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Record A level results open doors for Epsom and Ewell students

13 August 2026



Students at two Epsom and Ewell secondary schools are celebrating impressive A-level and vocational qualification results, with Rosebery School recording its best results to date and seven Glyn School students securing straight A* grades.

At Rosebery School in Epsom, 43% of all A-level entries received an A* or A grade, while 73% were graded A* to B and 88% A* to C. All three figures represent new records for the girls' school.

Twenty-four Rosebery students achieved A* or A grades in every subject. Five secured straight A*s: Emma Glencross, with four A*s, and Emily Woodville, Grace Worley, Amy Box and Amy Helyar, each with three.

The school also highlighted students whose results demonstrated particularly strong progress since their GCSEs. Emily Gromova, Amelie Dale, Lara Sollewijn Gelpke and Jacqueline Tetteh were among the strongest members of the cohort when measured by the progress made from their earlier attainment.

Rosebery headteacher David Lach said: "These results are truly outstanding and reflect the talent, resilience and determination of an exceptional group of young women. We are enormously proud of what they have achieved and the way they have supported one another throughout their journey.

"At Rosebery, we believe there should be no limits to what girls can achieve, and this year's results demonstrate exactly that."

Members of the Class of 2026 will now progress to destinations including Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College London, King's College London and the universities of Warwick and Bath. Others have secured degree apprenticeships or will pursue specialist training, including pilot training and drama school.

Mr Lach thanked Rosebery's teaching and support staff for helping the students to believe in themselves and fulfil their potential.

At Glyn School in Ewell, staff and students were meanwhile celebrating A-level and vocational qualification results in which more than 51% of students achieved A* to B grades.

Seven students obtained straight A*s. Vrushabh K achieved four, in chemistry, further mathematics, mathematics and physics, and will study mechanical and electrical engineering at the University of Bristol.

Oliver H gained three A*s in mathematics, further mathematics and physics and is heading to the University of Sheffield.

Amri R achieved the same top grades in computer science, mathematics and further mathematics and will study at Imperial College London.

Amelie S secured A*s in biology, chemistry and mathematics, while Ilario Lok C achieved A*s* in further mathematics, mathematics and physics and will attend the University of Hong Kong.

James D received three A*s in chemistry, mathematics and physics, while James Y achieved three in economics, mathematics and geography.

Glyn headteacher Jo Garrod said: "We are thrilled to see this year's A-level and BTEC exam success. With over 51% of students achieving A* to B grades, they should all be extremely proud of their efforts, and we wish them the very best for their futures."

She said the school was delighted that students had secured places at their chosen universities, apprenticeships and careers, while paying particular tribute to those who had overcome significant barriers before sitting their examinations.

"They should be incredibly proud of themselves and the results they have secured under difficult circumstances," she added. "Thanks also go to the staff for their immense effort this year to ensure our students got the grades they deserved."

Warwick Sharp, chief executive of GLF Schools, which includes both Rosebery and Glyn, congratulated the students and staff.

Describing Rosebery's results as "record-breaking", he said its students had been set on a path towards future success by the school's committed team.

Addressing Glyn's results, he added: "We are excited to see what these wonderful young people go on to do next as they shape their futures. A huge thanks and well done to the brilliant team at Glyn who should be proud of these impressive achievements."

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Sam Jones – Reporter



Chips down and Epsom up

13 August 2026



Epsom and Ewell FC 1 – 0 Chipstead. 8th August – Chalky Lane – The Emirates F.A. Cup Extra Preliminary Round

A much-changed Epsom & Ewell side showed grit, discipline and real defensive character to secure a hard-earned FA Cup victory, with Jason Bloor's first-half strike proving decisive against ten-man Chipstead.

The Salts made several changes, including the return of Dylan Marchant-Simmonds for his first game of the season and a debut for goalkeeper William Davis, who impressed throughout and kept a clean sheet. Prince Aderogba also came into the back line.

Both sides looked to attack from the outset, with former Salts player Carl Oblitey booked in the 33rd minute as the game's physical edge began to show. The Salts continued to press for the opener, playing positive, forward-thinking football, and the breakthrough arrived on 40 minutes. A superb free-kick delivery from skipper Brendan Murphy-McVey found Jason Bloor, who applied a composed finish to put the Salts 1–0 ahead.

Just before the interval, Chipstead were reduced to ten men. Oblitey, already on a yellow card, elbowed goalkeeper William Davis, earning a second booking and his marching orders.

The Salts went into half-time with a deserved lead.

The game tightened after the restart, with a flurry of cautions. Ayran Kugathas was booked in the 52nd minute, while Jason Vincent and Brendan Murphy-McVey both received yellow cards on 60 minutes.

Manager **Max Johnson** then used all five substitutions:

- **67 mins:** LJ Walker and Blessing Hombessa replaced Jason Bloor and **Luke Miller**.
- **73 mins:** Ryley Merrett and Callum O'Keeffe came on for Ayran Kugathas and Ore Allen.
- **78 mins:** Oba Akinniranye replaced Jason Vincent.

Despite sustained pressure from Chipstead, the Salts defended with courage, organisation and determination. Davis remained assured in goal, while the back line held firm to protect their slender advantage.

A disciplined and resilient performance saw the Salts safely through to the next round, where they will host Crowborough Athletic in two weeks' time.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media

Surrey leads first nuclear science experiment with world's most advanced gamma-ray detector

13 August 2026

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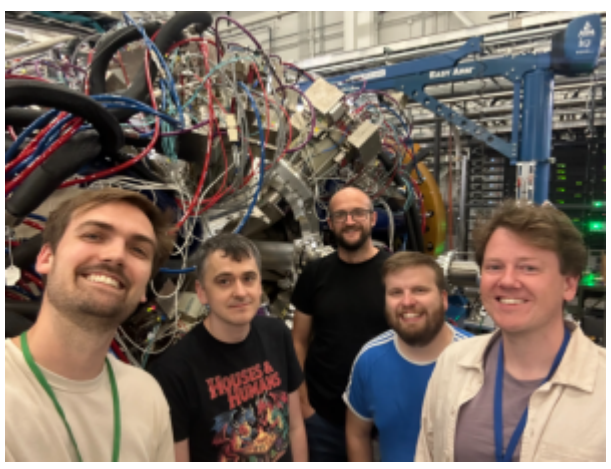

Nuclear physicists at the University of Surrey have become the first to carry out a scientific experiment using the world's most advanced gamma-ray spectrometer – investigating a sudden change in the shape of the atomic nucleus that could challenge existing theories.

Nuclear physicists at the University of Surrey have become the first to carry out a scientific experiment using the world's most advanced gamma-ray spectrometer – investigating a sudden change in the shape of the atomic nucleus that could challenge existing theories.

The experiment took place at the Facility for Rare Isotope Beams (FRIB) in Michigan, USA, using the newly delivered and characterised Gamma-Ray Energy Tracking Array (GRETA). Led by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) and delivered by a collaboration with Argonne National Laboratory, Oak Ridge National Laboratory and FRIB, GRETA is a $58 million detector designed to reveal the structure of atomic nuclei in unprecedented detail.

Working with collaborators from FRIB and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, the Surrey team investigated a radioactive isotope of germanium to help answer a long-standing question about the shape of its atomic nucleus.

For many years, physicists predicted that the nucleus should resemble a rugby ball. However, more recent evidence has suggested it could instead be flattened like a disc – a result that would challenge current theories describing how protons and neutrons behave inside the nucleus.

Dr Jack Henderson, Co-Project Investigator, UKRI Future Leaders Fellow and Senior Lecturer at the University of Surrey's School of Mathematics and Physics, said:

"Beam time at facilities like FRIB is exceptionally competitive, with proposals assessed by an international panel of experts. Being selected to lead the first scientific experiment using GRETA is an incredible achievement for us here at Surrey.

"Nuclear physicists deliberately study the most unusual atomic nuclei because they provide the toughest tests of our understanding. In this case, we wanted to investigate whether this isotope of germanium really does have an unexpected disc-like shape – a bit like chocolate Smarties."

GRETA uses highly segmented high-purity germanium detectors to detect, localise and track gamma rays emitted by unstable atomic nuclei, allowing scientists to study their structure with unprecedented sensitivity and precision. Compared with the detector originally planned for the germanium experiment, GRETA is around five times more efficient, meaning measurements can be completed faster and with far greater precision.

Because access to rare isotope beam facilities is limited, GRETA's efficiency enables scientists to study more exotic, short-lived isotopes within the available beam time.

Beyond Surrey's experiment, GRETA opens up new opportunities to study how the elements are formed in explosive astrophysical events and deepen scientists' understanding of how protons and neutrons interact within the atomic nucleus. Its exceptional sensitivity also allows researchers to detect tiny signals hidden within complex datasets and investigate increasingly rare isotopes that were previously beyond reach.

Paul Fallon, GRETA project director and interim director of Berkeley Lab's Nuclear Science Division, said:

"The completion of GRETA and the first installation for physics experiments is a major milestone. This is the result of years of effort from a very big team."

The experiment was led by Dr Jacob Heery, a postdoctoral research assistant at the University of Surrey, whose proposal secured the highly sought-after beam time after being selected by an international panel of experts.

Jacob Heery said: "Securing the first scientific experiment using GRETA is a huge achievement within the nuclear physics community. The detector gives us a level of sensitivity we've never had before, allowing us to investigate extremely rare isotopes that were previously beyond reach. We're only just beginning to explore what's possible, and I hope this will be the first of many collaborations between Surrey, FRIB and the GRETA team."

Analysis of the experiment is now underway. The work formed part of the JANUS (Joint Arrays for Nuclear Structure) collaboration between FRIB, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and the University of Surrey. It also builds on Surrey's leadership of the £3.1 million FAUST project, which is developing a next-generation detector system that will operate alongside GRETA in future experiments.

Surrey University

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Photo: Credit University of Surrey. Caption: From left to right: Chris Cousins (Surrey), Stephen Gillespie (FRIB), Jack Henderson (Surrey), Tom Parry (FRIB – Surrey PhD), Daniel Doherty (Surrey).

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Drones may reduce delays on Waterloo line

13 August 2026



A drone is now operating at London Waterloo to tackle trespass, fix infrastructure faults and reduce disruption
Operated remotely from Southampton, the drone provides live intelligence to South Western Railway and Network Rail Wessex for rapid response to incidents.

Trespass and fatalities account for almost 14 per cent of delays, making them a leading cause of disruption and costing taxpayers millions.

Automated drone technology is part of publicly owned South Western Railway and Network Rail Wessex's plan to improve services for customers ahead of the establishment of Great British Railways
RAILWAY customers at London Waterloo may have spotted a new presence overhead: a drone helping to prevent delays at Britain's biggest station.

South Western Railway (SWR) and Network Rail Wessex (NR Wessex) are deploying automated drone technology to deter and tackle trespass, improve safety and reduce disruption on one of the country's busiest rail corridors.

Trespassing on the railway is illegal and extremely dangerous. SWR and NR Wessex trains are powered by an 'always on' electric third rail carrying 750 volts of direct current, which can cause severe, lifechanging injuries or death.

When trespass is reported on the railway, SWR and NR Wessex must turn off the power, preventing trains from running until the incident has been resolved and power to the lines can be safely restored.

Most of South Western's 1,600 daily services begin or end at London Waterloo. Even minor incidents can delay thousands of customers and cost taxpayers millions.

Between April 2025 and June 2026, trespass and fatalities caused almost 14 per cent of cancellations and over 200,000 minutes of delay to SWR and NR Wessex services, making it one of the leading causes of disruption.

Last September, a trespasser near Clapham Junction caused more than 57 hours of delays and was later imprisoned for eight weeks.

Another even more serious incident in the New Malden area in August 2024 saw the equivalent of nine days of delays, costing the taxpayer £1.2 million. The trespasser was sentenced to 18 months in prison.

The drone is operated remotely by British firm SkyBound from a high-tech control centre almost 80 miles away in Woolston, in the Southampton area.

When required, operators launch the drone from its trackside station to provide rapid intelligence for SWR and NR Wessex's control centre, security and engineering teams, even before teams arrive on the ground.

Its high-resolution and thermal imaging cameras give enhanced visibility of trespass incidents, infrastructure concerns or any situation that requires inspection, with live footage streamed directly to the network's operations centre in Basingstoke.

This allows the railway and emergency services to respond more quickly, reduces the need for ground teams to access the track, and limits the need to switch off the power and delays customer journeys.

The drone at Waterloo is just the first of a planned chain of SkyBound drones to help protect the busiest section of the SWR and NR Wessex network, with further drones to be based at Clapham Junction, New Malden and Walton-on-Thames.

South Western Railways

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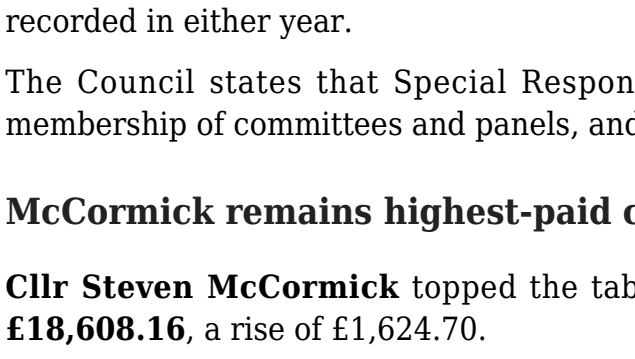
Epsom and Ewell Councillor allowances

13 August 2026



Councillor allowance bill rises £19,275 in a year

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's bill for councillor allowances rose by more than £19,000 last year, with 30 of the borough's 35 councillors receiving more than in the previous financial year.

The Council paid a total of **£285,011.33 in members' allowances in 2025/26**, compared with **£265,736.49 in 2024/25** – an increase of **£19,274.84, or 7.25%**.

The newly published figures cover the financial year from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. The previous return covers 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Much of the increase resulted from the basic allowance payable to every councillor rising from **£5,779.86 to £6,202.68** – an increase of £422.82, or 7.3%.

Across all 35 councillors that added **£14,798.70** to the bill. In other words, just over three-quarters of the £19,275 year-on-year increase arose from the increase in the basic allowance alone.

Special Responsibility Allowances – additional payments for councillors holding particular positions – increased collectively from **£62,822.38 to £67,359.72**, an increase of £4,537.34.

Travel and subsistence payments actually fell slightly, from £619.01 to £557.81. No dependants' carers' allowances were recorded in either year.

The Council states that Special Responsibility Allowances do not relate to actual attendance at meetings but to membership of committees and panels, and that allowance payments are subject to Income Tax and National Insurance.

McCormick remains highest-paid councillor

Cllr Steven McCormick topped the table for the second successive year. His total increased from **£16,983.46 to £18,608.16**, a rise of £1,624.70.

For clarity, McCormick was a **Residents' Association councillor throughout the 2025/26 financial year**. Although EEBC's present councillor page now records him as Conservative, the Council's earlier listing recorded him as RA and he contested the new East Surrey Council election on 7 May 2026 as a Residents' Association candidate for Epsom Town and Downs. His subsequent change of allegiance therefore falls outside the period covered by these allowance figures.

Second highest was **Cllr Neil Dallen**, whose payment increased from £15,645.76 to **£17,057.52**, a rise of £1,411.76.

Council Leader **Cllr Hannah Dalton** moved from second to third place and was one of only five councillors whose total payment fell. She received **£16,266.40**, £429.41 less than the £16,695.81 received in 2024/25. The difference largely reflects a reduction in her Special Responsibility Allowance and travel and subsistence payments.

The other councillors whose total payments fell were **Humphrey Reynolds (£175.96 less), Steve Bridger (£75.76 less), Julian Freeman (£52.16 less) and Bernie Muir (£52.16 less)**.

Biggest rises

After McCormick's £1,624.70 increase, the biggest cash increases went to:

John Beckett – up £1,474.94

Neil Dallen – up £1,411.76

Alan Williamson – up £1,395.42

Clive Woodbridge – up £1,214.94

The percentage comparison can sometimes exaggerate relatively small payments, but Cllr Beckett's total nevertheless rose by almost a quarter, from £6,278.44 to £7,753.38.

At the other end of the scale, 12 councillors received no Special Responsibility Allowance in 2025/26 and were paid simply the basic £6,202.68 allowance.

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The two published returns show all 35 councillors serving in both financial years, allowing a direct like-for-like comparison.

Councillor allowances compared

The table is ranked by the latest, 2025/26, total.

Councillor / ward / party during 2025/26	2024/25	2025/26	Change
Steven McCormick — Woodcote & Langley Vale — RA	£16,983.46	**£18,608.16**	+£1,624.70
Neil Dallen — Town — RA	£15,645.76	**£17,057.52**	+£1,411.76
Hannah Dalton — Stoneleigh — RA	£16,695.81	**£16,266.40**	−£429.41
Clive Woodbridge — Ewell Village — RA	£12,431.10	**£13,646.04**	+£1,214.94
Liz Frost — Woodcote & Langley Vale — RA	£9,790.14	**£10,562.54**	+£772.40
Peter O'Donovan — Ewell Court — RA	£9,648.02	**£10,544.64**	+£896.62
Phil Neale — Cuddington — RA	£8,131.92	**£8,994.00**	+£862.08
Alan Williamson — West Ewell — RA	£7,553.56	**£8,948.98**	+£1,395.42
Bernice Froud — Woodcote & Langley Vale — RA	£7,802.86	**£8,373.72**	+£570.86
Christine Cleveland — Ewell Village — RA	£7,727.52	**£8,063.52**	+£336.00
John Beckett — Auriol — RA	£6,278.44	**£7,753.38**	+£1,474.94
Shanice Goldman — Nonsuch — RA → Conservative	£7,300.16	**£7,488.26**	+£188.10
Kate Chinn — Court — Labour	£6,708.26	**£7,173.00**	+£464.74
Rachel King — Town — RA	£6,539.96	**£7,133.04**	+£593.08
Jan Mason — Ruxley — RA	£6,358.22	**£6,822.96**	+£464.74
Humphrey Reynolds — West Ewell — RA	£6,998.92	**£6,822.96**	−£175.96
Chris Watson — Ewell Court — RA → Labour	£6,286.66	**£6,822.96**	+£536.30
Alison Kelly — Stamford — Liberal Democrat	£5,779.86	**£6,719.58**	+£939.72
Kieran Persand — Horton — Conservative	£5,779.86	**£6,719.58**	+£939.72
Bernie Muir — Horton — Conservative	£6,658.22	**£6,606.06**	−£52.16
Alex Coley — Ruxley — Independent	£5,993.54	**£6,593.09**	+£599.55
James Lawrence — College — Lib Dem → Independent	£5,779.86	**£6,552.72**	+£772.86
Julian Freeman — College — Liberal Democrat	£6,358.22	**£6,306.06**	−£52.16
Arthur Abdulin — Town — RA	£5,779.86	**£6,202.68**	+£422.82
Chris Ames — Court — Labour	£5,779.86	**£6,202.68**	+£422.82
Steve Bridger — Stamford — RA	£6,278.44	**£6,202.68**	−£75.76
Tony Froud — Stoneleigh — RA	£5,779.86	**£6,202.68**	+£422.82
Rob Geleit — Court — Labour	£5,779.86	**£6,202.68**	+£422.82
Christine Howells — Nonsuch — RA → Independent	£5,779.86	**£6,202.68**	+£422.82
Graham Jones — Cuddington — RA	£5,779.86	**£6,202.68**	+£422.82
Robert Leach — Nonsuch — RA	£6,029.16	**£6,202.68**	+£173.52
Lucie McIntyre — West Ewell — RA	£5,779.86	**£6,202.68**	+£422.82
Julie Morris — College — Independent	£6,179.82	**£6,202.68**	+£22.86
Kim Spickett — Cuddington — RA	£5,779.86	**£6,202.68**	+£422.82
Darren Talbot — Auriol — RA	£5,779.86	**£6,202.68**	+£422.82
TOTAL	**£265,736.49**	**£285,011.33**	**+£19,274.84**

Political allegiances also shifted during the year covered by the figures. Shanice Goldman left the Residents' Association for the Conservatives in January 2026, Chris Watson moved from the RA to Labour in February, and James Lawrence left the Liberal Democrats for the Independent Group in March. Christine Howells, who had been an RA councillor during part of the year, was also sitting as an Independent by its end. Steven McCormick remained an RA councillor throughout the 2025/26 financial year; his subsequent move to the Conservatives came after the May 2026 unitary council election, which he contested unsuccessfully for the Residents' Association in Town and Downs.

Sam Jones – Reporter

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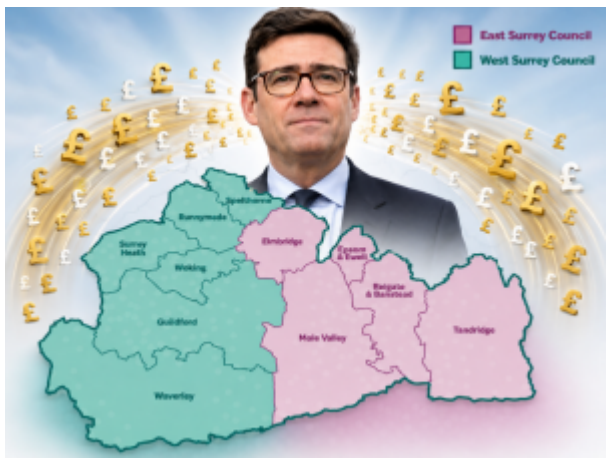
Image: Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Chamber. EEBC YouTube

Surrey eyes a share of its own taxes under devolution plans

13 August 2026



Surrey’s future strategic authority could retain a share of locally generated income tax and business rates under government plans to transfer more money and decision-making from Whitehall to England’s regions.

The Government’s “Rewiring the State” programme proposes replacing some central government grants with a share of the income tax generated within each mayoral area from April 2028.

Mayors would not, on the information published so far, be given the power to set income tax rates. Instead, part of the existing tax collected by the Treasury would be assigned to their regions.

The intention is that an area which expands its economy and tax base would benefit from the additional revenue. Councils and strategic authorities would also retain a greater proportion of locally raised business rates.

However, the Government has yet to disclose what percentage of either tax would be retained, how the system would operate during an economic downturn or how revenues would be redistributed between wealthier and less prosperous regions.

Those details are expected in a fiscal devolution roadmap accompanying the autumn Budget, followed by more precise income-tax arrangements in the next Spending Review.

The proposals could prove particularly significant for Surrey, with its comparatively strong economy, high employment and large number of higher-rate taxpayers. Whether that translates into substantially more money for local services will depend upon the formula eventually adopted and the grants which tax revenues replace.

Surrey County Council says a Foundation Strategic Authority is proposed for the county in 2027, providing a possible route to a Mayoral Strategic Authority from 2028.

That distinction matters. The Cabinet statement promises a share of income tax to “every mayor”, while saying that mayoral authorities will receive greater powers than non-mayoral bodies. It does not clearly promise non-mayoral Foundation Strategic Authorities the same income-tax entitlement.

The Government says it will not impose a mayor on an area which does not want one, although it regards directly elected mayors as offering the strongest form of accountability. It wants every part of England to have, or be establishing, a strategic authority by the end of 2027, with authorities operating everywhere by the end of 2028.

Councillor Steve Wotton, Leader of the East Surrey Shadow Authority, welcomed the direction of travel.

He said: “Surrey has a strong economy, a highly skilled workforce and an important role to play in supporting national growth. Giving strategic authorities a stronger link to locally generated revenues has the potential to provide greater certainty for long-term investment in transport, infrastructure, housing and skills.

“The ability to plan over a longer time horizon could help local leaders make better decisions, unlock investment and deliver improvements that residents and businesses want to see.”

Councillor Paul Follows, Leader of the West Surrey Shadow Authority, said the principle was positive but cautioned that the detail would be critical.

“Places like Surrey should have a stronger voice in the decisions that affect their residents, businesses and local economy,” he said.

“However, it will be important that government gets the detail right. Any new funding system must be fair, sustainable

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and recognise the different opportunities and challenges faced by communities across the country."

Beyond taxation, the programme proposes giving mayors greater control over transport, housing, skills, employment support, innovation, energy and cultural investment.

Mayors would gain control of budgets for technical and vocational education for 16 to 19-year-olds and locally tailored employment support. They could also be given greater influence over commuter rail services, bus regulation, affordable housing and regional investment.

Police, fire and rescue services and Integrated Care Boards are eventually expected to align with strategic-authority boundaries. Deputy mayors could be appointed to oversee important public services.

All strategic authorities, including non-mayoral ones, would also be able to introduce an Overnight Visitor Levy. The charge, sometimes described as a tourist tax, could be imposed on overnight accommodation, with authorities expected to explain by March 2028 how the proceeds would be invested.

No proposed rate or charging mechanism has yet been announced.

The reforms could therefore give a future Surrey mayor considerable influence over services and investment currently controlled by Whitehall or separate public bodies. They would also create another directly elected political office above the two new Surrey unitary councils.

Epsom and Ewell is due to form part of the new East Surrey authority under the county's local government reorganisation. The precise relationship between the two unitary councils and a county-wide strategic authority—including how powers, costs and accountability would be divided—has still to be settled.

Tax retention could reward economic growth and provide more predictable funding for long-term projects. It also raises difficult questions. Income-tax receipts fluctuate, affluent regions begin with much stronger tax bases, and replacing government grants with locally assigned revenues could expose authorities to greater financial risk.

The Cabinet statement acknowledges that different areas have unequal starting points and says growth incentives will have to be balanced against fairness. It also proposes stronger oversight, including making the chief executives of mayoral strategic authorities accountable for the use of public money as Local Accounting Officers.

Business-rate retention is scheduled to begin for mayors in April 2027, with locally retained income-tax receipts following in April 2028. A government white paper setting out the legislation, funding arrangements and timetable is promised for the autumn.

For Surrey, the headline prospect is an attractive one: keeping more of the wealth generated within the county. Whether it represents genuinely additional local spending power—or chiefly a new way of funding responsibilities transferred from Westminster—will only become clear when the figures and equalisation rules are published.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Water shortage risk drives Surrey farm plan for irrigation pond

13 August 2026



An east Surrey farm is seeking permission to build a new irrigation pond, as climate change has made water supply a "major operational risk".

Reid Manor Farm Limited has put forward a prior notification application to Tandridge District Council for excavation works to install the pond in a field to the west of Lingfield.

The applicant noted that "mixed farming activities" are currently undertaken in the area, with hay production being the largest operation.

"There are a number of other farming activities the business is currently exploring and in the process of setting up to support the farming business," the planning documents say.

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Blackberry harvesting and jam making are expected to be included among these activities, the applicant states.

But they added that the proposals for a new irrigation pond represent a “critical business asset” in the cultivation of aquatic plants.

“While south east England is historically the driest part of the UK, climate change has worsened summer droughts and unpredictable rainfall patterns, making reliable water access a major operational risk,” the documents say.

They add: “A farm irrigation pond allows a farm to capture and store abundant winter rainfall, securing an independent, year-round water supply that protects the crop from summer water restrictions and heat stress.”

The applicant also pointed to a government statement published in its ‘Farming Roadmap 2050’, which states: “The scientific consensus is clear that the UK should expect wilder, stormier weather with significantly increased flooding as well as summer droughts.

“With 70 per cent of our land currently used for agricultural purposes, it will become increasingly important to hold more water on farmlands to help reduce the impact of flooding downriver and support farmers during drought periods.”

Access to the farm via Brickhouse Lane would not be changed as a result of this development, the documents claim.

They add: “The site currently has no mains water connection, and no water bore holes exist on site meaning the only current water source option is harvesting rainwater.”

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

Image: Wheat stock image (Credit: Pixabay)

A battle in Epsom: “A Bridge Too Near”

13 August 2026



A newly built railway footbridge has been delivered to Epsom Common but cannot be installed after a late dispute emerged between Surrey County Council and Network Rail over its width.

Residents of Castle Road, Epsom, who have endured nearly three years without the former crossing to Evelyn Way, briefly blocked access to the Network Rail compound when the replacement structure arrived to be stored beside their homes.

The previous bridge was closed and demolished almost three years ago. Work to strengthen and rebuild its supports began earlier this year, and residents had expected the new bridge to be installed over the weekend of 4 July.

Instead, the structure is now lying within the building site while Network Rail and Surrey County Council attempt to resolve whether it can legally be installed.

The bridge has been designed with a width of 1.5 metres. However, SCC says the public footpath crossing the railway has a legally recorded width of 3.6 metres.

The council maintains that allowing a narrower bridge would obstruct part of the public right of way and breach its statutory duty to protect its full width.

What has particularly angered residents is that the conflict appears not to have surfaced until April 2026, despite the bridge having been absent for almost three years and construction work beginning in February.

SCC says it was neither consulted about the replacement design nor asked to approve the works before construction began.

‘No choice but to object’

Cllr Matt Furniss, SCC Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, told the Epsom and Ewell Times:

“We appreciate and share residents’ frustration at the situation. Unfortunately, Network Rail failed to consult us on the installation of the bridge prior to starting construction works in February, nor did they apply under the Highways Act for an S118 or technical approval to undertake works to a structure on a public highway.

“This meant when we found out about the bridge work in April, we had no choice but to object in line with our statutory duty to assert and protect public rights of way.

“The bridge being proposed by Network Rail also fails to meet minimum width national design standards, with it being less than half the width of the public footpath. To provide a narrower bridge is an obstruction under the Highways Act.”

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Cllr Furniss added that SCC understood Network Rail had placed a structure on the site but said the rail infrastructure body had not confirmed its intentions.

“We will continue to work with Network Rail to resolve this situation as soon as possible while achieving the best possible long-term outcome for the community and ensuring that the public footpath is protected,” he said.

Residents halt delivery

Residents learned that, rather than pay for storage elsewhere, the completed bridge was to be delivered to the site and left there pending a resolution.

When the delivery day arrived, a group gathered at the entrance and initially prevented the vehicle from entering.

“We were ready for it; the whole thing was set up for it,” said Castle Road resident Linda Barry. “But if it’s now just dumped here, we have no idea when the bridge will be installed. What has been the three-year hold-up at Surrey County Council?”

The project manager was called to the scene and attempted to reassure residents that the delay would be temporary. With the bridge already in transit and no alternative place immediately available for it, residents eventually allowed it to be unloaded.

“We were in an impossible position,” said Ms Barry. “The bridge was here, and there was nowhere else for it to go. But now we have no guarantee that it will be installed, so it could be here by the side of the road for a long time.”

Residents say they have already endured years of disruption, dust and temporary sewage-pumping arrangements associated with the works.

Council learned of bridge through social media

In a separate response to Ms Barry, a member of the SCC Countryside Capital Programme said the authority became aware of the proposed replacement bridge only in late April — and did so through social media.

She wrote: “Unfortunately, we had not been consulted on the design and therefore had no opportunity to provide input during its development.”

She explained that Section 130 of the Highways Act 1980 requires the council, as highway authority, to assert and protect the rights of people using public rights of way.

“This includes protecting the full recorded width of the public footpath,” she said. “As a result of the legislation, we are not legally able to permit the installation of a bridge that would reduce the available width of the public footpath to below the recorded legal width.”

Ms Barry questioned why consultation had apparently not taken place during the years between the closure of the old bridge and construction of its replacement.

She also pointed out that, during her 43 years living in Castle Road, she had known the crossing as a footbridge used by pedestrians and people with pushchairs rather than as a route requiring a 3.6-metre-wide structure.

Potential year-long delay

Residents have been told that resolving the dispute could delay installation by as much as another 12 months, although no revised completion date has yet been formally confirmed.

The controversy raises questions over how a replacement bridge could be designed, manufactured and brought to the point of installation without the highway authority responsible for the public right of way being consulted.

For Castle Road residents, the immediate result is that a bridge built to restore a long-closed route has reached Epsom — but remains firmly on the ground.

Photo caption: Castle Road residents Linda Barry and Rob block access to the Network Rail site before the replacement footbridge was unloaded.

Network Rail was been invited to comment.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Photo caption: Castle Road residents Linda Barry and Rob block access to the Network Rail site before the replacement footbridge was unloaded.

Related reports:

A bridge closed too far?

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Bedsit bedlam in Reigate and Banstead getting under control

13 August 2026



Strict controls on new HMOs in Reigate and Banstead could be brought in next year.

It comes as new bedsits have sprung up and clustered in Redhill and Horley at an enormous rate in recent years, driven by a demand for low-cost housing, with the council having no say on where they are.

The borough council is looking to bring in new powers to ban the automatic right to convert homes into bedsits for between three to six residents in order to control where they are built.

Making small HMOs go through the planning process, the council says, would relieve pressure on waste collection and parking – as well as ensure quaintly of design.

Currently landlords can convert their homes into small HMOs – properties rented by at least three people from more than one household with shared kitchen or bathrooms – under permitted development rights.

The council is looking to remove this and, if everything goes according to plan, would come into effect in 12 months to limit the council's financial liability against any conversions already under way.

HMOs of seven people or more already require planning permission.

Speaking at the July meeting of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council's planning committee was its chairperson, Councillor Simon Parnall.

He said: "It doesn't remove existing HMOs nor would it prevent new HMOs from being created; however it would give the council greater control over location of, and the design of, the HMOs."

Currently there are 101 licensed houseshares on the council's registers with about three quarters occupied by up to six people.

There are at least 109 non-licensed HMOs with occupancy of three to four people. This, the meeting heard, was only an estimated number, and that, in reality, it may well be considerably higher.

The majority of the HMOs within the borough are in Redhill and Horley and in recent years the number of small HMOs on the register has increased by 400 per cent with a notable rise in complaints to planning enforcements following.

He added: "There can be issues about parking pressure, waste management, poorly maintained buildings, the general standard of accommodation, noise disturbance, anti-social behaviour, especially when there is an area where there is a larger number of HMOs."

The chair recognised the important role HMOs play in low cost accommodation but stressed the powers would give greater control over location, design and quality which in turn would better renters.

It would also, he said, help reduce the clustering of HMOs, reduce parking pressures and overflowing bins.

Cllr Rich Michalowski said: "I am hugely supportive of the recommendation…and good news for those who will be dwelling in HMOs. Great news for communities."

The deadline for responses to thehttps://www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/article4directionHMOs consultation is Thursday 24 September 2026.

Chris Caulfield Local Democracy Reporter

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Back Epsom’s Horton Cemetery history heroes in national vote

13 August 2026



Epsom and Ewell (and beyond) residents are being urged to get behind the local Friends of Horton Cemetery after the charity was shortlisted for a national award celebrating the volunteers who rescue the stories of ordinary people from obscurity.

The Friends are among 24 organisations selected from across England for Findmypast and Heritage Open Days’ first “Everyday History Heroes” awards, with its place in the regional South-East final short-list of three.

Historian and broadcaster David Olusoga is supporting the campaign, which recognises historic and cultural organisations that preserve the stories of people frequently overlooked by conventional history.

A national winner and seven regional winners will be chosen by public vote. Regional winners will receive £1,000 to support their work.

Olusoga is quoted in a BBC news article as saying: “Horton Cemetery was a remarkable example of everyday history.” Adding “More than 9,000 people who died as patients in Epsom’s psychiatric hospitals were buried there, many in unmarked graves, and for decades their stories were largely forgotten.”

He said: “The Friends of Horton Cemetery have been restoring dignity and remembrance to thousands of people who were too often overlooked in their own lifetimes”.

The Epsom & Ewell Times makes no pretence of neutrality in this contest: our vote belongs to the Friends of Horton Cemetery—**and we hope our readers will add theirs.**

Between 1899 and 1955, about 9,000 people were buried at Horton Cemetery. Each had been a patient at one of the five mental health hospitals forming the Epsom Cluster.

Their graves are now unmarked. The privately owned cemetery has been neglected for decades and remains inaccessible to the public.

Against that unpromising background, the Friends’ volunteer researchers have painstakingly rebuilt the lives of those buried there from hospital, census, military, family and other historical records. More than 500 individual life stories have already been researched, written and published.

The result is much more than a list of names and dates. The research restores identities to people whose lives were often obscured by the stigma once attached to mental illness and institutional care.

Those remembered include war veterans, mothers, labourers, domestic servants and children. Many experienced poverty, bereavement, illness or family separation before entering one of Epsom’s hospitals. Their stories collectively illuminate a neglected chapter of the borough’s history—and of Britain’s changing treatment of mental ill-health.

Explaining its nomination, charity trustee Theresa Keneflick said: “We’re proud that this nomination recognises the work of our researchers and volunteers for all that they do to ensure the lives of the 9,000 are remembered.”

The award was created by family-history website Findmypast in partnership with Heritage Open Days. Its purpose is to honour grassroots organisations telling the histories of the ordinary people and communities who worked, struggled, campaigned and helped to build modern Britain.

David Olusoga said history was not confined to the famous figures taught about in schools, but included the millions of ordinary people whose actions shaped today’s world. He encouraged the public to explore the shortlisted organisations and vote for a local “hidden gem”.

Few candidates can fit that description more literally than Horton Cemetery: an important part of Epsom’s heritage hidden behind locked boundaries, its thousands of occupants deprived of individual grave markers but no longer without voices.

Voting remains open until 31 August, with the winners due to be announced on 10 September.

Vote for the Friends of Horton Cemetery on the Findmypast South East voting page.

The Friends’ research and the stories already recovered can be explored at the Horton Cemetery website.

The Friends of Horton Cemetery host an Heritage Open Day alongside the Cemetery on Saturday 12th September.

Lionel Blackman

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Hon. Sec. of The Friends of Horton Cemetery and a director Epsom and Ewell Times

Image – photo of the Cemetery from 1971

Note: The FindMyPast voting page suggests the charity has “transformed the cemetery”. This is an error we are seeking to correct. The Cemetery remains neglected in private hands with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council declining to purchase it for its restoration as a community asset.

Related reports:

500 patients buried in Epsom’s asylum cemetery no longer forgotten

Friends of Horton Cemetery influence law reform

Epsom and Ewell’s MP champions Friends of Horton Cemetery mission on “Time to Talk Day”

Epsom’s Horton Cemetery gets attention of two kinds

Epsom Council dead set against the dead?

Petition to reclaim Horton Cemetery from property speculator

Local community gathered at Horton Cemetery

Epsom Council chamber walk-out: a postscript

13 August 2026



The procedural controversy at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council did not end when 11 councillors walked out of the Council Chamber on 21 July in protest at the Mayor’s ruling in favour of her father participating in a debate on the development of Council owned Hook Road arena, where his annual fireworks display is held.

Since Epsom and Ewell Times’s (EET) report, “Fireworks at Epsom Council spark walk-out”, further exchanges with Councillor **Neil Dallen** (RA, Town) and the Mayor, Councillor **Lucie McIntyre** (RA, West Ewell), have raised questions about accountability, consistency and the proper boundary between robust scrutiny and personal abuse.

An interview made a condition of answering

Before the earlier publication, EET sent Cllr Dallen straightforward written questions about his position as a director of Epsom Fireworks Display Limited, the company’s agreement to hire the Council-owned Hook Road Arena, and whether he has ever received remuneration, expenses or another financial benefit through the company. After five days Cllr Dallen did not reply before publication.

After the publication he made an interview a condition of responding: “I do not intend to answer them *(the questions)* in isolation but if you wish to meet and discuss the firework display, how it is organised, who benefits etc. I would be very happy to meet you either face to face or online.”

EET explained that its settled news-gathering policy is to conduct enquiries by email. This creates an exact, contemporaneous record of the questions asked and answers given and protects reporters, contributors and those being interviewed against later disagreement about what was said. This policy has been expressly approved by EET’s regulator IMPRESS. Furthermore, as volunteers we do not have the time to give and Cllr Dallen is no exception to our method. EET would welcome for publication an article about the history of the Epsom fireworks, an annual event that has been a staple of community life in the Borough since 1971.

Cllr Dallen replied: “*I can see no point in responding*. Perhaps you need to consider taking out insurance or getting agreement to record meetings.”

For clarity, Cllr Dallen did not decline an interview. He required one before he would answer. EET declined that condition and renewed its invitation to answer in writing. No substantive response has followed.

Cllr Dallen is under no general legal obligation to answer questions from a newspaper. His decision not to answer proves neither payment nor wrongdoing. EET nevertheless considers the questions proper and relevant to the public controversy.

In particular, the question remains unanswered:

As a director, does Cllr Dallen receive, or has he ever received, fees, expenses or any other financial benefit from Epsom Fireworks Display Limited?

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Gain is not the only possible interest

At the 21st July Council meeting, Cllr Dallen declared that he was a director and trustee connected with the fireworks display, but said he did not have a pecuniary interest in the Hook Road proposal.

It is possible that he reached that conclusion in good faith because the motion sought to advance development which might ultimately bring the annual firework display to an end rather than produce a gain for him.

A pecuniary interest, however, is not confined to the prospect of making money from the decision. An existing financial interest may also be adversely affected and that would constitute a "*pecuniary interest*"

Moreover, EEBC's Members' Code of Conduct includes among disclosable pecuniary interests a contract between the Council and an incorporated body of which the councillor is a director, where goods or services are to be provided and the contract has not been fully discharged. Epsom Fireworks Display Limited had an agreement to hire Hook Road Arena for the November 2026 display.

The Code says that, where a matter "directly relates" to such an interest, the councillor must disclose it, take no part in the discussion or vote and leave the room unless granted a dispensation.

That leaves an important question of application. Did a motion merely making development of the Arena a strategic priority "directly relate" to the existing fireworks-hire contract? The motion did not itself cancel that agreement or approve a particular development. There is consequently room for legal argument.

But the existence of a company contract is relevant independently of whether Cllr Dallen receives directors' fees. An answer about remuneration would still help establish whether his directorship also falls within the separate category of an office carried on for "profit or gain" and would allow the public to understand the full nature of his interest.

It remains a question Cllr Dallen has chosen not to answer.

The Mayor's full statement

EET also asked Cllr McIntyre why she did not formally disclose that Cllr Dallen is her father and why she did not invite the Deputy Mayor to chair the dispute over his participation.

The Council supplied the following statement on her behalf: "I was elected Mayor this year and, as you will read in my biography on the Council website, the commitment my father, Councillor Dallen, demonstrates in helping others is one of the things that inspired me to serve my community by becoming a councillor, and now Mayor. I am perfectly able to chair a meeting in my capacity as Mayor when my father is in attendance. At the Full Council meeting on 21 July, Councillor Dallen declared that he did not have a pecuniary interest in the item concerning Hook Road Arena, which was his right."

The original report summarised the first part and reproduced the final two sentences verbatim, these being the part directly addressing the question. The Council subsequently insisted that the entire statement should appear, saying that editing it had altered its meaning.

EET therefore publishes it above in full.

The additional passage undoubtedly supplies context. It also expressly records Cllr McIntyre's admiration for her father and the influence he has had upon her own public life. Readers may consider that this reinforces, rather than dispels, the appearance of a conflict when she chaired rulings determining whether he could remain, speak and move the motion.

The issue is not whether a mayor can ordinarily chair a meeting attended by a parent. It is whether she should have continued to chair the particular dispute over that parent's interests, without formally disclosing the relationship and when the Deputy Mayor was available.

Cllr McIntyre's statement does not answer that question.

In requesting publication of the full quotation, the Council's communications team added: "We value our working relationship with local media and always respond to enquiries in good faith, with the expectation that comments will be represented accurately."

This was not an express threat to end cooperation with EET. In its context, however, the reference to the working relationship could be read as placing institutional weight behind the request. A constructive relationship between a council and the local press must permit fair editing, difficult questions and disagreement over what is relevant. It cannot depend upon every supplied statement being published in full.

Was there "hate" in the chamber?

At the conclusion of the Hook Road debate, Cllr Dallen said: "We, as a council, made a motion about Debate Not Hate, and I think we need to remind ourselves about that."

EEBC unanimously adopted its Debate Not Hate motion in July 2023. It committed the Council to challenging abuse and intimidation while encouraging healthy political debate.

The campaign was never intended to make councillors immune from criticism. When the East Surrey Shadow Authority recently supported the same Local Government Association campaign, councillors emphasised that they expected their decisions to be questioned and that there was a fundamental difference between robust disagreement and personal abuse. As one councillor put it: "We should challenge each other's policies, question decisions, and hold one another to account." Read EET's report.

EET has reviewed the transcript of the Hook Road exchange. It records repeated procedural objections, interruptions, an

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adjournment and the walk-out. Cllr **Kieran Persand** (Conservative Horton) called the Council "a joke". Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) praised those opposition councillors who remained for showing a "mature side", prompting Cllr **Chris Watson** (Labour Ewell Court) to defend the walk-out as a valid democratic act. Cllr **Hannah Dalton** (RA Stoneleigh) referred more generally to "cheap pop shots and remarks" and councillors feeling "mauled".

Some of that language was sharp and the atmosphere was plainly heated. EET found no threat, discriminatory abuse, harassment or personal attack upon Cllr Dallen in the recorded Hook Road exchange of the kind at which Debate Not Hate is principally directed. The objections concerned whether he was entitled to participate and whether the correct procedure had been followed.

It is therefore fair to ask what Cllr Dallen intended by invoking Debate Not Hate. If it was directed at those procedural objections, it risked treating scrutiny as abuse and turning a campaign designed to protect democratic participation into a means of discouraging it.

"Debate Not Hate" cannot sensibly mean "debate, but no uncomfortable questions". The campaign protects councillors against intimidation; it does not release them from accountability.

Cllr Dallen may maintain that he had no pecuniary interest and was entitled to participate. Cllr McIntyre may maintain that she was capable of chairing impartially. Both are entitled to state those positions.

But accountability involves more than asserting that one is right. It includes answering reasonable questions, disclosing relationships relevant to public perception and permitting established rules to be tested without characterising the challenge itself as hate.

Whether the approaches taken here demonstrate consistency—or something closer to selective accountability—is a judgment readers can now make with the exchanges before them.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Related reports

- Fireworks at Epsom Council spark walk-out
- Why procedure matters—even in little old Epsom and Ewell
- Debate Not Hate says East Surrey Shadow Authority

Glyn Hall thanks Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

13 August 2026



Dear Editor,

Glyn Hall, originally gifted by local benefactor Margaret Glyn, has served generations as a place for education, connection and community activities.

However, after more than 150 years, the building has reached the end of its usable life and has been closed.

Volunteer trustees have worked tirelessly to secure funding and develop plans for a replacement hall. They had already raised significant funds, including £85,000 from local sources, but had exhausted every avenue available to obtain the remaining money needed to regenerate the site.

The trustees are delighted to confirm that Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has approved funding totalling £315,000, inclusive of the previous £85,000 award, enabling the trust to implement its approved planning permission.

The trustees said they were extremely grateful to council members for approving the award and recognising the positive impact that restoring this historic community facility would have on local people.

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The project will now enter its next phase, and the trust is seeking additional volunteers and trustees. It particularly wishes to hear from people with experience in construction, social media or project management.

Details of the trust's forthcoming annual general meeting will be publicised shortly.

The project represents an excellent opportunity to return a much-needed community asset to public use.

Anyone able to help or support the trust should contact Matthew Anderson at mjranderson64@gmail.com.

Yours faithfully,

Matthew Anderson

Trustee Glyn Hall

Glyn Hall was erected around 1870 in Cheam Road, in the heart of Ewell Village. It was bequeathed by Margaret Glyn in 1946 for the use of Ewell residents.

In January 2024, the trustees obtained planning permission to demolish the existing wooden building and replace it with a new hall.

For further information, contact Matthew Anderson by email at mjranderson64@gmail.com or telephone 07801 785403.

Related reports:

Glyn Hall faces uncertain future as trustees issue urgent appeal to save Ewell landmark

Campaign to save Ewell Village's Glyn Hall

Epsom and Ewell Council's final spending spree?

Epsom and Ewell drive home in virgin waters

13 August 2026



Virginia Water 1–2 Epsom & Ewell Saturday 4th August. Chertsey Town (Groundshare). Combined Counties Premier League

The Salts began the new season in perfect fashion, overturning a first-half deficit to claim a deserved 2–1 away victory over Virginia Water. On Chertsey Town's immaculate surface, Epsom & Ewell produced a performance full of intensity, resilience and attacking intent.

From the opening whistle, the Salts looked sharp. Early pressure produced several blocked efforts as the Virginia Water defence scrambled to keep them at bay. Despite controlling the tempo, the visitors found themselves behind after 29 minutes when Stuart Mortimer broke through and finished clinically, punishing a momentary lapse at the back.

The response was immediate. Courtney Swaby struck the upright after excellent footwork inside the box, reminding everyone that the Salts were far from finished. More pressure followed, but the equaliser remained elusive as the sides went into the break with Virginia Water leading 1–0.

The second half saw the Salts emerge with renewed purpose. Jason Vincent had a golden one-on-one opportunity but dragged his effort wide. Managerial changes soon followed, with Oba, Luke Miller and Prince Aderogba introduced to inject fresh energy.

The breakthrough arrived through an unlikely source. Defender Stefan Aiwone surged forward and delivered a teasing ball – or was it a shot? Whatever the intention, it sailed beyond the goalkeeper and into the net to level the scores at 1–1.

Further substitutions saw Ryley Merrett and Ore Allen enter the fray, and barely two minutes later the turnaround was complete. Super-sub Luke Miller controlled the ball brilliantly inside the box before firing home a superb finish, sending the travelling supporters into celebration and putting the Salts 2–1 ahead.

The Salts then saw out the remaining minutes professionally to secure all three points. It was the perfect way to begin the season and an excellent away victory to start the campaign.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media

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Why more homeowners are taking drain problems seriously before they become emergencies

13 August 2026



Most people don’t think about their drains until something goes wrong. By then, the kitchen sink has stopped draining, the toilet is backing up, or an outside drain has overflowed after heavy rain. In many cases, these problems could have been avoided by spotting the early warning signs.

Across Surrey and South East England, drainage engineers continue to see the same causes of blocked drains. Wet wipes, cooking fat, tree roots and a lack of regular maintenance remain among the most common reasons for emergency call-outs.

Older properties can also develop cracked or displaced pipework, allowing tree roots to enter the drainage system over time.

The first signs are often easy to overlook. Slow-draining sinks, unpleasant smells, gurgling noises after flushing a toilet, or water collecting around outside drains can all indicate that a blockage is starting to form.

Dealing with these issues early can often prevent more expensive repairs later.

Many homeowners turn to chemical drain cleaners, but these rarely fix the underlying problem and may even damage older pipework.

A professional drain camera inspection can quickly identify whether the cause is grease build-up, tree roots, damaged pipework or another fault, allowing the correct solution to be carried out.

Modern drainage equipment, including high-pressure water jetting and drain camera inspections, allows many drainage problems to be resolved without unnecessary excavation, saving both time and disruption.

Drainage & Plumbing Ltd specialises exclusively in drainage services, including emergency drain unblocking, high-pressure water jetting, drain camera inspections, root removal, drain repairs and preventative maintenance.

The company provides fixed-price quotations, operates 24 hours a day and covers Surrey, South London, Sussex, Kent and surrounding areas.

The company’s advice is simple: don’t ignore the early warning signs. Acting early is usually quicker, less disruptive and far more cost-effective than waiting for a complete blockage or drainage emergency.

For more information about drainage services or to arrange an inspection, visit Drainage & Plumbing Ltd.

Sponsored article

Staines Ali G fans hope for Massiv support for statue

13 August 2026



A petition has been launched calling for a statue celebrating Ali G to be installed in Staines – tying in with the release of his new film.

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The petitioners want Spelthorne Borough Council to explore a “temporary” Ali G attraction in the town linked to the upcoming release of ‘Ali G: Who Iz I?’, while also looking at options to fund a permanent landmark.

Nearly 15 years have now passed since Staines voted to change its name to Staines-upon-Thames – partially in response to negative associations with the character.

But the new petition wants the town to “embrace the attention with humour and pride” – and even asks the council to reach out to actor Sacha Baron Cohen himself to get involved.

It reads: “Ali G and the Staines Massiv have given Staines a distinctive place in British popular culture.

“The release of a new film provides an opportunity to celebrate that connection, promote the town centre and create a lasting community benefit.”

While the petitioners want the council to invest in a permanent statue or landmark to celebrate Ali G, it adds that this should only happen “if external funding is secured for its design, installation and maintenance”.

The petitioners explicitly state they do not want a statue to be bought and upkept using council tax receipts, and want the project to “include a secure donation facility supporting affordable sport, arts, leisure and community activities for children and young people in Staines”.

They add: “We believe Staines should embrace the attention with humour and pride, while using it to support the next generation of the Staines Massiv.”

Just ten people have signed the petition at time of writing, which will run on Spelthorne Borough Council’s website until August 24.

Played by Sacha Baron Cohen, Ali G rocketed to global notoriety following the release of ‘Ali G Indahouse’ in 2002.

While the film was broadly well received with critics and audiences, many people felt the spoof character left viewers with an undeservedly bad impression of Staines.

Staines’ name was officially changed to Staines-upon-Thames in 2012, in a move that was widely seen as being a reaction to Ali G’s depiction of the town.

However, then Spelthorne Borough Councillor Colin Davis told the BBC at the time: “Ali G may have had a role, but I think it goes back further than that.

“I regard Ali G as someone who put Staines on the map, we’re just telling people where it is.”

The character’s new film ‘Ali G: Who Iz I?’ is due to be released on October 23, 2026.

Chris Caulfield Local Democracy Reporter

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Photo: Ali G Indahouse (Universal Pictures)

Accident in Leatherhead led to prosecution

13 August 2026



An event structure company and its director have been fined after a worker suffered life-changing injuries. The worker sustained multiple back fractures, a punctured lung and a broken leg. An HSE investigation found the dismantling work had not been properly planned or carried out safely.

iSkate Limited employee, Natalie McCreith, 38, a former outdoor sports instructor, had worked for the company for 14 years when she was seriously injured while working at Beaverbrook Hotel & Golf Course Leatherhead, Surrey, on 26 June 2024.

Ms McCreith underwent an 11-hour operation, spent three months in hospital and she is still recovering following the incident.

During the dismantling of a steel beam temporary structure, a ratchet strap was being used to lower a steel beam weighing over 100kg. The ratchet strap was not designed for lifting or lowering loads and failed, causing the beam to fall onto Ms McCreith. She sustained multiple fractures to her back, a punctured lung and a broken leg.

Neil Munn, director of iSkate Limited, was on site at the time and made the decision to use the ratchet strap, instructing workers where to stand. He continued with the method even after Ms McCreith raised concerns about whether it was

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safe.

In a victim personal statement, Ms McCreith said:

“Since the accident, my life has been completely turned upside down it’s now the polar opposite of what it once was. I will never live the life I once had or be in a body that isn’t screaming at me all day, I wish I could turn back time.

“My family spent the journey from Liverpool to London thinking I was dead, they have had to watch someone they love go through agonising pain and continue to do so. I am not the person I once was, I can’t be everything I once was and for them this Journey also continues.”

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that iSkate Limited had failed to ensure that the dismantling of the internal steel frame was properly planned and carried out safely.

HSE provides guidance on structural stability during alteration, demolition and dismantling which states that demolition or dismantling arrangements should be written down before the work begins. This safe system of work may be in the form of a safety method statement identifying the sequence required to prevent accidental collapse of the structure.

iSkate Limited, of Norfolk House, Station Road, St Ives, Cambridgeshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 16(1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, by virtue of Regulation 20(1). The company was fined £12,000 and ordered to pay £6,949 in costs at a hearing at Guildford Magistrates’ Court on 28 July 2026.

Neil Munn, director of iSkate Limited, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 37 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, by virtue of Regulation 16(1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 and Regulation 20(1). He received a community order with 75 hours of unpaid work to be completed.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Russell Beckett said: “Demolition and dismantling is a high-hazard work activity, but if the work is properly planned it can be carried out safely. This accident has had a devastating effect on Ms McCreith and could easily have been prevented had the right work equipment been used.”

Health and Safety Executive

Phoito: iskate ratchet strap

How would you pronounce “WSASMC”?

13 August 2026



One of the first orders of business for the newly formed Liberal Democrat-run, £4billion indebted West Surrey Council – will be to seek to change its name.

A motion is being put forward by Spelthorne-based councillors to rebrand West Surrey Council into the catchily named West Surrey and South Middlesex Council (WSASMC).

Proposed by Councillor Harry Boparai the motion to the Thursday, July 30, West Surrey Shadow Authority calls on the council to ask the government to rebadge the new body before it formally comes into being.

Posting to Facebook he described it as the most important motion for Spelthorne in 50 years.

He said: “Yes this is about identity that has been brushed under the carpet since 1965 which is shameful.”

His motion reads: “It is important that the name of the new unitary authority accurately reflects the history and identity of the communities it serves.

“Unlike the rest of the new authority Spelthorne lies north of the River Thames and has been historically a part of Middlesex, not Surrey, for centuries.

“Indeed, the postal address of properties in Spelthorne remains Middlesex.

“This council resolves to ask the government to rename the West Surrey Authority as West Surrey and South Middlesex as this would more accurately reflect and respect the history and identity of all the communities it serves.

“It would also remind councillors, officers, and others on a daily basis of the existence of a part of the new authority on the other side of the River Thames.”

The timing comes just two days after West Surrey Council leader Cllr Paul Follows issued his vision for the future of West Surrey. It mentions West Surrey 18 times. It never once says South Middlesex.

Cllr Follows said: “It is our collective understanding that this motion has broad opposition support.”

Had the council waited until it formally took over, in April 2027, it would require a two-thirds majority of members to

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change its name.

Leader of the opposition, Cllr Jane Austin criticised the decision to push forward with the name change during the summer holidays, when many residents would be away.

She said: “It is extraordinary that the Liberal Democrats’ first major signal of intent for West Surrey Council is to debate changing its name rather than tackling the enormous challenges facing the new authority.

“They are attempting to push through a significant change without consulting the nearly 700,000 residents we have been elected to serve.

“Meanwhile, the real issues – integrating six councils, managing around £4.5 billion of inherited debt and ensuring the new authority is ready for Vesting Day – remain unaddressed, and councillors are still largely in the dark about the administration’s intentions.

“I understand why many people in Spelthorne feel strongly about their Middlesex heritage, but Spelthorne is one of six council areas that will form the new authority, and its name must represent everyone.

“West Surrey does exactly what it says on the tin.

“By contrast, the proposed alternative is cumbersome and is being advanced without first seeking the consent of the residents it would represent. Rather than bringing people together, it risks creating division from day one.”

“In my view, it is outrageous that the Liberal Democrats are prioritising rebranding over building a council that is financially secure, well run and focused on delivering for residents.”

East Surrey Council has no plans to change its name.

Chris Caulfield Local Democracy Reporter

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