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For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

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Surrey health literacy warning

3 September 2026



Nearly one in three working-age Surrey residents is not adequately health literate, a council committee report has warned.

The report, which is due to be considered at a joint meeting of Surrey's Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care Partnership next week, states that low levels of understanding of health information are a "significant barrier" to improving healthcare outcomes in the county.

It defines health literacy as "a person's ability to access, understand, evaluate, and use health information to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing".

But the document noted around 30 per cent of adults aged 16 to 65 in Surrey fall below the threshold for health literacy, rising to 37 per cent in the worst-performing borough, Spelthorne.

The countywide number rises to 49 per cent in areas where numeracy is required.

"This means many adults in Surrey are reading at, or below, the level of an average nine-year-old," the report reads, "This is a significant concern and highlights the need for continued focus and action to address health literacy across Surrey."

People with poor health literacy will struggle to read or understand health-related information and know what action to take based on it, the document says.

"Low health literacy is also closely linked to educational disadvantage, deprivation, disability and poorer health outcomes," it reads, "Improving the accessibility of health information and services is therefore an important lever for reducing health inequalities."

People with bad health literacy are also more likely to go to hospital more and have depression, the report adds.

A health-literacy pilot programme called Clearer Care aims to combat this trend and help make health information and services clearer for Surrey residents.

It aims to achieve this through a mix of expert guidance and small grants to help Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations deliver their own health literacy pilots.

The report says: "This is a small-scale pilot programme aimed at introducing and embedding health literacy across Surrey. While limited funding and a VCSE-led delivery model may constrain its immediate impact on wider system change, the programme provides an important opportunity to test approaches, generate learning and demonstrate impact.

"Findings will help inform future development, potential scaling and opportunities to embed health literacy more systematically across the system."

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

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A doctor stock image (Credit: Pixabay

Surrey campaigners seek independent appeal rights over new flight paths

3 September 2026

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Surrey countryside campaigners have joined a national call for residents to be given an independent right of appeal when changes are proposed to flight paths over their homes.

CPRE Surrey is among 22 community and environmental organisations that have signed a letter delivered to 10 Downing Street warning that the Government's aviation reforms could leave the Civil Aviation Authority as both the regulator making decisions on airspace changes and the body answering complaints about those decisions.

The letter, addressed to Prime Minister Andy Burnham, calls for the Civil Aviation (Consumer Protection and Regulatory Reform) Bill to be amended to establish an independent airspace ombudsman.

Campaigners say this would give residents somewhere outside the CAA to seek a review of decisions capable of concentrating aircraft noise over homes, schools and previously quieter areas.

The proposed legislation arrives as the Government begins the most extensive redesign of British airspace for decades. Although the Bill does not itself draw new flight paths or change airport operating hours, it would strengthen the machinery through which approved airspace changes can be implemented.

Its significance for Surrey arises particularly from the planned redesign of the highly congested airspace over London and the South East, involving Heathrow, Gatwick and other airports.

What the Bill would change

The Civil Aviation (Consumer Protection and Regulatory Reform) Bill is a wider aviation measure covering passenger rights, enforcement of consumer law, airport slots, safety regulation and airspace modernisation.

It completed its stages in the House of Lords on 20th July and received its formal first reading in the House of Commons on 1st September. A date for its Commons second reading has yet to be announced.

Under existing legislation, the Transport Secretary can direct an airport, air navigation provider or another organisation involved in airspace change to prepare and progress a proposal. Clause 4 of the new Bill would extend that power so a direction could also require an airspace change already approved by the CAA to be implemented.

The Government's explanatory notes say this would make the direction-making power available at every stage of the process, including putting an approved design into operation and implementing alterations identified by a subsequent review.

The Government argues that Britain's underlying airspace design has changed little since the 1950s and is increasingly unsuitable for modern aircraft and present-day traffic levels. It says redesigning routes could permit more direct journeys and improved climb and descent profiles, cutting delays, fuel use and emissions.

The Bill would also allow the CAA to make detailed rules covering aviation safety and operations. However, these general rule-making provisions are distinct from the CAA's function of deciding individual airspace change proposals. The measure does not expressly abolish consultation on individual proposals or create new flight paths by itself.

A new "guiding mind" for UK airspace

The broader reform centres on the new UK Airspace Design Service, known as UKADS. It is being provided by NATS En Route Ltd, the monopoly provider of en-route air traffic control services.

In its June 2025 announcement, the Government described UKADS as a single "guiding mind" capable of producing a coordinated design instead of relying upon airports to develop overlapping proposals separately.

The Government said UK airspace handled around 200,000 flights annually in the 1950s, compared with 2.47 million in 2024. Without modernisation, it estimated that one flight in five could experience disruption or delay by 2040.

The first priority for UKADS is the London airspace "cluster". This includes the routes serving Gatwick and Heathrow and would also encompass airspace alterations needed for a third runway at Heathrow.

For Surrey residents, modernisation could therefore determine not merely how many aircraft use the region's airports but where arriving and departing aircraft fly, at what heights and how noise is distributed.

Modern satellite navigation allows aircraft to follow routes much more accurately. That can reduce the total population affected by noise but may also concentrate flights over a narrower corridor, leaving households directly beneath it exposed more frequently.

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How the public is consulted

Individual permanent flight-path changes must normally follow the CAA's CAP 1616 airspace change process. A proposal is generally sponsored by an airport or air navigation service provider, although UKADS will now take a coordinating role in the London region.

Depending on the scale and likely effects of a proposal, the process includes development of design options, environmental assessment, engagement and public consultation. Consultation responses and other documents are published through the CAA's Airspace Change Portal.

The portal allows residents to search by postcode or place name for proposals near them. The CAA says CAP 1616 is intended to provide a transparent, impartial and evidence-based assessment taking account of everyone affected.

When making a decision, the CAA must give priority to safety and then consider matters including efficient use of airspace, the needs of aircraft operators, environmental guidance and the interests of people on the ground.

The Government's revised 2026 air-navigation guidance also sets expectations for engagement and consultation with affected communities and for the assessment of noise and other environmental consequences.

Consultation, however, is not the same as a right of appeal. It allows people to comment before a decision is made but does not necessarily provide an independent tribunal to reconsider the eventual decision.

Existing routes of challenge are limited

Anyone may ask the Transport Secretary to "call in" an airspace proposal and decide it in place of the CAA. But the request must normally be made during a four-week window and satisfy restricted criteria.

According to the CAA's call-in guidance, a proposal must be of strategic national importance, have a potentially significant effect on UK economic growth, or meet a specified test involving both aircraft noise and its effects on health and quality of life.

The noise test requires a net increase of at least 10,000 people exposed to 54 decibels or more during the relevant 16-hour daytime period. Even if a proposal qualifies, the Secretary of State is not obliged to take it over.

Otherwise, a dissatisfied community may be left to pursue a complaint about whether the proper process was followed or consider judicial review. Judicial review is generally concerned with the lawfulness of a decision, rather than providing a complete reconsideration of whether a different route would have been fairer or less damaging. It can also be costly and procedurally demanding.

The Bill preserves an appeal against a ministerial direction for the person or organisation directed to carry out an airspace change. That is not an equivalent appeal for residents affected on the ground.

It is this gap that CPRE Surrey and the other signatories want an ombudsman to fill.

"Decisions made over their heads"

CPRE Surrey Chair Jennet Eyre said: "This Bill risks giving communities the worst of both worlds: more decisions made over their heads, with no independent way to review them.

"Residents deserve a process that is transparent, accountable and genuinely fair. If there can be independent oversight for passengers, consumers and proposed for the Clean Water Bill then there must also be independent oversight for the communities living under flight paths."

The campaigners say they are not opposed to airspace modernisation or aviation but believe the interests of the industry should not override the health, sleep and quality of life of affected communities.

Ms Eyre added: "Families on the ground should not be left to live with increased noise, sleep disruption, health impacts or loss of amenity from concentrated flight paths without a clear, independent way to challenge how those decisions are made."

The Government maintains that modernisation can produce "quicker, quieter and cleaner" flights and says future airspace designs will remain subject to environmental assessment and community engagement.

The central dispute is consequently not whether the public will be consulted at all. It is what residents can do after consultation if they believe their evidence has been disregarded, the effects have been underestimated or the burden of aircraft noise has been distributed unfairly.

CPRE Surrey is now urging MPs to amend the Bill during its Commons stages to provide an independent review mechanism outside the CAA. Whether ministers accept that argument may determine how much confidence communities place in the consultations that accompany the coming redesign of the skies above Surrey.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Stoppage-time double sinks the Salts

3 September 2026



Epsom & Ewell 2–3 Tooting & Mitcham United. 31st August 2026 – Chalky Lane, Chessington – Combined Counties Premier League South. Attendance: 206.

Epsom & Ewell twice led and appeared on course for a deserved victory before two stoppage-time goals turned the match on its head.

The Salts began brightly, moving the ball well and immediately putting Tooting under pressure. There was an early moment of controversy when an apparent elbow inside the penalty area went unseen by the officials.

Tooting adopted a physical approach and Epsom became increasingly frustrated as several challenges went unpunished. Jason Bloor was booked for kicking the ball away following another disputed decision, while three Tooting players received yellow cards for heavy challenges.

Despite the disruption, the Salts maintained their composure and took a deserved lead in the 41st minute. Blessing Hombessa found the bottom corner with a calm, low finish to send Epsom into the interval 1–0 ahead.

Tooting drew level four minutes after the restart through Michael Onovwigun, but the Salts responded superbly.

In the 55th minute, Hombessa broke free, brought the ball under control and fired past the goalkeeper to restore Epsom's advantage with his second fine finish of the afternoon.

The Salts continued to play the better football, while Tooting increasingly relied on long balls forward. Ayran Kugathas was shown a yellow card in the 74th minute.

As the players tired, however, the contest became increasingly stretched. Epsom opted not to use any of their five available substitutes and paid a heavy price during a dramatic period of added time.

Antonio Simeone equalised for Tooting in the 92nd minute. Three minutes later, William Efambro struck the visitors' winner to complete a remarkable turnaround and leave the Salts empty-handed.

Having controlled long periods of the match and twice held the lead, Epsom will regard this as a particularly painful defeat.

The Salts return to action on Saturday 12th September, when they host Bearsted in the FA Vase.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media

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Heritage doors open across Epsom and Ewell

3 September 2026



Historic buildings, forgotten stories and rarely seen corners of Surrey will be brought to life when Heritage Open Days return from Friday 11th to Sunday 20th September.

The annual festival offers free access to historic places, guided walks, exhibitions and talks. This year's theme, "Everyday Histories", celebrates the lives, work and experiences of people whose stories may not always feature in traditional accounts of the past.

Among the many events taking place across Surrey are a dozen opportunities to explore the heritage of Epsom and Ewell, ranging from the history of the borough's spa and racecourse to Ewell's buildings, local currency and the lives of thousands of patients once treated in Epsom's psychiatric hospitals.

Remembering the 9,000 at Horton Cemetery

A particular focus of the local programme will be Horton Cemetery – 9,000 People Remembered, taking place on Saturday 12th September from 10am to 4pm.

Around 9,000 former patients of Epsom's cluster of five psychiatric hospitals were buried in Horton Cemetery between 1899 and 1955. Most lie in unmarked graves and, for decades, their individual identities and life stories were largely forgotten.

The Friends of Horton Cemetery have been working to restore those identities through historical and family research. Visitors will be able to meet researchers and volunteers, explore displays, listen to audio material and learn about some of the people buried there.

The event will be held on land adjacent to the cemetery in Hook Road. The cemetery itself remains inaccessible, but free parking will be available close to the event. Admission is free and advance booking is not required, although the organisers expect the site to become busier later in the day.

A linked event, The History of Horton Asylum and Horton Cemetery, will run at The Horton Arts Centre in Haven Way from 10am to 4pm on the same day.

The Grade II-listed arts centre occupies the former chapel of Horton Hospital. Its exhibitions, presentations and tours will examine the history of Epsom's five psychiatric hospitals and the lives of the patients and staff who lived and worked within them. Researchers will also be available to help visitors investigate possible family connections.

Local events across the ten days

The borough's programme begins on Friday 11th September, when St Martin of Tours Church in Church Street, Epsom, will open from 9.30am to 1pm. The parish church will also be open on most days during the festival:

- Saturday 12th September, 10am to 5pm
- Sunday 13th September, noon to 6pm
- Monday 14th to Friday 18th September, 9.30am to 1pm
- Sunday 20th September, noon to 6pm

On Sunday 13th September, a guided Epsom Salts and Spa Walk will leave the historic Assembly Rooms in the High Street at 11am. The walk will explore how Epsom's mineral waters transformed the town into a fashionable spa destination. Advance booking is required.

Ewell Court House, in Ewell Court Avenue, will welcome visitors between 10am and 2pm that day, offering an opportunity to discover more about the history and architecture of the house. No booking is required.

Also on Sunday, the Service Wing Museum at Nonsuch Park will open from noon until 4pm. The museum occupies part of the surviving service wing of the former Nonsuch Mansion and contains displays relating to the history of the estate and the lost Tudor Palace of Nonsuch. Admission is free without advance booking.

Bourne Hall will host Everyday Histories in Worcester Park from the Iron Age to the Computer Age at 2pm on Monday 14th September. The talk will follow the development of the area through archaeological discoveries, changing

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communities and more recent technological history. Booking is required.

On Tuesday 15th September, former professional jockey Caroline Baldock will lead Life on the Downs, a guided walk around the Derby course at Epsom Downs Racecourse. The walk begins at 10am and is expected to last approximately 90 minutes. Places are limited and must be booked in advance.

Lost Buildings of Epsom will be the subject of a talk at Bourne Hall at 2pm on Wednesday 16th September. It will recall notable local buildings that have disappeared through redevelopment, demolition or changing uses. Advance booking is required.

Two events follow on Thursday 17th September. Ewell Village, People and Places is a guided walk leaving Bourne Hall at 10am, while Token Coins in Ewell and Epsom, at Bourne Hall Museum at 2pm, will explore the tokens issued by local traders when official coinage was in short supply. Both events require booking.

The local programme concludes on Saturday 19th September when Ewell Castle School opens its doors to visitors from noon until 3pm. The school is celebrating its centenary, having been founded in 1926 when H R Budgell acquired the Castle and opened a school for an initial intake of 40 boys. Advance booking is required.

All Heritage Open Days events are free, but capacity is limited for several of the guided walks and talks. Visitors should book promptly where required and check the individual listings before travelling, as arrangements can change.

The full Surrey Heritage Open Days programme and event search provides details of events across the county, including opening times, accessibility information and booking arrangements.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Epsom Hospital in top national league for car park charges

3 September 2026



Epsom and St Helier parking among UK’s most expensive, study claims

Patients and visitors parking for more than eight hours at Epsom or St Helier Hospital face a £20 charge, placing the NHS trust among the most expensive in the country, according to newly published research.

The analysis by short-term lender Fast Loan UK compared the maximum daily parking charges advertised by NHS trusts on their websites.

It placed Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust joint seventh in its table, alongside Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and Devon Partnership NHS Trust.

St George’s University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in Tooting was found to have the highest daily charge, at £30.

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Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust was second at £29, followed by University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust at £26.50.

The ten highest charges identified by the research were:

1. St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust – £30
2. Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust – £29
3. University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust – £26.50
4. Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust – £26
5. York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust – £22.50
6. The Hillingdon Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust – £22
7. Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust – £20
8. Devon Partnership NHS Trust – £20
9. Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust – £20
10. Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust – £19

The local charge is confirmed by the Epsom and St Helier hospitals' published parking tariffs, which have applied since April 2025.

Parking is free for the first 20 minutes. Charges then rise from £3.50 for up to one hour to £6 for two hours, £8 for three hours, £10.50 for four hours and £18 for seven hours. A fixed daily rate of £20 applies to stays exceeding eight hours.

The trust says parking spaces are limited and encourages patients and visitors to use public transport or active travel where possible. Epsom Hospital has 252 spaces, including 32 disabled bays and six drop-off and pick-up spaces.

Several bus services stop at Epsom Hospital itself:

- 166: Croydon – Purley – Chipstead – Banstead – Epsom – Epsom Hospital
- 293: Morden – North Cheam – Ewell Village – Epsom – Epsom Hospital
- 467: Kingston – Chessington – West Ewell – Epsom – Epsom Hospital
- 408: Woodmansterne – Banstead – Epsom – Epsom Hospital – Ashtead – Leatherhead – Effingham
- 479: Guildford – Fetcham – Leatherhead – Epsom Hospital – Epsom – Banstead – Chipstead
- E5: West Ewell – Epsom – Epsom Hospital – Langley Vale
- 516: Epsom – Ashtead – Leatherhead – Box Hill – Dorking
- 623: Ashtead – Epsom Hospital – Epsom
- 21: Crawley – Dorking, Box Hill, Headley, Leatherhead, Ashtead, Epsom Hsopital – Epsom

Other services connect surrounding areas with Epsom town centre, from which the hospital is approximately a 15-minute walk:

- 406: Kingston – Surbiton – Tolworth – Ewell – Epsom
- 418: Kingston – Surbiton – Tolworth – West Ewell – Epsom town centre
- E9: Epsom – West Ewell – Clarendon Park – Livingstone Park – Manor Park
- E10: Epsom – Manor Park – Noble Park
- E16: Epsom – Stoneleigh – Worcester Park – Ewell
- 318: Burgh Heath – Banstead – Nork – Tattenham Corner – Epsom
- S2: Epsom High Street to St Helier Station

Free hospital parking is available to Blue Badge holders. Outpatients attending hospital three or more times in the same week and parents staying overnight on paediatric wards also qualify for free parking.

Other concessions include a £3.50 ticket for outpatients whose appointment overruns by more than an hour and weekly tickets for dialysis and oncology patients and the immediate relatives of people receiving intensive, high-dependency, coronary, neonatal or end-of-life care.

The trust says all money raised from parking goes towards managing and maintaining its car parks, security, environmental and travel initiatives and its shuttle bus. Any remaining income is directed towards clinical services.

Fast Loan UK said its figures were collected from NHS trust websites in June 2026. Where a trust operated several sites with different tariffs, the comparison used its highest published charge for a standard 24-hour stay.

The research also reported that 33 NHS trusts in England offered free parking and that hospital parking was free in Scotland.

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Image: Epsom Hospital public car park

New vicar returns to his Epsom roots

3 September 2026



The Revd Tom Hill has returned to the church where he came to faith more than 25 years ago, following his institution as Vicar of Christ Church Epsom Common.

The service took place on Thursday 27th August and was led by the acting Bishop of Guildford, the Rt Revd Paul Davies, who instituted Mr Hill. He was subsequently inducted and installed by the Archdeacon of Dorking, the Ven Martin Breadmore.

Ordinarily, the appointment of a new vicar would involve a service of collation conducted by the diocesan bishop. However, the Diocese of Guildford currently has what is formally known as a “vacancy in see”, meaning that there is no serving diocesan bishop. As acting bishop, Bishop Paul institutes rather than collates a new incumbent.

The congregation included the Very Revd Bob Cooper, Dean of Guildford Cathedral, local clergy and representatives of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, schools, uniformed organisations and Churches Together in Epsom.

Official welcomes were offered by Dean Bob Cooper on behalf of Guildford Cathedral and the Revd John Marrow, Area Dean.

Others welcoming the new vicar included Louise Druce, headteacher of Stamford Green Primary School; Karl Nicholas, District Lead Volunteer for Epsom and Ewell Scout District, representing local uniformed organisations; churchwardens David Blacoe and Gill Glasspool; and Christ Church’s children and youth worker, Sofia Welsby. Young members of the Christ Church congregation also took part.

The service had particular personal significance for Mr Hill, who grew up in Epsom and first came to faith at Christ Church more than 25 years ago.

Before entering the ministry, he served for 13 years as an officer with the Metropolitan Police. He began training for ordination in 2016 and subsequently served as a curate at Holy Trinity Claygate and as Associate Minister at Leatherhead Parish Church.

Members of Christ Church were joined at the service by many of Mr Hill’s family and friends, as well as visitors from his former parish in Leatherhead. Mr Hill is married to Megan and the couple have four children.

The occasion also provided an opportunity for Christ Church to welcome two new curates, the Revd Patrick Corley and the Revd Rebecca Catterall.

A reception followed in the parish hall, where former churchwarden Fay Wedlake presented the new vicar with a cross carrying a long association with Christ Church. The cross has traditionally occupied a place in the vicarage study and has been passed down from one vicar to the next over many years.

Mr Hill said he was looking forward to a new season of growth at Christ Church, sharing the Christian message and

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getting to know more people throughout the local community.

His first Sunday service as Vicar of Christ Church Epsom Common will take place at 10am on Sunday 6th September. All are welcome.

Christ Church Epsom Common is in Christ Church Road, Epsom, KT19 8NE.

Lionel Blackman

Photo: From left to right:

Berwick Curtis Licensed Lay Minister at Christ Church

Revd Nico Ohlsson St Paul's Howell Hill

Revd Harry Lamaison St Barnabus

Revd Sue Ayling, St Mary's Ewell

Archdeacon The Ven. Martin Breadmore

Revd James Wakefield, St Mark's Tattenham Corner

Revd Rebecca Catterall curate Christ Church

Revd John Marrow All Saints West Ewell

Revd David Senior St Pauls Howell Hill

Revd Tom Hill vicar Christ Church

Revd Patrick Corley curate Christ Church

Acting Bishop of Guildford The Rt Revd Paul Davies.

Five-star Epsom and Ewell FC bounce back in style

3 September 2026



Godalming Town 1–5 Epsom & Ewell FC. 29th August – Bill Kyte Stadium – Combined Counties League

Epsom & Ewell produced the perfect response to last week's FA Cup disappointment with an emphatic 5–1 victory over Godalming Town at the Bill Kyte Stadium.

The Salts delivered an excellent all-round performance, combining defensive resilience with confident attacking football. Five different goalscorers underlined the strength of the team display.

There were several changes following the FA Cup defeat, with Alex Foord starting in midfield and new signing Aiden Siegel named among the substitutes.

Epsom began brightly, with Stefan Aiwone setting the tone through a superb driving run from the back. He surged almost the length of the pitch before seeing his effort saved.

Luke Miller then fired narrowly over, while Callum O'Keefe also went close in the 40th minute.

Godalming remained dangerous at the other end and Will Davis was called upon to make several strong saves, supported by some committed last-ditch defending.

Just when it appeared that the teams would go into the interval level, the Salts found the breakthrough. Two minutes into added time, Aiwone reacted quickest inside the box and fired home to give Epsom a deserved 1–0 half-time lead.

The Salts came flying out after the restart and produced their best attacking spell of the match. Luis Oliveira was booked in the 55th minute before Foord doubled the advantage five minutes later with the goal of the game, unleashing a dipping long-range strike that left the goalkeeper rooted to the spot.

Epsom's confidence continued to grow and Oliveira, playing unusually high up the pitch, calmly finished in the 68th minute to make it 3–0.

The substitutes then made an immediate impact. Blessing Hombessa replaced Miller in the 70th minute and, just three minutes later, found the net to make it 4–0.

Jason Bloor replaced Oliveira before Ayran Kugathas came on for Prince Aderogba. Siegel then made his Epsom debut, replacing Foord in the 76th minute.

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Courtney Levi Swaby had an opportunity to add another from the penalty spot two minutes later, but his effort was saved by the Godalming goalkeeper.

There was still time for a fifth. Obasanjo Akinniranye replaced Jason Vincent in the 82nd minute and scored with virtually his first involvement just a minute later, a genuine super-sub moment.

Godalming grabbed a late consolation through Elliot Creeley following a free-kick awarded after Harry Murphy had been booked, but it did little to take the shine off an impressive afternoon.

Five goals, five different scorers and a superb team performance send the Salts into Monday's Bank Holiday local derby against Tooting & Mitcham United with momentum and confidence.

Attendance: 129

Next up: Epsom & Ewell v Tooting & Mitcham United – Bank Holiday Monday – Kick-off 3pm

Epsom and Ewell FC Media

Bailiffs knocking on Council tax debtors in Epsom and Ewell

3 September 2026



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council passed 552 council tax debts on to bailiffs in 2025/26, according to new Freedom of Information data compiled by National Debtline as part of its annual Stop the Knock campaign. This is a reduction of 39% compared to 2024/25.

The findings come as total council tax arrears in in and around Epsom and Ewell were revealed by MHCLG to now stand at £1.9 million. This forms part of a national total which has now hit £7.4 billion, up from £6.6 billion in 2024/25.

The charity's figures also show that across England and Wales a total of 153 councils (48%) increased their use of bailiffs for council tax debts. And that 1.72 million council tax arrears cases were passed to bailiffs by councils during 2025/26, a figure largely unchanged from 1.74 million in 2024/25. The charity says these numbers demonstrate the continued reliance on enforcement action despite ongoing cost-of-living pressures.

As their budgets have become more stretched, councils are increasingly reliant on council tax revenue to fund essential services like social care, local schools and rubbish collections. This has led many councils to increase council tax for residents, a move which often deepens the financial challenges for people already hit hardest by the high cost of living.

Councils reduce support for most vulnerable residents

National Debtline's research found that last year, just 26 of 317 local authorities were exempting residents in receipt of Council Tax Support from bailiff action, a decrease of 26% from 35 in 2024/25. Epsom & Ewell Borough Council does not exempt Council Tax Support recipients from bailiff action in this way – something National Debtline is calling on councillors to change.

The charity is calling on local authorities to recognise that people receiving Council Tax Support will be some of the most financially vulnerable so are highly unlikely to be able to be able to repay quickly and in full and so should be exempted from bailiff action.

Charity urges local people to seek advice

With council tax being one of the top three most common debts its advisers hear about, alongside credit cards and energy bills, National Debtline, the free independent debt advice service, is calling on anyone in and around Epsom and Ewell worried about their council tax bills or facing bailiff action to seek advice as soon as possible.

Currently a third (31%) of people who contact National Debtline have council tax debt.

Edward Ware, spokesperson for National Debtline, says:

"We understand that councils are under increasing financial budget constraints, and council tax is vital to funding the

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local services we all rely on, but collecting this money cannot come at the expense of its most financially vulnerable residents.

"We are pleased to see that Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has reduced its bailiff use recently, but we would urge councillors to review whether there is more the council could do to support residents who are struggling to pay."

"With council tax now one of the most common debts we see we need councils to adopt fairer approaches to collection, not harsher enforcement. Exempting residents who receive Council Tax Support from bailiff action is a key way in which councils can help – and we would urge Epsom & Ewell Borough Council to put this in place urgently."

Changes on the way, but more reform still needed

There is some positive news on the horizon. Following the Government's wide-ranging consultation on council tax administration, several reforms are expected in 2027. These are aimed at creating a fairer and more proportionate system for people struggling with payments.

The changes will require councils to wait longer – 63 days, up from two weeks – before demanding a full year's council tax following a missed instalment; offer more affordable repayment arrangements; and a new £100 cap on court-related fees. Alongside this, there will be stronger emphasis on reducing aggressive enforcement practices such as the use of bailiffs, better protections for vulnerable households and a shift to 12 monthly payments, instead of the current 10, by default to make bills more manageable.

The charity has welcomed these changes following years of campaigning on council tax reform, but says further action is still needed. It is urging the government to set out a series of statutory steps councils must take before passing debts onto bailiffs, including councils working with residents and debt advisers to put in place an affordable payment arrangement before any enforcement action is taken.

The charity is also calling on the Government to follow through with proposals to regulate the bailiff industry and give the Enforcement Conduct Board statutory power to oversee the sector.

Edward continues, *"The proposed changes to council tax collection practices should make a meaningful difference to financially vulnerable households, but we need to see more progress when it comes to regulation of the bailiff industry.*

"We need to stop people falling behind with council tax in the first place. The Government should also invest more funding in local Council Tax Support schemes, so that all councils can offer 100% Council Tax Support for its most financially vulnerable residents.

"Anyone struggling to pay their council tax bill should seek free, independent advice from National Debtline as soon as possible. Our advisers are here to help and can talk you through your options."

1. Full dataset of bailiff use in England and Wales in 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 available on request or via https://www.stoptheknock.org/

2. The latest council tax arrears statistics (from MHCLG) can be accessed via: https://www.gov.uk/government/-statistics/collection-rates-for-council-tax-and-non-domestic-rates-in-england-2025-to-2026 **(Table 9a)**

3. Government's consultation on council tax: https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/modernising-and--improving-the-administration-of-council-tax/modernising-and-improving-the-administration-of-council-tax

4. National Debtline provides free, independent, expert advice. People worried about their finances can contact National Debtline for free on 0808 808 4000 or via **www.nationaldebtline.org**.

NATIONAL DEBTLINE

Bringing centuries of Surrey records into the 21st century

3 September 2026



Residents, researchers and history enthusiasts will soon find it easier than ever to explore Surrey's rich heritage thanks to a major investment in a new collections management system at the Surrey History Centre, by Surrey County Council.

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Home to Surrey's archives, Surrey History Centre, with accredited status by The National Archives, cares for an extraordinary collection spanning more than 900 years of history. Its six miles of shelving contain around six million documents, manuscripts and parchment records dating back to the Middle Ages.

The collection includes family and house history records such as parish registers, census returns, civil registration records, poor law records, electoral registers and manorial records. It also houses thousands of historic photographs, postcards, watercolours, engravings and archive films, alongside local history books, directories, newspapers, periodicals and historic maps.

Among its treasured special collections are records and papers connected to notable Surrey figures and businesses, including Lewis Carroll, renowned garden designer Gertrude Jekyll and the Broadwood piano family.

Managing and preserving such an extensive collection is a significant undertaking. The introduction of the new collections management system will transform how people discover and access Surrey's archives, making searches faster, more intuitive and more comprehensive.

The improved online catalogue will be available Monday 14 September and provide an improved user experience, helping users quickly locate the records and documents they need. Documents can then be ordered up from home in advance of their visit to the Surrey History Centre.

Councillor Mark Nuti, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Health and Communities, said: "Our archives tell the story of Surrey and the people who have lived, worked and shaped our county over hundreds of years. By investing in modern technology, we are helping to ensure these invaluable records can continue to be discovered, explored and enjoyed by future generations.

"This is about investing in the future to gain access to the past. The new collections management system will make it easier for residents, family historians and researchers to explore Surrey's rich heritage, with improved search functionality and the ability to request documents before visiting the Surrey History Centre. These improvements will help people plan their research more effectively and make the most of their time with us, while encouraging even more people to discover the fascinating stories held within Surrey's archives."

The investment forms part of Surrey County Council's commitment to preserving the county's heritage while making public services more accessible and user-friendly through digital innovation.

For more information about the Surrey History Centre and its collections, visit: Surrey History Centre – Surrey County Council

Surrey County Council

Image: John Speed – 1610 – Map of Surrey (including Nonsuch Palace) Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps, Inc. raremaps.com. public domain

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How two became one became three – how "unitary" means "trinity".

3 September 2026

The central promise of local government reorganisation was easy to understand. Surrey's confusing two-tier system would be swept away. Surrey County Council and the county's 11 borough and district councils would be replaced by streamlined unitary authorities.

One council would deliver the principal local services in each area. Duplication would be removed, accountability would become clearer and residents would know which authority was responsible.

That was the theory.

The emerging reality looks rather different. The Government is abolishing two tiers of local government, but Surrey now appears to be heading towards three separate layers or bodies: a countywide strategic authority or elected mayor, the new East Surrey Council and, within Epsom and Ewell, Charter Trustees preserving the borough's civic and ceremonial functions.

Not all three would have equivalent powers. Charter Trustees would not run ordinary council services and a strategic

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authority would operate at a regional level. Nevertheless, each would be a public body with functions, office-holders, meetings, administration and potential financial consequences.

Residents might reasonably ask: how exactly is this simplification?

From two councils to one – and then back again

At present, Epsom and Ewell residents are served principally by Surrey County Council and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.

From April 2027, both are due to disappear and be replaced locally by East Surrey Council. On paper, that reduces two councils to one.

But the reorganisation was always linked to a wider devolution agenda. A Foundation Strategic Authority covering Surrey is proposed as a possible first step towards a Mayoral Strategic Authority headed by a directly elected Surrey mayor.

The latest Government proposals would give regional mayors substantial powers, including the ability to intervene in major planning applications. Those powers could extend to developments of more than 150 homes, large commercial schemes and buildings of 30 metres or more.

Whatever view one takes of those powers, this would plainly be more than a decorative office. A Surrey mayor and strategic authority would sit above East and West Surrey councils, making decisions across the county on matters potentially including planning, transport, housing, infrastructure and economic development.

The old county council tier would therefore disappear, only for a new countywide strategic layer to emerge in a different form.

It may have different boundaries of responsibility, a different constitution and a directly elected mayor. But to residents looking up the governmental ladder, it may feel remarkably like the return of a second tier.

A new body below as well as one above

Epsom and Ewell also came close to acquiring an additional layer beneath East Surrey Council.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council conducted a Community Governance Review into establishing two parish councils, styled as Epsom Community Council and Ewell Community Council. Parish councils are statutory local authorities with elected councillors and the power to raise their own Council Tax precept.

The proposal was rejected decisively by residents. Around 82 per cent of approximately 2,200 respondents opposed it, and the plan was abandoned.

That should have settled the question of creating another precepting body below East Surrey Council. Yet the abolition of the borough leaves a genuine question about what happens to Epsom and Ewell's mayoralty, civic identity and ceremonial traditions.

The Borough Council's preferred answer is Charter Trustees.

Charter Trustees are not parish councils. Their role would be much narrower, principally preserving the mayoralty and civic and ceremonial functions of the disappearing borough. They would probably be drawn from East Surrey councillors representing the Epsom and Ewell area rather than forming another separately elected council.

But they would still constitute another public body. They could seek funding from East Surrey Council during their first year and thereafter would have the power to levy a precept through Council Tax. The Borough Council's report suggested that the average Band D charge imposed by existing Charter Trustee bodies is about £2.50 a year.

That may sound modest. The more important question is one of principle and accountability. Residents rejected two new parish councils carrying separate precepts. They may nevertheless find another precepting body created to preserve civic arrangements after the borough council is abolished.

There may be a respectable case for maintaining the mayoralty and Epsom and Ewell's civic identity. But if residents are to pay for it, however small the initial sum, they are entitled to be consulted and told clearly what the body will cost, what it will do and how its spending will be controlled.

Three bodies where two once stood

The prospective structure can therefore be summarised simply.

Today, Epsom and Ewell has two principal councils: the borough and the county.

Tomorrow, it may have East Surrey Council in the middle, a Surrey strategic authority and mayor above it, and Charter Trustees below it.

Two bodies become three.

That does not necessarily mean three full tiers of service-delivering local government. Ministers and council leaders will no doubt insist upon that distinction. They will describe the mayoral authority as strategic and the Charter Trustees as ceremonial.

Technically, they would be right. From the resident's perspective, however, government is not simplified merely by giving every new layer a different description.

Residents will still want to know who is responsible for a decision. They may have to distinguish between East Surrey councillors acting as members of the unitary authority and some of those same councillors acting as Charter Trustees. On

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major strategic issues, they may have to determine whether responsibility rests with East Surrey Council, a Surrey mayor or central government.

If the objective was clearer accountability, the emerging structure risks producing the opposite.

Powers must be matched by money and accountability

There is a legitimate argument for devolution. Decisions about Surrey's transport, infrastructure, economy and housing may often be better made in Surrey than in Whitehall. A directly elected mayor could provide visible leadership and secure powers and funding which individual councils could not obtain alone.

But devolution must mean more than transferring obligations without sufficient money. West Surrey Shadow Authority leader Councillor Paul Follows is right to warn that local government cannot continue absorbing unfunded mandates.

Nor should devolution become a convenient name for rebuilding the hierarchy that reorganisation was supposed to dismantle.

If a Surrey mayor is necessary, ministers should explain why the strategic functions cannot be exercised jointly by the two unitary councils. If Charter Trustees are necessary, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council should explain why the civic functions cannot be preserved more simply and without another Council Tax precept.

Above all, the complete structure and its cost should be presented openly. Residents were asked to accept the disruption, expense and democratic upheaval of abolishing 12 councils on the promise of simpler and more efficient government.

They should not discover, piece by piece, that the promised single tier comes with another body above it and another below.

Local government reorganisation was sold as the removal of layers. Surrey now appears to be replacing them under new names.

That may be devolution. It may be reorganisation. It may even produce better government if it is properly designed and funded.

But nobody should call it simplification.

Tiers not shed for local government in Surrey after all....?

3 September 2026



Surrey's shadow authority leaders have insisted that devolution in the county must be "done right" after the government proposed beefed up new planning powers for mayors.

Proposals due to be published in the coming week would see mayors across England granted the authority to override councils on certain planning applications – giving them the same powers already held by the Mayor of London.

These "call in" powers would only apply to developments of more than 150 homes, more than 15,000 square metres of commercial space, or of buildings 30 metres or taller, the BBC has reported.

It comes amid widespread change to local government in Surrey, with two new unitary councils in East and West Surrey set to take over from the county council and 11 district councils next year.

But many figures in local government are calling for additional changes that would see the county get an overarching elected mayor covering the whole of Surrey.

East Surrey Shadow Authority leader Councillor Steve Wotton told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) he supports the creation of a mayor and welcomes the prospect of additional powers handed over from Westminster.

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He said: “We have a national housing crisis, public transport leaves behind rural communities and is wholly centred around London, and there is great potential in the county’s own local economies.

“More power out of Westminster and closer to Surrey, with a mayor, can help tackle these issues if done right.”

Prime Minister Andy Burnham, who assumed office last month, has made regionalism one of his core missions in government.

Mr Burnham previously unveiled proposals to give regional mayors a share of income tax revenue as part of a broader devolution drive.

The upcoming planning changes could also see mayors given the power to grant “up front” development permission, although a government spokesperson said councils will still decide most planning applications.

Under current proposals, Surrey could see a foundation strategic authority (FSA) set up from April 2027, which would allow the two new unitary councils to pool resources on certain service areas.

An FSA serves as a stepping stone towards the creation of a mayoral combined authority, which would involve the creation of a directly elected mayor of Surrey.

Councillor Wotton added: “It will be important that a future mayor works very closely with the two new councils in Surrey.

“We look forward to seeing further detail from government, so that we can help shape what is right for Surrey’s residents and businesses.”

West Surrey Shadow Authority leader Councillor Paul Follows told the LDRS he is “very keen” to see more powers devolved to the county, but that “those powers need to come with the funding to make them meaningful”.

He added: “Local government at every level cannot absorb more un-funded mandates.

“Mayors make sense in some parts of the UK but not all, and I hope that the government will be open to working with local government to develop the most appropriate plans for each area rather than a one-size-fits-all option.”

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

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Ukrainian Independence Day celebrated with music, film and community spirit in Epsom

3 September 2026



Epsom Picturehouse was filled to capacity yesterday afternoon as the local community came together to mark Ukrainian Independence Day with an afternoon celebrating Ukrainian culture, music and film.

The event began in the Picturehouse foyer, where three young Ukrainians performed a selection of Ukrainian songs. Singer **Diana Zadorizhna**, guitarist **Vlad Verteba** and percussionist **Vlad Voloshin** provided live music as audiences gathered before the film screening.

Visitors were also able to browse a colourful display of Ukrainian crafts, handmade by local Ukrainian women. The crafts offered a glimpse into Ukraine’s rich artistic traditions and gave members of the community an opportunity to share

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something of their heritage with their neighbours in Epsom.

Nina Kaye of **Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network** welcomed the audience, and the afternoon began with everyone standing to sing the Ukrainian national anthem.

Roy Deadman, founder of **Surrey Stands with Ukraine**, introduced the film and spoke about the importance of cultural exchange and of continuing to share Ukrainian culture with the wider community.

The audience went on to enjoy *Mavka: The Forest Song*, one of Ukraine's most successful animated films. Inspired by Ukrainian folklore and Lesya Ukrainka's celebrated 1911 drama *The Forest Song*, the film combines fantasy, romance, comedy and music with a powerful celebration of Ukraine's natural and cultural heritage.

The screening attracted a full house, demonstrating once again the strong support that the local community continues to show for Ukrainians living in the area. For those attending, the event was not simply a film screening, but an opportunity to come together, celebrate Ukrainian identity and culture, and strengthen the friendships that have grown between Ukrainians now living in Epsom and the wider community.

The enthusiastic response reflected the continuing message of solidarity that has characterised local support for Ukraine since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion: Ukrainian culture is alive, vibrant and something to be shared and celebrated.

Nina Kaye

The young have their place in new Surrey governing

3 September 2026



Surrey's youngest councillors want to see more young people get involved in local government – and not let growing hostility towards elected representatives deter them from standing.

Elections to Surrey's two new unitary authorities in May saw several councillors under the age of 30 elected to the shadow council.

These new councils will formally assume all local government responsibilities from next April, at which point Surrey County Council and all 11 district councils will be abolished.

However, many younger councillors across the country face heightened online threats and abuse due to their age – with a 2024 Local Government Association (LGA) survey finding that seven in 10 councillors had received abuse or intimidation in the past 12 months.

The LGA's findings added that younger councillors will often report heightened abuse "suggesting they were too inexperienced" due to their age.

But several of the new shadow councillors told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) they are determined not to let this stand in the way of doing their jobs – or deter them from standing for office.

Councillor Harleen Boparai (Liberal Democrats: Staines South and Ashford West) said: "Yes, we are faced with online abuse but young people are more aware than any other generation.

"We know how to ignore comments from bad faith actors and stay focused on getting things done for our communities."

In a July meeting of the East Surrey Shadow Authority, councillors of all ages shared examples of the threats and intimidation they had received from residents and voters – which included threats of violence and inappropriate messages.

"This behaviour discourages good people from standing for public office," Councillor Kirsty Hewens (Liberal Democrats: Walton South & Oatlands) told councillors at the meeting.

Despite the online abuse and intimidation faced by younger councillors, many of those elected have said they want to use their office to address the issues facing young people in Surrey.

Councillor Bradley Nelson (Liberal Democrats: Dorking) said "As councillors in our twenties, we also know how difficult it is to afford a home, get around without a car or find thriving town centres that offer opportunities for younger people.

"Rather than complain about those challenges, we've chosen to try do something about it."

He pointed to the startlingly high cost of housing in Surrey, which is among the highest in the country outside of London, as a key issue affecting younger people in the county.

He added that balancing his council duties alongside his early career helps bring a useful perspective to the council.

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Councillor Josh Lambert (Liberal Democrats: Walton North) added: “Being a councillor shouldn’t be restricted to those with surplus time or money. It’s vital that young working people are represented in local government.

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

Salts bow out of FA Cup to Crowborough

3 September 2026



Epsom & Ewell FC 0–3 Crowborough Athletic. 22nd August – Chalky Lane – The Emirates FA Cup Preliminary Round

Epsom & Ewell bowed out of the Emirates FA Cup after a 3–0 defeat to Step 4 side Crowborough Athletic at Chalky Lane.

A crowd of 122 watched the Preliminary Round tie, for which the Salts made two changes following injuries sustained during their midweek defeat at Metropolitan Police.

In more pleasant conditions after the recent spell of hot weather, Epsom gave a good account of themselves throughout the first half.

The hosts had a strong appeal for a penalty when Courtney Swaby went down following a challenge by the Crowborough goalkeeper. The referee was unmoved and instead booked Swaby for diving.

Epsom then suffered a further setback with only around 30 seconds of the half remaining, conceding an avoidable goal to send Crowborough into the interval with a 1–0 lead.

Crowborough doubled their advantage in the 55th minute with a fine strike from the edge of the penalty area.

The visitors were subsequently awarded a penalty for handball after the ball struck an Epsom player’s arm from close range. It appeared a particularly harsh decision, given that the player had little opportunity to move out of the way.

Epsom thought they had pulled a goal back with around 10 minutes remaining, only for the effort to be ruled out for offside.

Crowborough ultimately saw out the tie to record a 3–0 victory, although the final scoreline arguably flattered the visitors after a competitive performance from the Salts.

Epsom & Ewell now turn their attention to next weekend’s away fixture against Godalming Town, while Crowborough progress to the next round of the FA Cup.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media

Epsom woman celebrates remarkable 100th birthday

3 September 2026

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

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An Epsom woman has celebrated her 100th birthday surrounded by three generations of her family and dozens of friends.

Helen Blackman, née Aldridge, was born in Richmond upon Thames on 22 August 1926. She later married Epsom resident Derek Blackman and has lived in the borough ever since.

Mrs Blackman was widowed when her husband died in his 50s, leaving her with three children. She never remarried and has remained closely involved in the local community, where friends describe her as a public-spirited woman who is always willing to help anyone in need, without waiting to be asked or expecting anything in return.

A committed monarchist, Mrs Blackman joined the crowds on The Mall for the coronation of the late Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. She has amassed a treasured collection of royal memorabilia marking coronations and other important anniversaries, to which she can now add a centenary message from King Charles III.

A keen traveller and sightseer, she has enjoyed numerous coach holidays across Europe and the United States. Her other interests include crosswords and the arts, particularly theatre, ballet, opera and classical music.

She continues to attend Glyndebourne Opera each year, courtesy of a nephew who is a conductor and countertenor.

Although her sight is now badly impaired, her speech, hearing and memory remain strong, and she continues to walk with no more assistance than a walking stick.

Mrs Blackman marked her milestone birthday at a celebration organised by her three children at her eldest daughter’s home and garden in Tadworth.

Around 60 guests attended the gathering, including many of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The festivities took place in near-perfect weather and came as a surprise to the centenarian, who had known she was visiting her daughter but had little idea of the large gathering awaiting her.

Friends and family describe her as “a very exceptional and remarkable lady”.

A special correspondent.

[Despite sharing a surname, the late Derek Blackman is not believed to have been related to Epsom & Ewell Times director Lionel Blackman.]

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Olympic star helps launch children’s gymnastics and ninja club in Epsom

3 September 2026



Children in Epsom will have a new opportunity to try gymnastics, parkour and free running when a community sports club opens at Blenheim High School in September.

Gymfinity Kids is launching gymnastics and “ninja” classes for children aged from two to 14, with an introductory opening weekend taking place from Friday 4 to Sunday 6 September.

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Olympic medallist and former Commonwealth Games champion Beth Tweddle MBE, who designed the organisation's gymnastics programme, will support the launch by visiting schools in the Epsom area.

The new club will run one-hour sessions intended to help children develop physical skills, confidence and an enjoyment of exercise, regardless of their previous sporting experience.

Its ninja classes combine elements of parkour and free running, while the gymnastics programme introduces children to the core skills of the sport. Sessions will be led by trained coaches.

Inspiring children to get moving

Beth Tweddle said: "I'm really excited to be bringing Gymfinity Kids' gymnastics and ninja classes to Epsom and creating more opportunities for children in the area to get active and try something new.

"Whether they're discovering gymnastics for the first time, giving ninja a go, or simply finding a new way to move and have fun, I want every child to feel welcome and encouraged to explore what they're capable of.

"Community clubs like this are a fantastic way to make activity more accessible to children and families, while giving children the opportunity to build confidence, learn new skills and find something they really enjoy.

"I'm looking forward to visiting schools in the area and helping inspire the next generation to get moving."

Tweddle won bronze on the uneven bars at the London 2012 Olympic Games and was a three-time world champion. Her career also included Commonwealth Games gold medals for England.

Five community clubs in the area

The opening will bring the number of Gymfinity Kids community clubs in the wider area to five. The company also operates purpose-built centres in Bracknell and Walton-on-Thames.

Paul Kirwin, chief executive of Gymfinity Kids, said: "We're passionate about making it easier for children to get active and discover a sport that they enjoy, which is exactly what our community clubs are designed to do.

"Our new Epsom Community Club will give children the opportunity to try something new, develop physical skills and build confidence in a fun and supportive environment.

"Whether they discover a passion for gymnastics or ninja, or simply find a new way to enjoy being active, we want every child to feel that sport is for them."

The club will be based at Blenheim High School, Longmead Road, Epsom, KT19 9BH.

Further information and booking details are available from the Gymfinity Kids Epsom club page and its online timetable.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Photo: Beth Tweddle with a child

Police headquarters in Leatherhead a step closer

3 September 2026



Work is set to begin on Surrey Police's long-awaited new eastern headquarters, bringing an end to a saga stretching back to 2023, when the force was compelled to vacate its Reigate base because of dangerous reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

Surrey Police was granted planning permission for the Cleeve Road site in Leatherhead in November last year. According to papers filed with Mole Valley District Council, preparatory work is expected to begin on 7 September.

The force originally bought the building in 2018 for nearly £20.5 million, intending to move into the site. Those plans were subsequently put on hold while it considered relocating staff to its Mount Browne headquarters in Guildford.

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If the project proceeds as planned, the main construction work will begin in February 2027. The new eastern headquarters, accommodating about 500 officers and staff, will be built on what is currently an unused car park.

Planning permission was also granted for 40 affordable homes on the site, although these will be constructed separately.

The second stage of the development will involve demolishing the existing redundant buildings to make way for a residential block containing the affordable homes. Surrey Police has said it would ideally like the homes to be occupied by its own officers and staff.

Once the headquarters is completed, the force will have a permanent eastern base. By then, officers and staff will have spent about four years temporarily housed at Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's former headquarters at Wray Park in Reigate.

A Surrey Police spokesperson said the new headquarters would provide a financially sustainable base and ensure officers and staff had the facilities needed to investigate crime and keep communities safe.

The force said the Leatherhead site best met its operational needs because of its access to the surrounding area and major road links. It added that the improved facilities would help Surrey Police attract and retain staff.

Chris Caulfield Local Democracy Reporter

Image: Illustrative Visuals of the new Eastern Divisional Head Quarters for Surrey Police. (Credit: Pick Everard/ Surrey Police/ Mole Valley District Council Planning

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