearly £200 million and are pursuing alternative ways to deliver more affordable housing. We will continue to work with (the government) in an open and transparent way and look forward to receiving the findings of the report. The rental income received from our commercial property portfolio more than covers the financing costs and provides a significant contribution to support council services,

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

additionally, there is a reserve to cover possible income variation in future years.”

Related Reports:

Spelthorne in financial trouble

Spelthorne’s neediest lose out on housing

Spelthorne’s thorny property problems spelt out

Spelthorne Borough Council offices in Knowle Green, Staines. Credit: Emily Coady-Stemp

---

Small Business is my business says Epsom’s MP

8 December 2024



Helen Maguire, MP for Epsom and Ewell, has announced a new survey for local businesses and will spend time working alongside staff at three local establishments in the lead-up to **Small Business Saturday** on 7th December.

Small Business Saturday is an annual campaign aimed at encouraging the public to support local businesses and raise awareness of their contributions to the community and the economy.

Ms Maguire is set to visit Fatima’s Hair Boutique in Epsom, All Things Nice Café in Ewell, and Lavender Flowers in Ashtead, where she plans to engage directly with staff and customers. According to her office, these visits are intended to provide her with a better understanding of the challenges faced by small businesses in the constituency.

The MP, who has previously run a charity fundraising consultancy and a fitness business, has highlighted her personal experience as a former small business owner. She says this gives her an insight into the pressures and demands local entrepreneurs encounter.

Ms Maguire’s survey, available on her website, invites business owners to share their experiences and concerns. She says the results will help her advocate for better support for small businesses in Parliament.

Speaking about her initiative, Ms Maguire said:

> *“Local businesses like All Things Nice and Lavender Flowers are integral to our community, providing not just services but also fostering a sense of connection and vibrancy. I look forward to working alongside them and learning more about how I can help.”*

The MP also criticised the government’s proposed National Insurance hike, stating:

> *“Small businesses here in Epsom and Ewell have faced rising costs and reduced support in recent years. The planned National Insurance increase will place even more strain on them, and I’ll continue to press for this to be reconsidered.”*

The Liberal Democrats have stated that they oppose the National Insurance rise, which they claim will adversely affect small businesses nationwide.

Ms Maguire’s visits will take place tomorrow and Friday.

What is Small Business Saturday?

Small Business Saturday, now a well-established event in the UK, promotes awareness and support for independent businesses. In 2022, shoppers were estimated to have spent £1 billion at small businesses on the day. The campaign encourages consumers to shop locally and highlights the broader contributions of small enterprises to communities and economies.

Small Business Saturday is an independent initiative that runs across the UK, with more details available on its official website.

Helen Maguire’s Small Business Survey can be accessed here.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

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

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Surrey pharmacies need a better financial prescription

8 December 2024



Pharmacy owners in Surrey say “enough is enough” as they complain working 12-hour days and barely breaking even. One pharmacist said it has to dispense just over 6,000 prescriptions a month to just about balance the books.

Over the last decade or so, the funding community pharmacies received from the government and NHS have been cut by 40 per cent, with 1,500 closing in the last 10 years.

The government announced a £26 billion boost for the NHS and social care in the budget. A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: “We are committed to working with the pharmacy sector and we will set out further details on allocation of funding for next year in due course.”

Asma’a Al-hindawi has worked at her family-owned pharmacy in Horley, after graduating from university in 2010. What used to be a family passion, is now a tough grind. She said: “It’s a lot of hard work. Sometimes me and my sister have to work 12-13 hours a day, six days a week, and still we’re only breaking even.”

Pharmacies are paid on a piecemeal basis for dispensing prescriptions issued by GPs. This makes up most of the community pharmacies’ income. In 2012, the piecework fee was £2.75 per item; but now, despite inflation, the fee stands at £2.18 per prescription dispensed.

Despite her family business making a loss, Asma’a said: “I feel I have a moral obligation to work this hard to keep the pharmacy running and to help the community with their healthcare.” She explained the pharmacy is a “community service” which he has stuck by despite often getting verbal abuse.

She said the NHS “doesn’t catch up with the prices of the market” when the market cost of medicine increases. Sometimes items are out of stock so the pharmacy has to buy more expensive branded products, but the pharmacy still only receives the £2.18 fee.

“It’s an ethical dilemma,” said Asma’a, “because you can’t tell a patient you cannot sell the medicine otherwise you will make a loss.” Speaking to the Local Democracy Reporting Service in a bustling pharmacy, with shelves high of medicine, Asma’a said: “If the pharmacy is this busy, it should be making a profit.”

Dorking & Horley MP Chris Coghlan (Liberal Democrat) said: “We really need to make sure our pharmacies are paid properly for the work they’re doing so they can survive and keep helping the community.”

John Bell, who runs South Street Pharmacy in Dorking, started his own mini campaign in protest against the funding situation. He turned off the lights of the pharmacy and posted a note on the window stating: “Why are the lights out in pharmacies? Find out more inside.”

He started the campaign to raise awareness that 500 community pharmacies have closed across the country over the last year. “There comes a point when enough is enough,” said John, explaining pharmacies can’t afford to keep pouring money into a business just to keep it afloat.

The Dorking pharmacist said he makes “zero money” from the main pharmacy business and has to subsidise it with selling the extra hair accessories, sun cream and glasses on the shop floor. Already running at a “skeleton staff”, John said he is dreading the increase in employers’ National Insurance contributions. He said staffing costs have gone up by 50 per cent in 10 years.

Mr Coghlan has written to Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care , to “stop the decimation of independent pharmacies”. He wrote: “It’s unacceptable that pharmacies are subsidising NHS work out of their own pockets while being expected to take on more responsibilities.”

In his letter, the Lib Dem MP has urged Mr Streeting to review and increase NHS reimbursement rates to reflect the “true cost” of dispensing and running a pharmacy. Mr Coghlan also asked for employers’ national insurance rise to be “halted” to prevent a “further financial blow” on pharmacies and health providers.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: “Community pharmacy has been neglected for years, but it has a vital role to play in the shift of care from hospital to the community as we reform the health service through our 10 Year Health Plan.

“We commend the hard-working pharmacists working to support their communities across England and there is never a justification for threatening behaviour.”

Image: MP Chris Coghlan (left) visiting Asma\’a (right) at her family-run pharmacy in Horley. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

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

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Epsom and Ewell low-income crisis support

8 December 2024



The **Household Support Fund**, provided by the Department for Work and Pensions, offers short-term financial support to households struggling to afford essentials. Distributed by CAEE on behalf of **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council**, this fund is available until **31st March 2025**.

Who Can Apply?

You may be eligible if you:

- Are on benefits
- Live in a low-income household
- Require crisis support that could otherwise lead to financial hardship

Who Can CAEE Help?

CAEE provides support to:

- Families
- Pensioners
- Disabled people
- Those in financial crisis

What Can the Funds Cover?

The Household Support Fund can help with:

- Utilities
- Food
- Essential goods
- Crisis support to avoid financial hardship

How to Access the Fund

- **Online**: Complete an application via our website: www.caee.org.uk/household-support-fund/
- **Phone**: Call us on **01372 300777**
- **In Person**: Attend a drop-in session:
  - **Monday & Tuesday**: 10 am – 1 pm
  - **Thursday**: 10 am – 3 pm

Message from Lisa Davis, CEO of CAEE

“We have been given more Household Support funds to distribute to those who are tipping into financial crisis. From June to September, we assisted 161 clients, including families, older people, and those with disabilities or long-term conditions. We provided essential help such as energy or supermarket vouchers and direct utility payments.

We saw first-hand the significant positive impact this support had on our community, alleviating financial pressure and anxiety.

Examples of crises we can help with include:

- Repairing an essential family car to get to work

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

- Providing support equipment to prevent a disabled person from falling into hardship
- Covering costs for new school uniforms
- Assisting with utility bills

Get in touch with us as soon as possible – we can help.

Unhappy couple. Photo by Timur Weber: https://www.pexels.com/photo/discord-between-man-and-woman-8560374/

Call to address mental health of health workers

8 December 2024



Only a system-wide overhaul of the NHS that invests in staff wellbeing can address the psychological ill-health crisis amongst healthcare workers, according to research led by the University of Surrey in partnership with the University of Exeter. The research, which is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), focussed on nurses, midwives and paramedics who are disproportionately affected by psychological ill-health, which leads to significant consequences for both individual wellbeing and patient care.

The study found that whilst high-pressure environments, heavy workloads, and chronic staff shortages are key drivers of stress and anxiety among healthcare professionals, it is the features of the work environment, such as lone working and career stage, such as being newly qualified, that can be key. The NHS staff survey reports that almost half of all NHS staff reported feeling unwell due to work-related stress in the past year (47%), with many experiencing unrealistic time pressures and inadequate staffing levels.

The researchers identified several key findings, including:

- An underlying blame culture undermines staff psychological wellness by creating a toxic work environment.
- A prevalent “serve and sacrifice” culture prioritises institutional needs over individual wellbeing.
- Healthcare professionals often experience moral distress and emotional exhaustion due to the tension between upholding professional values and the realities of clinical practice.
- A more comprehensive approach is needed to address the cumulative effects of workplace stressors rather than only focus on individual-level strategies and acute stressors.
- Developing effective psychological wellbeing interventions for diverse healthcare workers is complex.

Professor Jill Maben OBE, Professor of Health Services Research and Nursing at the University of Surrey, said:

“ By addressing these systemic issues, the NHS will not only improve the psychological health of its workforce, but will also enhance the quality of patient care and reduce costs associated with turnover and absenteeism”.

A series of recommendations emerged, aiming to improve staff wellbeing and create a healthier workplace culture. First and foremost, prioritising staff wellbeing is crucial. This involves addressing essential needs such as providing access to food and hydration, break rooms, staff parking (including disabled parking), and financial security.

A holistic and collaborative approach to staff wellbeing is also recommended. By focusing on both prevention and intervention, organisations can adopt a systems-level strategy to promote and protect wellbeing effectively.

Other key recommendations include:

- Normalising and proactively managing psychological ill-health: Recognising that psychological stress and burnout are common challenges in healthcare is essential.
- Giving equal consideration to psychological safety alongside physical safety within the healthcare workplace.
- Developing compassionate leaders for the future: Investing in leadership development fosters a compassionate and supportive work environment.
- Fostering a learning culture and encouraging open communication: Creating a psychologically safe environment where staff feel empowered to speak without fear of retribution is vital.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Professor Cath Taylor, Professor of Healthcare Workforce Organisation and Wellbeing, said:

“We have produced a comprehensive guide to assist NHS leaders and staff in implementing our recommendations. This resource provides practical advice on how to address poor psychological wellbeing in nurses, midwives and paramedics to create a more supportive healthcare system, allowing staff to thrive and deliver excellent care for patients”.

For more information, and to view the guide, visit: https://workforceresearchsurrey.health/projects-resources/cup2/

This project was supported by the NIHR HS&DR programme with grant number 129528. The views and opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the HS&DR programme, the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

Surrey academic to lead plastic pollution fight

8 December 2024



Tackling the plastic pollution crisis: Legislation must evolve to address challenges for our climate, ecosystems and human health

Urgent legislative action is needed to stop the imminent threats of environmental harms caused by plastics. To help find solutions, Dr Noreen O’Meara from the University of Surrey has been awarded a prestigious Mid-Career Fellowship by the British Academy to lead vital research that seeks to reshape how we govern the lifecycle of plastics through effective legislation and policy.

Dr O’Meara’s project aims to support national, European, and global efforts to combat plastics pollution at a time when negotiations for a Global Plastics Treaty are intensifying. This treaty represents the first international legally binding framework aimed at addressing the plastics crisis, and Dr O’Meara’s research will play a crucial role in informing its development and implementation.

Dr Noreen O’Meara, Associate Professor (Reader) in Human Rights, European and Environmental Law at the University of Surrey said:

“Plastics pollution is a toxic contributor to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, ecosystem degradation, and environmental pollution. Plastics production accounts for a rising proportion of the global carbon budget, which undermines states’ net-zero goals and action under the Paris Agreement to achieve a safer climate. The plastics lifecycle creates serious risks to human rights and human health which must be mitigated in governance efforts to tackle plastics pollution.

“We must mitigate the serious risks to human rights and health that arise from the plastics lifecycle in our governance efforts. This fellowship gives us the opportunity to advocate for a rights-oriented model that not only addresses pollution but also respects human dignity.”

With a strong background in EU and European Human Rights Law, Dr O’Meara’s research delves into pressing challenges in climate law and environmental justice. She has been actively involved in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), which is working towards finalising the Global Plastics Treaty by mid-2025. As United Nations negotiations resume, her insights will be invaluable as states navigate the complexities of this treaty.

Image: Muntaka Chasant Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International licence.

Surrey History Centre throws light on Epsom’s hospitals

8 December 2024

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

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

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Epsom Surrey had more mental hospitals than most English counties and, at Surrey History Centre, we are justly proud of the quantity and quality of surviving records we hold. These range from the early private asylums of the late eighteenth century through to the county asylums of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Many of these records were rescued by our archivists when the institutions were closed down in the 1990s, and they include the records of some of the 'Epsom Cluster' of hospitals. In 1896 the newly created London County Council, faced with the need to provide for huge numbers of the mentally ill, purchased the Horton Manor estate at Epsom and built five large hospitals. The Manor opened in 1899; Horton in 1902; Ewell Epileptic Colony, later St Ebba's, in 1904; Long Grove in 1907; and West Park in 1924.

Among the extensive archive of The Manor hospital at Surrey History Centre is a wonderful collection of glass plate negatives of individual male and female patients dating back to 1899. The patients were photographed on admission to the hospital and many who recovered after treatment were often photographed again on discharge, showing a marked improvement in their demeanour.

These glass plates had been languishing in our strong rooms so, earlier this year, we started creating digital positive copies of some of the plates that are over one hundred years old. Once digitised, the images were identified by matching them to the photographic prints in the Manor Hospital patient case books. Sadly a few of the case books had not survived, so a number of images remained unidentified, but more of this later. Thanks to our volunteer, Brenda, we have now successfully digitised over 500 images which can be viewed by researchers in our searchroom. The names of the patients whose photographs have been identified are also available on our online catalogue.

This digitisation project was actually prompted by the work of the Epsom based **Friends of Horton Cemetery**. Their Out of Sight, Out of Mind project explores and commemorates the lives of some of the 9,000 Epsom Cluster patients buried in unmarked graves in the disused cemetery. More information about this fascinating project can be found on the Horton Cemetery website.

This has truly been a collaborative undertaking. Also working in partnership with Surrey History Centre and the Friends of Horton Cemetery is multimedia artist and medic, Dr Eric Fong. His work spans film, photography, sculpture, and installation, often exploring themes of the body, identity, and vulnerability. His moving and haunting Cyanotype Apparitions exhibition, using some of the Manor Hospital patient glass slides, won the London Independent Film Awards' Best Experimental Short October 2024 award.

And here's a fitting postscript: last month saw the recovery of one of the long-lost Manor Hospital patient case books, filling an important gap in the hospital's record collection at Surrey History Centre. Discovered in an attic, this remarkable volume, spanning May 1900 to July 1901, records the medical histories of 250 women, complete with their personal details and poignant photographic portraits. And importantly, it has allowed us to identify some more of the unnamed glass plate images.

For more news from Surrey History Centre – read more here.

Image: glass plate negative of Caroline Appleton and William Smith

Surrey History Centre

Related reports:

Attic find fills gap in Epsom local asylum history

Portraits of pauper patients in Epsom's Horton Cemetery, inspires artist

Petition to reclaim Horton Cemetery from property speculator

Epsom and Ewell to be served by publicly owned trains

8 December 2024

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

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

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



The government has announced that South Western Railway (SWR), which serves commuters from Epsom, Ewell West, Stoneleigh and Worcester Park to London Waterloo, will be the first train operator to transition back into public ownership. The move comes following the passage of the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act 2024, signalling a historic shift for Britain's railways.

Starting next year, SWR services, including the Epsom to London routes, will come under the direct management of DfT Operator Limited, a publicly owned body. This change aims to address long-standing issues of delays, cancellations, and high costs that have plagued privatized rail services for decades.

What This Means for Epsom Commuters

Epsom's SWR services connect thousands of local residents daily to key destinations such as London Waterloo, Wimbledon, and Clapham Junction and south to Dorking and Guildford. These routes are lifelines for commuters and leisure travellers alike, and reliability issues have often sparked frustration among passengers. Under public ownership, improvements in punctuality, affordability, and customer satisfaction are hoped for.

Local resident and commuter Sarah James commented: *"I've been using the Epsom to Waterloo service for over ten years, and while it's convenient, the delays and rising ticket prices have been hard to justify. If public ownership can bring real improvements, it'll be a welcome change."*

Government's Vision for the Railways

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said: *"We're putting passengers back at the heart of our railways. For too long, privatization has failed to deliver for the British public. South Western Railway is the first step in our plan to rebuild a rail system that works for everyone."*

The move forms part of a broader government commitment to overhaul the rail network, with c2c and Greater Anglia services also set to follow suit by 2025. The goal is to save up to £150 million annually by eliminating franchise fees, redirecting those funds into service improvements instead of shareholder profits.

How Will the Transition Work?

The Department for Transport (DfT) is prioritizing a seamless handover, ensuring minimal disruption for passengers. Ticketing systems and staffing will remain unchanged during the transition period, with SWR's current workforce continuing to support commuters.

Publicly managed services will eventually integrate into Great British Railways (GBR), the government's new overseeing body for track and train operations. GBR promises a more unified and efficient approach to rail management, focusing on reliability, accessibility, and value for money.

Local Impacts Beyond the Commute

Epsom is known for its vibrant community and attractions like Epsom Downs Racecourse and Epsom shopping centre, which rely on reliable rail links to draw visitors. Public ownership of SWR could boost local tourism by ensuring smoother travel to and from Epsom.

Additionally, the promise of greater transparency and accountability could restore faith in public transport, encouraging more residents to opt for trains over cars, which aligns with Surrey County Council's environmental goals.

What's Next?

The first publicly run trains will start operating in 2025, and residents can expect regular updates on planned improvements, including timetable adjustments and station enhancements. The Epsom and Ewell Times will continue to monitor the situation closely, bringing you the latest developments as they happen.

For now, commuters and local businesses will be watching closely to see if public ownership delivers the transformative results promised by the government.

Image: CA850 (with cropping and exposure alterations by XAM2175) – CC BY-SA 2.0

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

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

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Lucy Porter Returns to Her Roots with “No Regrets” at Epsom Playhouse

8 December 2024



Epsom Playhouse is set to welcome one of comedy’s most beloved figures, Lucy Porter, on **18th January 2025**, as part of her nationwide tour with the brand-new show *No Regrets*. For Lucy, this performance will be more than just a stop on her tour—it’s a nostalgic homecoming.

Lucy, who grew up in nearby Croydon and Wallington, has fond memories of Epsom. “Epsom was the place we went for a fancy day out—it seemed so much posher than anywhere else nearby,” she reminisces. “I used to hang out at the Ashley Centre, which is right next to the theatre. I’ll relive my youth by putting on some baggy jeans and Kickers, hanging around and terrorising the locals!”

Reflecting on her formative years, Lucy recalls special occasions at the **Berni Inn at Tattenham Corner**, where she developed her love of prawn cocktails, and visits to the Playhouse itself as a young fan. “I never dreamed that one day I’d get to perform there myself,” she says.

A Hilarious Exploration of Regret

In *No Regrets*, Lucy takes audiences on a journey through her most embarrassing mistakes and missteps, from disastrous dates and professional mishaps to parenting fails and ruined friendships. With her trademark wit, she examines the nature of regret, guilt, and shame—topics she knows all too well as a self-confessed middle-class, middle-aged ex-Catholic.

“It’s not all doom and gloom,” Lucy promises. “Regrets can also be inspiring. You can use them to change your ways. This show is about learning to laugh at the past and maybe using it to build a better future.”

Lucy’s comedic reflections are infused with sharp social commentary. In the show, she explores collective regrets, such as not maintaining the work-life balance we rediscovered during lockdown or failing to realise clapping for the NHS wasn’t enough to sustain it.

From Epsom to Stardom

Lucy Porter’s career spans acting, writing, and comedy. A familiar face on television, she has appeared on *QI*, *Mock the Week*, *Have I Got News for You*, and *Would I Lie to You*. Her stage credits include *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* and even a stint on *Eastenders*. A passionate quizzer, Lucy co-hosts the hit podcast *Fingers on Buzzers* with Jenny Ryan (The Vixen from *The Chase*), and she’s a former Celebrity Mastermind Champion of Champions.

Her dulcet tones are regularly heard on **BBC Radio 4**, where she contributes to shows like *The News Quiz* and *Just a Minute*.

Don’t Miss Out

For those eager to catch Lucy’s laugh-out-loud performance and hear her candid confessions, tickets are available now at **www.boundandgaggedcomedy.com**.

Lucy’s final word on her return to Epsom? “I’m so excited to come back and share this show with a place that meant so much to me growing up. I hope everyone brings their prawn cocktails!”

Surrey schools not out for so long in summer?

8 December 2024



© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Surrey County Council is looking at possible changes to school holidays.

A consultation has been launched on whether the county council should switch to a two-week half term break in the autumn – and is asking for families to give their feedback before making a decision.

About one in ten state-funded schools have already made the switch, including some in Surrey.

It has led some families facing added challenges when term times at different schools are not aligned.

If the switch to a two-week autumn half term break goes ahead, the added five days would be clawed back from the summer break, although the council said it would look to minimise this reduction "where there are opportunities to recover days through the natural positioning of bank holidays during the Christmas and Easter breaks".

The consultation letter sent to parents read: "We are seeking to understand the views of all stakeholders in determining our future approach to term dates and if there is any appetite for change.

"This will enable the council, schools and multi-academy trusts to work in partnership to set term dates with an aim for more consistency for schools, school staff, and families.

"We acknowledge that there may be strong views on either side of this question, but we feel it is right and responsible to seek those opinions at a time when we are seeing movement towards a longer October half term by some schools.

"The combined responses from education settings, families and partners will help inform our approach to term dates for the 2026/27 academic year onwards.

"If it is determined that there is significant appetite for change, the council will adopt a two-week autumn half term break from the 2026/2027 academic year at the earliest."

The survey runs until the end of the year, and closes at 5pm on Tuesday December 31 2024.

The school year would still be 195 days, including the five inset training days for staff.

Local Plan lessons from our neighbour?

8 December 2024



"Four more years?" is the resounding cry after a Surrey council has been moved back to square one with its plan for 8,000 new homes, potentially at a cost of £1m.

Local plans are a crucial framework for councils as they set out where and what type of development is allowed in the borough. Without one, developers effectively have a free-for-all to build where they wish and the council could struggle to defend it.

A planning inspector told Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC) in September to reconsider its local plan, especially to increase the number of affordable housing. Despite asking for a 12-15 month extension to straighten out its plan, after six years working on the proposals, the council was given a firm 'no' by the inspector.

Christa Masters, the independent planning inspector, judged that Elmbridge could not prove it had five years' worth of housing for residents. The inspector has also labelled the borough – which includes Cobham, St George's Hill and Weybridge – as one of the "least affordable in the country".

The two choices in front of the council are to withdraw the plan and start again, or accept the inspector's findings of the report being 'unsound' and leave the borough open to speculative development. A report will be presented to the council in February 2025 for the council to decide.

"It is clear to us that building new homes is not this government's priority," a statement read from three senior councillors. They said: "Instead, it seems intent on forcing Elmbridge Borough Council and our residents to restart the lengthy 3-4 year process of developing a new Local Plan, with the significant additional costs (potentially £1million) this will bring to the council."

Council leader Mike Rollings, deputy leader Simon Waugh, and leader of Hinchley Wood Residents' Association Janet Turner, who wrote the statement, said they have been left with no choice by the government than to start again.

A Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government spokesperson said the decision was up to an independent inspector who found the council's plan 'unsound'. They said:"We are in a housing crisis and all areas of the country need to play their part in building more and delivering the homes that communities need. We want to see every council have a local plan as soon as possible, but it is for an independent Inspector to examine a local plan to ensure it is sound and

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

legally compliant."

But not everyone has been so forgiving of the update on the Local Plan. Cllr John Cope, leader of the Conservative opposition on the council, said: "It's now clear years of work and millions of pounds of local people's money have gone down the drain – and an acute shortage of affordable housing allowed in Elmbridge."

He added that the borough will "have to accept the Labour government's 121% increase in top-down development targets meaning a huge loss of green belt and loss of local democratic control of planning – but with no new roads, GPs, or schools to support the development."

Dr Ben Spencer MP (Runnymede and Weybridge) and Cllr Cope have also written a joint letter to Planning Minister Matthew Pennycook MP, urging him to review the situation. The pair ask him to grant the council an extension "so this can be resolved with minimal further financial drain on the council's resources".

In the letter, Dr Spencer and Cllr Cope also requested for Elmbridge residents to "not pay the consequences" of the failed Local Plan through "higher council tax and reduced local services".

"As a Council, we have done everything right," said Cllr Rollings, speaking to the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS). He said the council has worked to prepare a Local Plan "that meets its responsibilities" but the government has "have constantly changed and shifted the goalposts". He explained that mandatory housing targets have kept replacing each other and national planning policy is constantly being tweaked.

Cllr Rollings said: "As a Council leadership we will continue to work for the best outcomes for our residents. And we will do everything we can to protect the green spaces we all love."

Epsom Teen Selected as Duke of Edinburgh's Award Youth Ambassador

8 December 2024



A young woman from Epsom is amplifying young people's voices after being chosen as a UK Youth Ambassador for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE).

Kalina Hristova, 17, joins a select group of 35 DofE Award holders aged 16-24 from across the UK. These Youth Ambassadors will advocate for young people by sharing their insights on key issues, speaking at events, meeting decision-makers in Parliament, and contributing to the DofE charity's direction.

Originally from Bulgaria, Kalina has lived in the UK for ten years and credits the DofE with helping her socially. She began her DofE journey at the Silver level when she joined a new school, finding it a great way to meet people outside her classes.

Kalina said:
"Starting a new school in Year 10 is quite daunting, so I joined DofE to make new friends and learn new skills. I'm glad I did, as I've met some of my best friends through DofE, and I've been able to dedicate my time to something I want to achieve."

For her Volunteering section, Kalina coached netball, leading sessions for younger students, running drills, and planning fun games. This not only improved the students' skills but also enhanced Kalina's communication abilities.

For her Physical section, she focused on fitness, tracking her progress through her Apple Watch. An avid sportswoman, she joined a gym to start weightlifting. *"Sometimes I found it a bit intimidating, as it can be a male-dominated environment, but the more I progressed, the easier it became,"* Kalina added.

She also participated in the London Vitality 10K race, raising awareness and funds for the DofE. *"I would never have run a distance like this if not for the DofE. I was not a runner before, but with all the work I put in for my Physical section, I knew I could do it,"* she said.

As part of her Gold Volunteering, Kalina became her school's DofE ambassador, supporting Bronze and Silver participants, organising expeditions, and teaching skills like map reading and food planning.

For her Residential section, Kalina attended a three-week summer programme in Pennsylvania called Leadership in the Business World, which inspired her to consider studying Economics or Finance at university. "*DofE has been so much fun,*

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

and it's way more than just an Expedition. I applied to be a Youth Ambassador to apply the skills I've learned through DofE to the real world," she explained.

Empowering Young Leaders

Funded by The Gosling Foundation, the Youth Ambassador programme places young people at the heart of shaping the DofE's work. Ambassadors have met Ministers, spoken at high-profile events, represented the DofE at international forums, and influenced key decisions across the charity.

Ashley Williams, UK Youth Engagement Manager at The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, said: *"Kalina is one of many young people who have achieved incredible things through their DofE. As a charity, we're determined to put young people at the heart of everything we do and give them opportunities to make a positive impact on the issues they care about."*

"It's not an easy time to be a young person, with the after-effects of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Opportunities like the DofE allow young people to have fun, grow in resilience and self-belief, and develop vital skills they can't always get in the classroom."

Young people aged 14-24 who participate in the DofE choose activities in four sections: Physical, Skills, Volunteering, and Expedition. Along the way, they gain confidence, discover new talents, and work toward a highly respected award.

Epsom rugby scrape a point lead over Gravesend

8 December 2024

Gravesend 22 Sutton & Epsom RFC 23. Saturday 30th November.

Sutton and Epsom RFC visited Gravesend RFC in October last season at the height of the high tackle hysteria. In a match not so much punctuated by penalties as strangled by draconian enforcement Freddy Bunting collected five penalties. However, the hosts won 36-29 outscoring the visitors 6-2 in tries with a brace of penalty tries and a double from the totemic Samraj Chahal. The Black & Whites returned to the delightful Rectory Field facility that rather contrasted the unflattering portrayal of Gravesend in Andrea Arnold's recent film "Bird". One hopes the council were well compensated for the depiction of their town that raises the question: Is all publicity good publicity? S&E absquatulated again with the points sneaking home 23-22.

Sutton fielded the same starting XV that had snuck past Thurrock in the previous round, apart from an esoteric switch for the wingers. Tom Boaden returned to the bench and was joined by debutant Sam Lennie, the last arrival of the Christchurch triumvirate, who had flown in from New Zealand and not Dorset. An accident in the environs of Clackett Lane delayed the Sutton arrival but their blushes were spared as Mr Goksaran's tardiness that meant the kick off was delayed until 3:15pm. Finally, Freddy Bunting kicked off to the petanque end. Gravesend, belying their lowly league status, dominated the early exchanges. However, they struggled to cross the gain line owing to S&E's resolute defence. They squandered two opportunities in the opening ten minutes. Firstly, losing an attacking line out deep in the 22 and secondly knocking on with the line in sight.

Captain Bunting settled the visitors' nerves with an immaculate 45-metre strike for 3-0. His side now impressed with excellent continuity as rapid recycling aided forwards and backs alike. Gravesend, under severe pressure, conceded a penalty 10 metres out. The ball was prodded to the corner. The perfectly executed catch and drive ushered hooker Dan Jones over the whitewash for the opening try. Freddy Bunting's pin point accuracy made it 10-0. Five minutes later the Kent side found themselves in similar travails when they were not only turned over in their 22 but compounded the error by conceding a penalty. Another kick to the corner, another line out, another catch and drive … another outcome. The home pack halted their adversaries so it was spun wide to winger Angus Findlay whose sublime footwork left the defender grasping thin air as the second try was scored. The metronomic Bunting converted for 17-0.

The Gs looked for a rapid response and the inspirational Samraj Chahal went blind from a scrum. Rhys Betts then chipped ahead and a try was only thwarted by magnificent cover by Tom Lennard. Moments later Sutton provided the opposition with some degree of consolation when they conceded a penalty under the posts. Rhys Betts accepted the gift and the hosts trailed 3-17. The first half concluded shortly afterwards with no further addition to the scoreboard.

The second period started inauspiciously for the hosts when they kicked the restart out on the full. This was to be a rare blemish as they proceeded to besiege the Sutton 22. Following ten minutes of intense pressure it was centre Zac Filmer's perfectly angled run that opened the second half scoring with a try by the posts. Rhys Betts added the simple conversion and the home team trailed 10-17. Within five minutes a raucous Rectory Field sensed an equalising score but their team conceded a penalty one yard from glory. Undeterred by that misfortune the revitalised hosts continued to press for points. Finally, on the hour mark they levelled the scores. Sutton debutant Sam Lennie received a yellow card for a high tackle. The 3-point easy option was declined. They were rewarded when the redoubtable Samraj Chahal forced his way over. With Rhys Betts converting the scores were level 17-17 as Gravesend had scored 17 unanswered points. With S&E reduced to 14 the pendulum had swung dramatically in the favour of the Kent side.

Despite the numerical inferiority Sutton were the next to score. With Mr Goksaran hovering like Azrael the visitors were

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

awarded a penalty and Freddy Bunting recaptured the lead at 20-17. A minute later following excellent work from Jordan Huie S&E had another penalty for a late tackle. A simple 3 points for a 23-17 lead, meaning Gravesend would need a goal to regain the lead, was declined and the penalty was run instead. The forwards approached the line and thought they had scored via Rob Hegarty. The referee adjudicated that he had been held up over the line. A relieved home XV cleared long.

Sutton were returned to their full complement but only momentarily. Ben Tame cleared out a ruck and was issued a yellow for high contact. Sensing blood Gravesend also declined an easy kick and went for glory. From the ensuing penalty their bravery was rewarded as replacement Nathan Fouche powered over. To add salt to the wounds of the Sutton Society For Kicking All Penalties Rhys Betts conversion drifted wide and Gravesend led 22-20. However, a couple of minutes later Freddy Bunting was given a long-range attempt from the sidelines to recapture the lead. Demonstrating as few nerves as a false tooth he bisected the uprights for 23-22 as the game entered time added on.

Gravesend immediately had a chance following a fabulous 50-22 kick that nestled in an ideal spot for an attacking line out. Sutton set themselves for the catch and drive and did not contest the ball. Remarkably the throw was not straight. The hosts cleared to halfway but then they conceded a penalty which saw them retreating back to the corner to defend another close-range line out. This time, roared on by the Rectory Field faithful, the Gs pack secured the ball. Numerous phases saw the hosts crab their way under the posts. The heroic Sutton defence refused to be breached and turned over the ball. From the scrum they secured the ball and dismissed it from the paddock for a very hard earned 23-22 victory.

Sutton played some of their most effective rugby of this campaign in the first half. Their defence was miserly, they were quick to capitalise on errors and impressed with ball in hand. They were clinical in the opposition 22 when scoring two tries. The second half transformation said more for the attributes of Gravesend than Sutton’s deficiencies. Rob Hegarty’s dynamism was a focal point throughout, Jordan Huie’s running out of defence was exhilarating and Tom Lennard’s all around game won plaudits. Close games come down to small margins and in Freddy Bunting S&E held all the aces in all the decks.

For Gravesend this was an unwanted hat trick being their third loss in a row by a solitary point to add to a single point defeat on the opening day to Old Reigatian, not to mention a 2-point deficit to Reeds. Such a run would make Jonah feel fortunate by comparison. The hosts defended aggressively denying Sutton time and space. They varied their game with forwards, backs and some astute kicking. They were undone by missed opportunities as more than one vital line out was lost and overlaps in the 22 were not perceived. In addition, they were up against a formidable kicker who missed nothing as he made the challenging look elementary.

Next Saturday December kicks off at 2pm with a visit from Reeds Weybridge who are proudly perched third in the league. The equivalent fixture last season culminated the campaign with Sutton winning with a Rob Hegarty try on the final play for a 12-7 success.

Sutton & Epsom
O’Brien, Huie, Bibby, Bunting ©, Findlay, Lennard, Munford, Johnson, Jones, Gibson, Glanville, McTaggart, Tame, Davies & Hegarty.
Replacements: Boaden, Lennie & Hilton.

Gravesend
White, Huckle, Cooke, Filmer, Bruce M, Bruce G, Betts, Alderson, Dadson, Brooker, Bird, Brett, Stener, Chahal & Hewitt.
Replacements: Fouche, Hampshire & Fisher.

Ewell village set to improve

8 December 2024



Earlier this month Epsom and Ewell Borough councillors met to agree their contribution of £1.25m Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding toward the Ewell Village improvement project. This funding will match the £1.35m that Surrey County Council have committed to the project.

This is an important milestone for the Ewell Village project and will ensure the improvements go ahead as planned in 2026. The improvements, which include the introduction of new pedestrian crossings, greenery, improvements to footways and the public realm and a 20mph speed limit in the village, aim to improve safety along the High Street and make Ewell a great place to live, work and visit.

The plans were finalised earlier this year, following several public exhibitions and an online engagement, in which over

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

1400 responses were received from local people. The results of the engagement helped decide the way forward and plans were approved by Surrey County Council's Infrastructure Board and Capital Programme Panel in August.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, Surrey County Council said, "It's great news that Epsom and Ewell Borough Council have agreed their funding contribution to this important project. Now that all necessary funding is in place, we are in a good position to deliver this work as planned in 2026. Delivering these improvements to Ewell Village will bring about much needed safety enhancements to the High Street, whilst still allowing vehicle access. We know this was important for many local people and believe the plans deliver necessary change, whilst reflecting what the community want in their village."

Councillor Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, said: "I'm very pleased that we can support this substantial infrastructure project which will hugely benefit residents, businesses, and visitors to Ewell Village.

This project shows partnership working at its best. I would like to thank Surrey County Council for working so diligently with our residents and businesses to ensure that the planned improvements are tailored to their needs, and that Ewell Village maintains its unique, and historical, characteristics for many years to come, whilst improving accessibility and safety throughout the village."

The Essential Guide to Maintaining Clean Carpets and Upholstery in Woking

8 December 2024



Sponsored article: Maintaining a clean and inviting home is a priority for every homeowner. Among the most overlooked aspects of cleanliness are carpets and upholstery, which, if left unattended, can accumulate dirt, allergens, and stains over time. For residents of Woking, finding reliable carpet and upholstery cleaning services is key to ensuring your home remains a sanctuary. In this article, we'll explore the importance of regular cleaning, practical tips, and professional solutions to help you keep your carpets and upholstery in pristine condition.

Why Regular Cleaning Matters

Your carpets and upholstery are subjected to daily wear and tear, whether from foot traffic, spills, or pet accidents. Over time, these materials can trap dust, bacteria, and allergens, which can negatively impact indoor air quality and trigger allergies or respiratory issues. Regular cleaning not only prolongs the life of these furnishings but also ensures a healthier living environment for your family.

Signs Your Carpets and Upholstery Need Professional Attention

While routine vacuuming and spot-cleaning are essential, there are clear indicators that your carpets and upholstery need expert care:

- **Persistent Stains:** Stubborn marks from coffee, wine, or ink often require specialized treatments to remove without damaging the fibers.
- **Unpleasant Odors:** Lingering smells can indicate deeply embedded dirt or mildew.
- **Fading Colors:** A dull appearance is a sign of accumulated grime and wear.
- **Allergy Symptoms:** Frequent sneezing, itchy eyes, or a runny nose indoors could be caused by allergens hiding in your soft furnishings.

Professional Carpet Cleaning in Woking

For residents looking for high-quality **Carpet Cleaning Woking** services, enlisting a trusted provider is the best solution.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Expert cleaners use advanced techniques like hot water extraction, dry cleaning, and stain removal to restore carpets to their original beauty. Not only do they tackle visible dirt, but they also eliminate deep-seated bacteria and allergens.

Don’t Overlook Upholstery Cleaning

Your sofas, armchairs, and other upholstered furniture also deserve attention. Regular professional cleaning can preserve their texture and appearance, preventing premature wear. Companies specializing in **Sofa Cleaning Woking** and **Upholstery Cleaning Woking** offer tailored solutions for different fabric types. From delicate silk to durable microfiber, professional cleaners ensure the process is safe and effective.

DIY Tips to Maintain Cleanliness Between Professional Services

While professional cleaning provides a deep refresh, here are some DIY steps you can take to maintain cleanliness:

1. **Vacuum Regularly:** Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter to remove surface dust and debris.
2. **Address Spills Immediately:** Blot (don’t rub) spills with a clean cloth and apply a gentle cleaning solution.
3. **Rotate Furniture:** Prevent uneven wear by changing the position of rugs and furniture periodically.
4. **Use Protective Covers:** For high-traffic areas, covers can shield your upholstery and carpets from dirt and stains.

Why Choose Professional Cleaning Services in Woking

Professional cleaners combine expertise with cutting-edge equipment to deliver exceptional results. Whether it’s your carpets or upholstery, services in Woking provide customized solutions to suit your needs. With eco-friendly cleaning agents and meticulous attention to detail, they ensure a hassle-free experience and a fresher home environment.

Conclusion

Carpets and upholstery are significant investments that deserve regular care. By combining routine maintenance with professional services, you can enhance your home’s appearance and promote a healthier living space. Don’t wait for stains and odors to become a problem—schedule a professional cleaning today and enjoy the benefits of a spotless, inviting home.

Broad Gauges New Train Set to Serve Epsom

8 December 2024



Residents of Epsom will soon benefit from South Western Railway’s (SWR) latest investment in modern rail travel as the new Arterio trains, officially launched this week, are set to roll onto local lines in March 2025. The £1 billion fleet of state-of-the-art trains promises greater capacity, enhanced comfort, and cutting-edge features for commuters and leisure travellers alike.

The launch event at London Waterloo was marked by cricketing great Stuart Broad CBE naming one of the trains the **Nighthawk**, in a nod to his storied cricket career. Speaking at the ceremony, Broad reflected on the role trains play in bringing communities together:

“Trains are a lifeline for fans travelling to iconic venues. It’s exciting to think of the Nighthawk connecting people across London and the South East, including my beloved Oval cricket ground.”

The Arterio fleet is a major upgrade for SWR’s suburban network. By June 2025, these sleek trains will serve routes to **Dorking, Epsom, Guildford, Hampton Court, and Reading**, with some of the first services to Epsom and Guildford scheduled for March.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

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

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

What's New for Epsom Commuters?

Local residents can look forward to a host of improvements:

- **More Space**: Each 10-car Arterio train offers over 50% more capacity than the outgoing Class 455 models.
- **Modern Comforts**: Passengers will enjoy Wi-Fi, charging points at every seat, air conditioning, and accessible toilets.
- **Real-Time Information**: Advanced technology will provide live updates, helping commuters stay informed.

These upgrades are set to make travel smoother for Epsom residents, whether commuting to London or exploring nearby destinations like Guildford and Hampton Court.

A Train Network Honouring Sporting Heritage

SWR's nod to sporting excellence was evident at the event, where trains were also named the **Jockey**, **Red Rose**, **Ace**, and **Thames Racer**, celebrating key destinations such as Ascot, Twickenham, Wimbledon, and the Boat Race course. The Nighthawk is expected to carry cricket fans heading to the Oval via nearby stations, including Vauxhall.

Stuart Meek, Interim Managing Director of SWR, highlighted the significance of the new fleet:
"The Arterio trains are more than just a means of travel – they symbolise connection and community. Epsom passengers, among others, will soon benefit from the extra capacity, reliability, and comfort these trains bring."

A Boost for Epsom and the Local Area

The introduction of these trains is part of a broader commitment to enhancing rail services across Surrey. With more than 80 peak services planned each weekday, residents can expect reliable, comfortable journeys into London and beyond.

As Epsom prepares to welcome the Arterio trains, the town's position as a well-connected suburban hub is set to be further cemented, offering improved travel options for work, leisure, and everything in between.

For further updates on Arterio services to Epsom, keep an eye on the **Epsom and Ewell Times**.

What cuts to Surrey County Council services are you prepared for?

8 December 2024



Surrey County Council has unveiled its draft budget for the upcoming financial year and is calling on residents to share their views through a public consultation.

As councils nationwide grapple with severe financial pressures, Surrey remains confident in its ability to set a balanced budget. However, making difficult decisions will be essential to ensure long-term sustainability of vital services.

The proposed budget outlines crucial investments in areas such as specialist care services, special education provision, road maintenance, and transport improvements. Public feedback will help shape these priorities.

Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, stated:

"Councils across the UK are facing unprecedented financial challenges, and while Surrey benefits from a stable budget position, we are not immune to these pressures. "Our key services – including social care, children's services, and highways maintenance – are experiencing rising demand, escalating costs, and reduced funding. The demand on services in Surrey is particularly high, and it's critical that the government addresses this by providing sufficient funding in the upcoming finance settlement.

"We are committed to supporting the residents who need us most and delivering essential services that people rely on every day. Achieving this requires cost reduction where feasible, alongside transforming how we operate and exploring innovative ways to deliver services effectively. "We need your input to guide these decisions. Please participate in this consultation – understanding your priorities is essential."

The draft budget, approved at a recent Cabinet meeting, aligns with the four priority objectives set out in the council's **Organisation Strategy 2023-2028**. To balance the books while delivering essential services, the council has identified **£57 million in efficiencies**. Public feedback will help refine how these savings are implemented.

Residents are encouraged to share their thoughts through the consultation survey, which takes no more than 10 minutes

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

to complete and can be submitted anonymously.

The survey is open until **11:59 PM on Tuesday, 31 December 2024**. Feedback from this phase will contribute to the final budget report, which is set to be published in January 2025.

To participate, visit Surrey County Council's website.

HOW YOUR COUNCIL TAX IS SPENT:

In **Epsom and Ewell**, Council Tax contributions are distributed among three authorities: Surrey County Council, Surrey Police, and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. For every £1 of Council Tax paid:

Surrey County Council receives 76p.
Surrey Police receives 14p.
Epsom & Ewell Borough Council receives 10p.

For the fiscal year 2024/25, the total Council Tax for a Band D property in **Epsom and Ewell** is £2,308.34, allocated as follows:

Surrey County Council: £1,758.60
Surrey Police: £323.57
Epsom & Ewell Borough Council: £226.17

Allocation of Funds:

Surrey County Council utilizes its share to fund services such as:

Education
Social services
Highways and transportation
Libraries
Public health
Waste disposal

Surrey Police allocates its portion to:

Maintain law and order
Crime prevention
Community policing
Emergency response services

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council uses its share to provide services including:

Waste and recycling collection
Maintenance of parks and open spaces
Housing services
Planning and development control
Environmental health
Leisure and cultural services, such as the Epsom Playhouse and Bourne Hall

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY