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

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES

Up to £1 where sold

# Surrey County raining over local democracy?

5 July 2022




The Conservative-run **Surrey County Council** plans to axe “area committees”. Will this reduce local people’s voice in Council decisions? “Surrey to reign over us? Happy and glorious?”

“**Local and Joint Committee**s” have been the mainstay of local democracy in Surrey over the last 20 years, providing a forum for county councillors to join with their counterparts In **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** and other local councils in the County, to discuss issues and make decisions on local county council spending. Members of the public participated in the meetings by bringing petitions and asking questions about council services.

These committees have gradually reduced in the frequency of meetings and their remit. Decision-making on highway functions was removed at the Surrey County Council Cabinet meeting in February this year. Various ideas have been floated about replacing them with a new model of partnership working but as yet, no firm proposals or timeline have been set.

The abolition of Local and Joint Committees is now set for the 31 October 2022 latest.

Epsom and Ewell *and* Surrey County Councillor **Eber Kington** (Residents Association) said to the Epsom and Ewell Times: “It was a decision taken without consultation with most County Councillors and made without any detailed plans in place to replicate many of the functions of Local Committees.  Getting “how will this work” responses has been difficult and met with evasion and delay.  However, we now know that petitioners will have their requests for action determined by a Cabinet Member (not from Epsom and Ewell), and residents can only ask in-person questions related to their local community if they travel to Surrey County Council’s **Woodhatch HQ in Reigate**, accessible only by car.  My ability to promote a highway safety scheme amongst my Epsom and Ewell County Councillor colleagues is gone, and such schemes now have to take their chance in competition with 80 other county councillors across Surrey.”



Cllr Eber Kington losing control over highways?

“The outcome of this centralisation of highway spending decisions is self-evident when you see that for highway improvements to reduce road casualties, tackle speeding and make walking and cycling to school easier and safer in 2022/2023, there are 42 schemes listed with a total spend of £2,200,000. Unfortunately, the Epsom and Ewell area has just one scheme listed at a cost of £5000.  That is just 0.2% of the budget for 2022/2023 being allocated to Epsom and Ewell.”

Epsom and Ewell College Ward Councillor **David Gulland** (LibDem) told Epsom and Ewell Times “This move threatens to undermine local democracy and reduce Epsom and Ewell’s voice in County Council decisions. The Conservatives have been looking to abolish Local and Joint Committees for a number of years but have yet to come up with any firm proposals for anything that will work better. My concern is that if they are completely abolished without their replacements up 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

running, there could be a temporary or even a permanent deficit in local democracy. We want to press the County Council into committing to a future that provides for local participation in local decision-making. My LibDem colleagues on the County Council will move a resolution to preserve Local and Joint Committees."

The Conservative County Councillor was also asked to comment.

© 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