



# West Surrey ‘much worse off’

16 April 2026



Surrey residents could face rising council tax bills and deep financial uncertainty under plans to overhaul local government and councillors say people are already “really angry” about it.

At a West Surrey joint committee meeting on April 14, politicians warned that changes to council tax under the new system could hit some households harder than others, at a time when many are already struggling with the cost of living.

Plans to “harmonise” council tax across the two new authorities (East and West Surrey) mean some areas could see increases above the usual 5 per cent cap. Cllr Joanne Sexton said the issue is coming up “all the time” on the doorstep and asked what protections would be in place for residents facing sharp rises.

Finance chief Andy Brown confirmed some households could pay more than 5 per cent increases to bring different council tax rates into line. “What you won’t see is an average increase across West Surrey that breaches the referendum principles,” he said. “But within that you may see areas... higher than the 5 per cent and some lower.”

Modelling has already been done and could be published, but the final call will be made by new “shadow councils” elected in May, ahead of the new system going live in 2027.

## West Surrey ‘worse off’

Behind the council tax fears is a bigger concern: that West Surrey is heading into the new system in a much weaker financial position.

Councillors repeatedly warned the west could end up the “poor relation”, inheriting higher debt, greater infrastructure needs and more financial risk.

Cllr Liz Townsend said the scale of the problem is not being taken seriously enough. She said: “I still feel we haven’t emphasised the disparity between East and West and how by virtue of an arbitrary line drawn on a map the people in West Surrey are far more disadvantaged.”

The Liberal Democrat councillor added: “I’ve been knocking on doors recently and people are really angry about it. I don’t think we’re emphasising how critical the situation is.”

Cllr Catherine Powell echoed those concerns, warning West Surrey is set to inherit “a much worse financial situation” than the east, something she said was not clearly reflected in official papers. The Farnham Residents councillor also raised concerns about infrastructure, saying the west faces specific challenges that are not being properly accounted for.

## Debt mountain and government bailout

A major factor is the huge debt linked to Woking Borough Council. The government has already stepped in, promising £500m to help reduce Woking’s borrowing. But even after that, the council is still expected to carry around £1.7bn in debt.

The government, through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, has said there is “no reasonable means” for Woking to manage this on its own. So, ongoing national support will be needed. This creates a major risk for the new West Surrey authority which will inherit the problem.

## Inequality fears and vulnerable residents

Councillors also raised concerns about how the changes could hit the most vulnerable. Cllr Powell warned that people on lower incomes are likely to be hardest affected by financial pressures but said current equality impact assessments do not fully reflect that.

Cllr Powell also called for a clearer breakdown of how decisions could affect different areas, warning the divide between east and west must not be hidden in “generic statements”. Officials said more detailed equality assessments will be produced alongside future decisions, including budgets.

## Confusion over what has been agreed

Adding to concerns, councillors warned official documents risk misleading residents about what has already been decided. Minutes from previous meetings appeared to suggest councillors had agreed to split assets geographically, something members insisted is not the case. They said they had only agreed that assets would need to be split, not how.

With local elections coming up on May 7, councillors called for clearer language to avoid confusion about who is making

decisions and when. Officials agreed to tighten up the wording.

## “Just a starting point”

Lead council officers stressed that nothing is final yet. Current proposals were described as a “starting point”, with work ongoing to figure out how services, staff and assets will be divided between the two new councils.

Final decisions will be taken by the shadow authorities after the elections, with the new system due to launch in 2027.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Related reports:

West Surrey debt mountain - teenage fears

Strip Woking’s debt-man of his OBE MP says

Government bailout to ease Woking’s debt burden

Who will be saddled with Spelthorne’s and Woking’s £3 billion debts?

Could Woking’s debt be shared by you after reorganisation?

---

Epsom and Ewell Times adds: Epsom and Ewell will come under the EAST Surrey Unitary Council. The promised £500 million debt repayment support from central Government falls far short of the overall debt accumulated in Woking, Spelthorne and other WEST Surrey districts.

---

## You Are Not Alone, Epsom Stands Against Rape

16 April 2026



It’s a sunny Wednesday afternoon in Epsom, and it feels as though spring has finally arrived. People have gathered on the streets, perhaps 1,200 or more, women and men, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, friends, young and old, from all walks of life.

They are here because of what happened last Saturday. By now, everyone knows: a woman in her 20s was followed after leaving Labyrinth nightclub and attacked outside Epsom Methodist Church in the early hours of the morning. The story has reached national headlines, BBC, *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*: **Woman in Her 20s Gang-Raped in Front of a Church with CCTV Cameras.**

I ask one of the people in the crowd what’s going on: “We are here today because a young girl was raped on Saturday night, and the police are not telling us who was responsible. There is a perception that it could be immigrants, but the police need to tell us who has done it. Without that, speculation grows, and it could be one of our own. I don’t want to protest against people who haven’t done anything wrong, but we have to come together as a community because nobody is telling us what is going on. That’s why we are here.”

I speak to a mother and her daughter, I want to know what they feel about the assault: “Our feeling is that the police need to be transparent about who is responsible, so that women and girls can feel safer, so that we know who we are dealing with. We haven’t been told. We need descriptions. The police say that information available is limited. No arrests have been made. It is reported that four men attacked a young woman for two hours. If cameras are everywhere, why have there been no arrests? Why is there said to be no information, when people believe suspects may still be walking freely in Epsom?”

Some believe the police have accused the gathering of disorder in a public space. Many here ask: “What about the victim? Isn’t rape a disorder?”

More police officers arrive. Eggs are thrown. Emotions are high. People care. Voices rise: “Who raped her?” The crowd chants in support of the victim, while the young police woman responds to my questions with a single phrase: “no comment.”

Meanwhile a voice of authority repeats familiar words: “*My heart goes out to the young woman at the centre of this deeply distressing incident.*” It is a statement many here feel they have heard too many times to truly believe.

The Methodist Church will hold a service today, April 16th at 12.30pm. All are welcome. *Epsom and Ewell Times* will be there.

*Epsom and Ewell Times* is also launching a weekly series, **Epsom Safety Brief**. If you would like to be involved and share your concerns, please get in touch at: [romana.epsomandewelltimes@gmail.com](mailto:romana.epsomandewelltimes@gmail.com).

To the young woman at the centre of this: the whole town stands with you. You are not alone. Stay strong.

Coming soon:

**Epsom Safety Brief** is a community-driven series committed to clear, balanced reporting on crime, safety, and accountability. It seeks to highlight what is happening, ask necessary questions, and assess whether meaningful action is being taken to protect residents.

Romy Sustar



Freelance journalist | SIA-certified | Covering crime & community safety.

Phone: +44 (0)77 2727 5946

Email: [romana.epsomandewelltimes@gmail.com](mailto:romana.epsomandewelltimes@gmail.com) LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/romanasustar/>

X: @RomanaSustar

Related report: [Epsom shock as police probe serious assault](#)

---

## Epsom and Ewell FC's winning streak continues

16 April 2026



Epsom & Ewell signed off their league campaign in positive fashion with a narrow but well-earned 1-0 victory over Tadley Calleva at Chalky Lane on 14th April.

With several changes to the starting line-up, the Salts were forced to adapt. Goalkeeper Kit Fletcher was absent through injury, handing Faebian Witter a start, while Tom Collins dropped into central defence alongside stand-in captain Toby Young and Prince Aderogba. In midfield, Ore Allen partnered Ryley Merrett, and up front Ali Fofahan and Karl Bailey led the attack, with Brendan Murphy-McVey rested.

Epsom began on the front foot and looked the more purposeful side early on, but their rhythm was disrupted midway through the first half when Collins was forced off with a groin injury. Leo Cunningham replaced him, prompting a reshuffle in both personnel and shape. Despite the disruption, the hosts maintained the greater attacking intent, though the sides went in level at the break.

The second half followed a similar pattern, with Epsom pressing for a breakthrough. Their best chance fell to Courtney Swaby, whose powerful effort crashed back off the crossbar. The introduction of debutant Joshua Arthur in the 70th minute injected fresh energy into the attack and would prove decisive.

With the match seemingly heading for a stalemate, a late error from the Tadley goalkeeper in the 89th minute handed Arthur his moment. Reacting quickest, he calmly slotted into an empty net to seal victory and mark his debut in memorable fashion.

The win secured a third consecutive home clean sheet and ensured Epsom & Ewell finished the season in 13th place. Back-to-back victories against play-off-bound sides provided a strong finish and underlined clear progress compared to last season.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media



# West Surrey debt mountain - teenage fears

16 April 2026

Surrey's Districts	Total debt	Per person
Woking	£2,155,641,000	£20,601.33
Spelthorne	£1,065,761,000	£10,252.24
Runnymede	£597,712,000	£6,608.79
Guildford	£311,532,000	£2,088.35
Surrey Heath	£183,436,000	£1,990.24
Waverley	£140,286,000	£1,061.60
Tandridge	£92,816,000	£1,038.11
Mole Valley	£73,850,000	£836.68
Epsom & Ewell	£64,427,000	£785.80
Elmbridge	£48,624,000	£346.08
Reigate & Banstead	£5,000,000	£32.05

A 16-year-old from Ash has urged ministers not to “lumber” his generation with billions of pounds of debt. He said it is not fair that people have to pay off debts when they have never been to Woking.

Harley Davey-Harper, who lives just a short walk from Aldershot town centre, said plans to merge borough councils into a new ‘West Surrey’ authority would tie his community to around £4.5bn in legacy debt.

Harley said: “As someone who will be starting my adult life and paying council tax in just two years, it is terrifying to know that my money will be sucked into a black hole to pay for Woking’s failed skyscraper projects and Spelthorne’s commercial property debts.”

Woking Borough Council is battling with debts of about £2.6bn after the former administration borrowed heavily to fund commercial development. Spelthorne Borough Council is also facing financial distress with over £1bn in debt from risky commercial investment.

Harley has written to ex-Chancellor Jeremy Hunt and local MP Alex Baker warning the shake-up could leave young people footing the bill for historic borrowing elsewhere in Surrey. He said: “I think it is important for MPs to know how the people are feeling.”

In his letter to the MPs, Harley wrote: “Being dumped into this new West Surrey mega-council feels like the final betrayal; we are being used as a piggy bank to fix mistakes made in towns 20 miles away that have nothing to do with us.

“Where I live is a mere 10-minute walk from Aldershot town centre. I am physically part of the Aldershot community, yet I am being forced into a council that stretches as far as Staines-upon-Thames.”

The college student has branded the decision as a “massive mistake” for the people of Ash. He said: “I don’t see why we should be paying for roads all the way over in Thorpe Park.” Harley said it is not fair that a certain group of people have to pay off the debts when some of the people have probably not been to Woking.

Harley said it is “heartbreaking” to see his home “dragged into a bankrupt Surrey merger”. He wrote: “My life is already entirely in Hampshire: my housing provider, Vivid, is Hampshire based; my post is processed in Aldershot; and the most local police force is Hampshire, who when I have called the police in the past Aldershot police have come as they are the closest in an emergency.”

Harley said he believes Ash is often overlooked compared to wealthier or more central parts of the county. “All the focus seems to go into Guildford,” he said. “Ash is forgotten. They only remember us when we need to pay our council tax- not much goes on there.”

Harley said: “It will be better for everyone if we are in the Hampshire region because the council tax will be lower.” So far, he has yet to receive a full response from MPs, though acknowledgements have been sent.

A Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government spokesperson said: “Proposals for local government reorganisation in Surrey were locally led and all the proposals received included Ash within a new West Surrey council.

“We recognise that Woking Borough Council holds significant debt that cannot all be managed locally, which is why we have committed to unprecedented debt repayment support of £500m.

“We will continue to support councils to deliver reorganisation in a way that protects services and reflects the needs of communities.”

Emily Dalton LDRS

Related reports:

[Strip Woking’s debt-man of his OBE MP says](#)

[Government bailout to ease Woking’s debt burden](#)

[Who will be saddled with Spelthorne’s and Woking’s £3 billion debts?](#)

[Could Woking’s debt be shared by you after reorganisation?](#)

Epsom and Ewell Times adds: Epsom and Ewell will come under the EAST Surrey Unitary Council. The promised £500 million debt repayment support from central Government falls far short of the overall debt accumulated in Woking, Spelthorne and other WEST Surrey districts.

---

## Fleet of foot Epsom and Ewell FC speed to victory

16 April 2026



Epsom & Ewell made it back-to-back 3-0 home victories with an impressive and controlled performance against play-off chasing Fleet Town at Chalky Lane on Saturday 11th April.

Facing a side now managed by a former Epsom boss, this result carried added satisfaction for the hosts. The Salts named an unchanged squad but were forced into a late reshuffle when Kionte Gillfillian-Waul was delayed in arriving. Jason Vincent stepped into the starting XI, while Callum O’Keeffe again showed his versatility by filling in at left-back, allowing Tom Collins to move into midfield.

Epsom & Ewell started on the front foot, immediately putting Fleet under pressure and setting the tone for the match. Their bright opening was rewarded in the 12th minute when Callum Wilson rose highest to meet a Brendan Murphy-McVey corner, powering a header into the net at the back post to give the hosts a deserved lead. The Salts continued to dictate the play for the remainder of the first half, restricting Fleet’s chances while posing the greater attacking threat.

The second half followed a similar pattern, with Epsom & Ewell remaining organised and patient in possession. Their control was eventually rewarded in the 74th minute when Jason Vincent doubled the advantage, producing a superb volley from another Murphy-McVey delivery to give the hosts breathing space.

There was still time to add further gloss to the scoreline. In the 88th minute, substitute Ore Allen applied the finishing touch, lifting a delicate low chip over the goalkeeper after a trademark mazy run from Courtney Swaby.

Three goals, three points and another clean sheet marked a superb home display and a statement victory against strong opposition.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media



---

## Epsom shock as police probe serious assault

16 April 2026



Police have launched a major investigation following reports that a young woman was raped by multiple men in Epsom in the early hours of Saturday morning.

The incident is said to have taken place near Epsom Methodist Church on Ashley Road, close to the town centre, between approximately 2am and 4am. The woman, believed to be in her twenties, had reportedly left a nearby nightclub shortly before the attack and is understood to have been followed.

Surrey Police confirmed that the assault involved several suspects and that enquiries are ongoing to establish their identities. At this stage, no full descriptions have been released, and officers are appealing for information from the public.

A senior investigating officer described the incident as extremely distressing and confirmed that the victim is being supported by specially trained officers. Detectives are carrying out extensive enquiries in the area, including reviewing CCTV footage and conducting house-to-house inquiries.

Police are urging anyone who was in the Ashley Road area during the early hours of Saturday morning, or who may have seen anything suspicious, to come forward. Drivers with dashcam footage are also asked to check recordings that may assist the inquiry.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Surrey Police quoting reference **PR/45260041426**, either via the force's online reporting form or by contacting them directly. Information can also be provided anonymously via Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111** or through its website.

Support services are available for anyone affected by sexual violence, including Rape Crisis England & Wales, which operates a 24-hour helpline on **0808 500 2222**.

The seriousness of the allegation, coupled with its location close to the centre of Epsom, has led to heightened concern locally and significant national media attention. Officers have maintained a visible presence in the area while investigations continue.

Sam Jones - Reporter

---

## Devolution or dilution? And who decides?

16 April 2026



Surrey's proposal to form a Foundation Strategic Authority is framed as a step forward — aligning transport, housing and economic planning across the county and bringing decision-making closer to local areas.

It may yet prove to be that. But the way in which such steps are taken matters just as much as the structures themselves.

The reorganisation of local government in Surrey is already one of the most significant changes in decades. Boroughs such as Epsom & Ewell are to be abolished and replaced by two large unitary councils. Now, alongside that, a new county-wide strategic authority is proposed. In some areas, parish councils may also emerge.

This is presented as simplification. To many residents, it may look more like substitution — one system replaced by another whose overall shape is no less complex.

A Foundation Strategic Authority would not initially be directly elected. It would operate through existing council leaders, taking decisions that could shape the county's future for decades. That makes clarity of accountability all the more important.

Which is why process matters.

When asked to explain the basis on which Epsom & Ewell supported the Expression of Interest, the council leader **Hannah Dalton** (RA Stoneleigh) declined to comment, citing the pre-election period. Caution during such periods is understandable. But it is important not to overstate what the law requires.

The statutory rules in question are aimed at preventing local authorities from issuing politically sensitive publicity using public resources. They are not a shield against legitimate questions about how decisions have been made — still less where the very question is whether the authority itself took the decision at all.

If a council has formally acted, it should be able to say so, and explain how. If it has not, then that too is a matter of legitimate public interest.

Invoking restrictions designed for publicity to avoid answering questions about authority risks blurring a distinction that ought to remain clear.

The lack of democratic scrutiny over the FSA submission contrasts with the level of scrutiny to which and recently the same Council leadership is subjecting the popular proposal to twin Epsom and Ewell with Bucha in Ukraine: Full Council to Strategy and Resources Committee to a Working Group and then all the way back again.

Beyond this local issue lies a wider one. English devolution has long carried a tension between promise and practice. Powers are announced, structures created, and expectations raised. Yet control — particularly financial control — often remains at the centre.

The risk is not simply that new layers are added. It is that they exist without the clarity, authority or autonomy needed to justify them.

None of this is an argument against devolution. The case for decisions being taken closer to the communities they affect remains strong. But devolution requires more than new institutions. It requires transparency about who is making decisions, on what basis, and with what authority.

As Surrey moves through this period of change, those are not peripheral questions. They are central ones.



Related reports

Cllr Dalton seeks another layer of local government

Cllr Coley on an attempt to create another layer of local government

Epsom on road to twin with world-famous Ukraine town of Bucha

---

## Cllr Dalton seeks another layer of local government

16 April 2026



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has apparently joined Surrey leaders in backing a bid to Government for a new county-wide “Foundation Strategic Authority” (FSA), prompting questions about how such a significant step has been taken locally.

A letter dated 20 March 2026, signed by council leaders across Surrey including Epsom & Ewell’s leader Cllr **Hannah Dalton**, (RA Stoneleigh) confirms an Expression of Interest to form the authority by April 2027 .

The proposal forms part of the Government’s latest devolution programme, under which areas without existing mayoral structures are invited to establish FSAs to coordinate transport, housing, infrastructure, skills and economic development.

### What is being proposed?

An FSA would sit above the new unitary councils planned for Surrey in 2027, providing strategic oversight across the county. The submission to Government describes it as offering “unified strategic leadership” and supporting long-term planning across a coherent economic area .

FSAs are also widely seen as a potential stepping stone to deeper devolution, including the possibility of a future elected mayor.

### A changing local government landscape

The proposal comes as Surrey undergoes major reorganisation, with existing borough and district councils — including Epsom & Ewell — due to be replaced by two unitary authorities.

Alongside that, some areas are exploring the creation of parish or community councils.

The combined effect could see a structure emerging of:

- unitary councils delivering local services,
- a county-wide strategic authority shaping major policy,
- and more localised parish-level bodies in some areas.

## Local concerns over authority and process

In a **letter to the Epsom and Ewell Times**, Cllr **Alex Coley** (Independent) raises concerns about how the decision to support the Expression of Interest was taken .

He questions whether the Leader of the Council had authority to sign on behalf of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, or whether the action was taken without formal approval through committee or full Council.

That distinction is not merely procedural. If the Expression of Interest was submitted on behalf of the Council, it would ordinarily be expected to rest on some identifiable constitutional or delegated authority. If not, it raises a different question as to the capacity in which the letter was signed.

## Council leader declines comment

The Epsom and Ewell Times invited Cllr Hannah Dalton to clarify the position. She responded: *“As we are in the pre-election period it is my understanding that elected members should not be making any comments on council matters and so I will not be providing a comment.”*

Cllr Dalton is closely associated with the failed attempt to create parish councils for Epsom and Ewell.

## Are pre-election publicity rules engaged?

The pre-election period places restrictions on **local authority publicity**, under the Code issued pursuant to the Local Government Act 1986.

However, those provisions are directed at preventing **the authority itself** from using public resources to publish material that could influence an election. They do not impose a general prohibition on elected members explaining decisions or clarifying the basis on which actions have been taken.

More importantly in this context, the issue raised is whether the Expression of Interest was in fact an authorised act of the Council at all.

If it was, the question of authority is plainly a legitimate matter for public explanation. If it was not, it is difficult to see how statutory restrictions on “local authority publicity” could apply to a request for clarification of an individual member’s actions.

Either way, the question goes to **accountability, not publicity**.

## What happens next?

The Government will now consider Surrey’s Expression of Interest. If progressed, further detail will be required on governance, powers and accountability.

For residents, the immediate issue may be more straightforward: understanding how decisions of this scale are made locally, and on whose authority they are taken.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Cllr Coley’s letter to Epsom and Ewell Times



## Cllr Coley on an attempt to create another layer of local government

16 April 2026



Dear Editor,

I read the 29th March letter to the editor “Local Councillors react to hospital merger idea” with great interest. The letter mentions a decision ‘taken behind closed doors three weeks ago, without public comment and clearly no intention to engage with residents.’

I agree, this does not augur well. The central theme of the letter is reminiscent of parallel activity at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.

Last week I discovered, by accident, that our borough council has supported an Expression of Interest to form a Foundation Strategic Authority as part of the Government’s next wave of devolution. This is a significant move with substantial implications for planning, housing, transport, skills, economic development, net-zero initiatives, police and fire services and perhaps most crucially - mayoral powers.

Cllr Hannah Dalton, the Leader of the Council in Epsom & Ewell has joined some, but not all, councils in Surrey to sign the Expression of Interest. There has been no announcement.

To obtain the proper authority in signing this Expression of Interest some Surrey councils have called an Extraordinary Council Meeting, some used a committee meeting and some brought a report to their Cabinet delegating authority to their Leader. There are also some councils which expressly give the constitutional authority to act, to their Leader.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has done none of these.

I have subsequently written to the Council’s Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer seeking clarity.

Do residents wish for their thoughts and concerns for the future to be guessed and assumed, perhaps ignored? Is a precedent being set, where a lone councillor can make strategic decisions on behalf of our borough without any of us knowing? Where is the public debate?

It feels that we have leadership-in-hiding and decisions made in secret. Like they say in Thelma and Louise “You get what you settle for.”

I don't think we should settle for this.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Alex Coley (Ruxley), Leader of the Independents - Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

---

## Epsom and Ewell unitary election, a family affair?

16 April 2026



The forthcoming East Surrey Council elections in Epsom and Ewell are shaping up to be something of a **family affair**, with a number of candidates sharing surnames - and, it appears, households.

The official Statement of Persons Nominated reveals several instances where voters may find familiar names appearing more than once on the ballot paper.

In the **West Ewell ward**, two candidates named **Chambers** - Sarah Jane and Simon - are both standing for Reform UK, while the Conservative slate includes **Christopher Charles Muller** and **Tracy Margaret Muller**.

Meanwhile, the surname **Persand** appears no fewer than **three times across different wards**: Aaron in Epsom Town & Downs, Kieran in Epsom West, and Meera in Ewell Village, Stoneleigh & Nonsuch - suggesting a family presence spanning multiple parts of the borough.

The pattern continues elsewhere. Labour candidates **Kate Chinn** and **Richard Chinn** appear in different wards, and the **Ng** surname also features twice, with Keew and Jeanne standing for Labour and the Liberal Democrats respectively.

Perhaps most notably, in **West Ewell**, Residents' Association borough councillor **Neil Dallen** is joined on the ballot in the same ward by borough councillor **Lucie McIntyre**. While the surnames differ she is his daughter - underlining the extent to which family ties intersect with local political life.

None of this is improper. Local elections have long attracted candidates from the same families, particularly in areas with strong traditions of civic involvement such as Epsom and Ewell. Political engagement often runs in families, with experience, networks and commitment passed from one generation to the next.

But for voters, it does add an extra layer of intrigue. With **multiple shared surnames across party lines and wards**, the ballot paper will require careful reading to distinguish between candidates - and perhaps a sharper awareness of the personal connections behind the names.

In an election already notable for ushering in a new era of local government under the Surrey reorganisation, Epsom and Ewell's contribution may also be remembered for something more personal: a contest where politics, quite literally, runs in the family.

[Click here for](#) : Details of all candidates for East Surrey Unitary Council standing in Epsom and Ewell

Sam Jones - Reporter



Related reports:

Unitary Council candidates standing in Epsom and Ewell

.  
. .  
.

# Unitary Council candidates standing in Epsom and Ewell

16 April 2026



[Click here for](#) : Details of all candidates for East Surrey Unitary Council standing in Epsom and Ewell

---

In the weeks ahead Epsom and Ewell Times will publish the personal statements of all candidates that wish to provide them to us.

---

Residents across Surrey - including Epsom and Ewell - will go to the polls on **Thursday 7 May 2026** in elections that will reshape local government for a generation.

The vote is part of the Government's programme of **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**, which will replace Surrey's current two-tier system with **two new unitary authorities** from April 2027.

For Epsom and Ewell residents, this means voting not for the existing Borough Council, but for councillors who will form the new **East Surrey Council**.

## What voters are being asked to decide

The 2026 elections will choose councillors for the "**shadow**" **East Surrey Council**, a body that will operate alongside existing councils during a one-year transition period.

These councillors will:

- Set the first budgets and council tax levels for the new authority
- Establish governance structures and staffing
- Oversee the transfer of services ahead of April 2027

Once the new system comes into force, they will continue as full councillors of the new authority until at least 2031.

## How the new system will work

Under the reorganisation:

- Surrey's **12 existing councils** (county plus districts/boroughs) will be abolished
- Two unitary councils - **East Surrey** and **West Surrey** - will take over all services
- East Surrey will cover areas including **Epsom & Ewell, Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge**

Each new authority will deliver everything from bin collections and planning to education and social care - functions currently split between borough and county councils.

## Voting system and representation

Voters will be able to choose **up to two councillors per ward**, with the top two candidates elected under a first-past-the-post system.

Across East Surrey:

- 72 councillors will represent 36 wards
- Elections are based broadly on current county council divisions

## What it means locally

Importantly, **no elections are taking place in 2026 for Epsom & Ewell Borough Council itself**. Existing borough and county councillors will remain in post until March 2027, creating a period of overlap.

For residents, day-to-day services are expected to continue unchanged during the transition.

## Registering and voting

To take part:

- You must be registered to vote by **midnight on 20 April 2026**
- Photo ID is required at polling stations
- Postal and proxy voting options are available

## A pivotal local moment

The Surrey LGR Hub describes these elections as a key step in creating a simpler system of local government, with councillors elected in May playing a “key role in setting up and then running the new councils.”

For Epsom and Ewell, the vote represents a significant shift away from long-standing borough governance towards a much larger strategic authority - with consequences that will shape local services, taxation and representation for years to come.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Related reports

Last day to Stand for Surrey’s Unitary Councils

Two unitary proposal confirmed

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council agrees to submit proposal recommending three unitary councils for Surrey

County council set to propose two unitary councils for Surrey

---

# Kirby Fans Pack the Kerb in Epsom

16 April 2026



Children’s author Katie Kirby drew crowds to Waterstones Epsom today Friday 10th, as families queued more than 100 metres along the High Street for a book signing on the final day of the Easter school holidays.

In bright spring sunshine, parents and excited children waited patiently for their chance to meet the bestselling writer, whose hugely popular *Lottie Brooks* series has become a staple for young readers across the UK. Staff at the store reported a steady flow throughout the day, with the queue stretching well beyond the shop frontage at its peak.

Kirby, a former primary school teacher turned full-time author and illustrator, has built a devoted following with her humorous and relatable books aimed at middle-grade readers. Her breakout success, *The Extremely Embarrassing Life of Lottie Brooks*, was shortlisted for major children’s book awards and has sold in significant numbers, with subsequent titles cementing her reputation as one of the UK’s leading voices in children’s fiction.



Epsom school student Ellie with her mother and the author



Epsom school student Rosie Gordon with the author

Her stories, told in diary format, capture the awkwardness and comedy of growing up, striking a chord particularly with readers aged 8 to 12. The blend of cartoon-style illustrations and accessible writing has helped drive strong sales both in bookshops and through school reading programmes.

Today's event reflected that popularity. Children clutching copies of Kirby's books chatted animatedly in the queue, while parents described the visit as a highlight of the holidays. Inside, Kirby signed books and spoke briefly with readers, creating what one attendee described as "a really special moment" for young fans.

Booksellers say such events have become increasingly important in encouraging children to read for pleasure. The turnout in Epsom suggests that, despite digital distractions, the appeal of meeting a favourite author—and taking home a



signed copy—remains as strong as ever.

Lionel Blackman