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

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Crime and Safety Round-Up: April and May 2026

5 June 2026



April and May proved to be unusually busy months for Surrey Police and community safety partners in Epsom and Ewell, with a mixture of high-profile investigations, anti-social behaviour enforcement, retail crime initiatives and public engagement events.

The most significant policing story of the period centred on a reported serious sexual assault in Epsom during the early hours of 11 April. Surrey Police launched a major investigation following a report that a woman in her twenties had been assaulted after leaving a town centre nightclub. Extensive enquiries were carried out, including CCTV examination, witness interviews, forensic work and house-to-house enquiries. By mid-April, Assistant Chief Constable Sarah Grahame stated that investigators had not found evidence to support the offence as originally reported, although enquiries remained ongoing. The case attracted national media attention and prompted public demonstrations in Epsom town centre. Surrey Police repeatedly appealed for witnesses and urged the public not to speculate while investigations continued. (The Guardian)

The incident also led to a substantial police presence in the town as officers dealt with protests and concerns regarding public disorder. Local community leaders and elected representatives called for calm and urged residents to allow the investigation to proceed without interference. (The Guardian)

Away from the headlines, Surrey Police continued its borough-wide campaign against anti-social behaviour and organised criminality under the “Safer Epsom and Ewell” initiative launched earlier this year. The partnership between Surrey Police and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has focused on tackling anti-social behaviour, serious organised crime and repeat offending in known hotspot locations. (Epsom and Ewell Borough Council)

Police teams also continued operations targeting nuisance and criminal use of motorcycles. According to local policing priorities published during the spring, officers have been using specialist teams, covert tactics, anti-social behaviour powers and multi-agency interventions to tackle riders involved in criminality and public nuisance. The strategy includes cooperation with housing providers and the use of borough-wide Public Space Protection Order powers. (Surrey Police)

Retail crime remained a major priority throughout April and May. Surrey Police’s Epsom Safer Neighbourhood Team reported that its zero-tolerance approach to shoplifting and offences against retailers was continuing to produce results. The initiative includes rapid investigation of known offenders, direct cooperation with retailers and remote CCTV operators, and proactive arrests aimed at reducing repeat offending in the town centre. (Surrey Police)

The wider “Safer Epsom and Ewell” operation reported notable results during the spring period. Police indicated that the partnership had led to more than 150 arrests, over 90 charges and the closure of ten county-lines drug networks, highlighting the continuing focus on organised criminal activity affecting local communities. (Facebook)

Community engagement remained a significant feature of local policing. Officers held a series of “Meet the Beat” events during April and May, including sessions in Epsom town centre, Ruxley Lane and at Epsom Hospital, giving residents opportunities to discuss local concerns directly with neighbourhood officers. Police also conducted public engagement work connected with violence against women and girls in the Ashley Centre area. (Surrey Police)

Latest published neighbourhood crime statistics continue to show violence and sexual offences, shoplifting and anti-social behaviour among the most frequently reported categories in parts of the borough. In Epsom & Ewell East, violence and sexual offences and shoplifting remained the most commonly recorded offences during March, the latest month for which detailed neighbourhood figures are available. (Police.uk)

Residents wishing to report crime can contact Surrey Police via 101 for non-emergencies or 999 in an emergency. Information can also be passed anonymously through Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

The Epsom and Ewell Times will continue to monitor local crime trends, policing initiatives and community safety developments throughout the summer.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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University of Surrey Staff Member Seriously Injured in Alleged Crossbow Attack

5 June 2026



A member of staff at the University of Surrey has been seriously injured following an incident on the University's Manor Park campus in Guildford.

The University confirmed that the incident occurred at approximately 9.50am on Thursday morning. Surrey Police attended the scene and arrested a man shortly afterwards.

In a statement provided to the Epsom and Ewell Times, a University spokesperson said:

"At approximately 9.50 am this morning, an incident took place on our Manor Park campus. Police attended and a man was arrested. A member of our campus safety team was seriously injured and is receiving medical care. The police are not looking for anyone else in connection with this incident. Surrey Police are leading the investigation and we are giving them our full support."

Subsequent statements issued by Surrey Police and national media reports indicate that the injured man, who is in his 50s, is a member of the University's campus safety team. He was taken to hospital with serious injuries following what police describe as a crossbow shooting. A 21-year-old former University of Surrey student was arrested at the scene on suspicion of attempted murder and remains in police custody.

Chief Superintendent Jon Groenen of Surrey Police said officers were not seeking anyone else in connection with the incident and that a full investigation is under way. Police have appealed for witnesses or anyone with relevant information to come forward.

The incident took place at the University's Manor Park campus, which includes student accommodation, teaching facilities and the Surrey Sports Park. Despite a significant emergency services presence, the University campus remained open during the police response.

The condition of the injured staff member has not been updated beyond police confirming that his injuries are serious. The University has said it is providing full support to the police investigation.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Surrey Police quoting reference PR/45260065706 or to contact Crimestoppers anonymously.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Updated release from Surrey University: *We have been informed that our colleague is now in a stable condition and our entire community is relieved to hear this news. We wish him a full and speedy recovery.*

"We also want to take this opportunity to thank our Campus Safety team. They responded with professionalism and courage to this incident, and their commitment to keeping this community safe is something we are deeply proud of. Our thoughts are with all of them

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Historic 1848 Epsom Racecourse Plan Saved Through Major Conservation Project

5 June 2026

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A remarkable hand-coloured plan of Epsom Racecourse dating from 1848 has been rescued from severe deterioration following an extensive conservation project.

The historic document, which provides a detailed record of the racecourse in the mid-19th century, had reached a fragile state. Conservators warned that without intervention valuable information about the history and development of the course could have been lost forever.

A Race Against Time

The plan was prioritised for treatment because of its worsening condition and the fact that much of its detail had become obscured beneath a darkened varnish layer.

Conservators found the document had suffered from multiple forms of damage over the years.

The paper itself was made from machine-produced wood pulp, which is naturally acidic and becomes increasingly brittle as the fibres deteriorate. At some point the plan had been mounted on a linen backing using starch paste, but the paper had begun separating from the fabric. In places, fragments had broken away altogether.

Evidence also suggested the document had previously been stored in damp conditions, leaving mould staining across parts of the surface.

Further damage had been caused by the way the map had originally been displayed. Wooden poles had been attached using nails driven through the paper, leaving rust stains and tears, particularly along the upper edge.

Perhaps most significantly, the entire plan had been coated in a thick glossy varnish which had darkened dramatically over time, concealing much of the image beneath.

Delicate Conservation Work

The first stage of treatment involved removing the remaining wooden pole to prevent further damage during handling.

Conservators then carefully detached the mould-stained linen backing before carrying out extensive surface cleaning on both sides of the document. Throughout the process the plan was supported on woven polyester sheeting to ensure that loose fragments remained safely in place.

Attention then turned to the dark varnish coating.

Specialist tests were undertaken using a range of solvents to identify the safest and most effective method of removal. Once a suitable solvent had been selected, conservators worked section by section to lift the varnish without harming the original inks and pigments.

Using a Japanese paper barrier and a solvent gel, the varnish was gradually drawn away from the surface and transferred onto the paper layer.

The process was compared by conservators to waxing, with the Japanese paper peeled away carrying the dissolved varnish with it.

As the treatment progressed, details hidden for decades began to reappear.

Although some staining remained embedded deep within the paper fibres, the plan’s image and written information became visible once again, making the document accessible for the first time in many years.

Washing and Stabilisation

Following varnish removal, the plan underwent a careful washing process designed to remove any remaining residues.

Once the rinse water ran clear, the paper was treated with a mild alkaline solution to neutralise acidity and slow future deterioration.

The document was then lined with a specially selected Japanese paper backing. Favoured by conservators for its purity, flexibility and exceptional strength, Japanese paper provides long-term support while remaining lightweight and unobtrusive.

After several days of drying, missing sections of the original document were filled using handmade paper closely matched in tone and thickness.

Conservators emphasised that the work followed established conservation principles rather than restoration. Repairs remain visible and distinguishable from the original material, ensuring future researchers can identify what is original and what has been added.

All treatments are reversible, with wheat starch paste used as the adhesive. Bleaching treatments, which can brighten

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paper but may accelerate deterioration over time, were deliberately avoided.

Preserved for Future Generations

Once fully dried, trimmed and stabilised, the restored plan was placed within an archival polyester sleeve and transferred to environmentally controlled strongroom storage.

The conservation team believes that without intervention the plan would have continued to darken, weaken and eventually disintegrate.

Instead, this important piece of Epsom's racing heritage has been secured for future generations, preserving a unique snapshot of the racecourse as it appeared nearly 180 years ago.

The conservation project not only saved the physical document but also revealed historical information that had been hidden beneath layers of damage and ageing for many decades.

Surrey County Council– History Centre

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

For more news from Surrey History Centre READ HERE

Epsom Racecourse: Preview and Tips for Derby Festival Oaks Day on Friday

5 June 2026



The first day of the eagerly anticipated Derby Festival is finally here. Today's eight-race card has the Group One Oaks as the headline race, supported by the Listed Surrey Stakes, the Group Three Diomed Stakes, the Woodcote Stakes, Nifty 50 handicap and three further handicaps.

Read on for a preview of and tips for the Epsom card, brought to you by BOYLE Sports, who provide all ***horse racing odds****.*

The action kicks off with the five-furlong Dash Handicap for two-year-olds (13.30). Alfa Duplicate, U S S Charleston and Wedonttelllies were all winners last time out, with U S S Charleston looking possibly the most likely to repeat the form, given five pounds by his rider. There is no guarantee that he will handle this track, though, therefore Coyy might be worth thinking about. Charmanfourtimes could go well having come down four pounds, while Naana's Shadow has an eye-catching booking in Oisin Murphy.

Next is the Woodcote Stakes; a six-furlong race for two-year-olds (14.05). Plenty of the runners have already won a race, and this should be an exciting watch. Charlie Hills' El Lambo won his race by the biggest margin – over four lengths – but has a tricky draw in 11. Rlasthope is worthy of some each-way interest, while George Boughey's Havana Flash is an interesting debutant. WIld Terrain impressed on winning debut at Hamilton, and again the booking of Oisin Murphy is a potential indicator.

Race three is the extended mile Group Three Diomed Stakes (14.40). Karl Burke's Boiling Point tops the ratings and won last time out in Listed company at Goodwood recently. He should handle this track well and is a serious contender. Seagulls Eleven equally should go well around Epsom and can handle some rain too. Chancellor has limited form on turf but won well on his debut on soft ground at Doncaster, so he could outrun his odds.

The Nifty 50 Handicap follows, run over 10 furlongs (15.15). Roger Varian's Sallaal returned to action nicely over course and distance in April, but he is drawn wide here. Respond's new mark needs to be proven today, whereas Alpha Crucis' looks appealing. Let's Dream steps up in class here and could have an each-way chance after a win at Chester in May.

In the afternoon's feature race, the mile and a half Group One Oaks (16.00), Coolmore's Amelia Earheart looks the likely favourite after winning the Cheshire Oaks at Chester in May. Charlie Johnston's Venetian Lace tops the ratings and ran significantly better than expected in the 1,000 Guineas, finishing third, and she could run another solid race here. She is probably better on firmer ground, though. Cameo can go on softer ground, as can Thundering On, who could be worth thinking about.

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An extended mile handicap is next (16.40). Celeborn is a useful sort who could be of interest in first-time cheekpieces after a midfield finish last time, while Stem can act on any ground and stays on a competitive enough mark to get involved here. It's worth looking out for Man Of La Mancha, while Walsingham could prove to be overpriced for David O'Meara.

Second to last is the Listed Surrey Stakes, run over seven furlongs (17.15). This looks a reasonably open race, but Joseph O'Brien's Irish raider Greek Mythology could be an interesting one to side with. He has won on the all-weather and is still relatively unexposed on turd, but has placed on both starts on that surface so far.

Finally, racing concludes with a seven-furlong handicap (17.50). Zarathos seeks a hat-trick, but looks unlikely here. Course and distance winner Rhoscolyn is now down to an attractive mark and warrants serious thought, while Colombier is entitled to improve on his seasonal reappearance at Ascot.

Epsom selections – Friday:

13.30 – Coyy

14.05 – Wild Terrain

14.40 – Boiling Point

15.15 – Alpha Crucis

16.00 – Thundering On

16.40 – Stem e/w

17.15 – Greek Mythology

17.50 – Rhoscolyn

Horses racing Image: Credit Paul. CC BY 2.0

Hopes and thanks of a new Councillor in Epsom

5 June 2026



Roy Deadman Reflects on Election and the Road Ahead

Dear Editor,

I am writing with a full heart and a great deal of gratitude following my election as councillor for the Epsom Town & Downs ward, and to give a short update on the progress and challenges ahead. To every resident who placed their trust in me, thank you. It means more than I can properly put into words.

Over the past six months of canvassing, I had the privilege of hundreds of conversations on doorsteps right across the ward. Those conversations were the most valuable part of the entire campaign. Residents shared their personal stories and experiences with me, from the frustration of persistent potholes and the importance of protecting our precious green spaces, to concerns around local planning decisions.

I heard about the need for safer, better-lit walkways that properly connect our town, and the challenges facing families trying to access local SEND support. Public transport came up repeatedly, with many residents, particularly those in Langley Vale, calling for more frequent and better-connected services. Road safety and speeding through residential streets was a consistent theme, as were concerns about anti-social behaviour, e-scooters, and inconsiderate moped parking.

The Chalk Pit and the importance of holding firm on the agreements in place was raised by a number of residents, and I want to assure you that this remains very much on my radar. People also spoke passionately about maintaining funding for the brilliant local groups and organisations that already make Epsom and Ewell such a great place to live, and that support must continue as we navigate the significant changes ahead.

Now that the election is over, I want to be very clear: staying connected to this community is not optional, it is essential. In due course my fellow councillors and I will be arranging local meetups, and we will be back out on the doorstep listening and asking for feedback. Representing this ward is a privilege, and we intend to earn that trust every single day.

I want to give a very special thank you to Helen Maguire and her entire team. Their support throughout this campaign was extraordinary. Helen ran a professional, values-driven campaign and set a standard that we will all carry with us into our roles as councillors.

What made it particularly special was that Helen did not just support from a distance. She was out canvassing alongside us in the evenings and at weekends, making sure that as a team we were genuinely listening to residents and placing their

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views at the centre of everything we do. The trust she placed in us as candidates, and now as councillors, was humbling and deeply motivating.

I also want to thank the incredible volunteers who delivered thousands of leaflets, supported our canvassing, showed up to events, and were there at the end of some very long evenings knocking on doors, sometimes with a well-earned pint to follow. Your dedication was the backbone of this campaign.

And to my fellow Liberal Democrat candidates, now councillors, I want to say how proud I am to have stood alongside each of you. Over these months, we have built something genuinely special, a team bound together by trust, hard work, shared values, mutual respect, and a real desire to do what is right for the communities we all call home. We have also, crucially, managed to make each other smile along the way.

Looking ahead, we face significant challenges. By 31 March 2027, we will see the formation of the East Surrey Unitary Council, as Surrey County Council is divided into two new authorities, East and West, with the borough and district councils merging into the new East Council. As Shadow Councillors, we must ensure that on vesting day, local services continue without disruption. The residents of Epsom and Ewell should feel nothing but continuity and, in time, genuine improvement.

I also want us to recognise the officers, the dedicated employees across the councils involved in this transition. Their combined skills and experience will be absolutely vital to the success of the new Unitary Council, and we must support and value them throughout this process.

I am pleased to share that I will be sitting on the East Surrey Authority Employment Committee, where I hope to play a constructive role in making this transition work well for everyone.

The work has already begun in earnest. There have been local discussions and planning meetings with the Liberal Democrat Epsom and Ewell team, as well as wider meetings involving all 40 Liberal Democrat councillors representing East Surrey, laying the groundwork and ensuring we fully understand the challenges ahead.

We recently held a full councillor induction day, where I had the pleasure of meeting colleagues across all parties who will help form this new team. I was proud to be present at the first inaugural full Shadow East Surrey Council meeting, where we elected senior roles, cabinet positions and committee members, building the structures we need to move forward at pace.

The mix of skills, different backgrounds and wealth of experience amongst the shadow councillors has put us in a strong starting position to deliver on our objectives.

This is also, I believe, a unique opportunity. A fresh start means we can shape how this new council works, how it manages its budget, and how it delivers services. I am determined that we bring real efficiencies, hold outsourced contractors firmly to account against their contractual obligations, and negotiate future contracts that deliver genuine value for our residents.

Until midnight on 31 March 2027 we will be Shadow Councillors focusing on what I have outlined above. Until then we will support, where possible, the current councillors of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and continue to listen to residents in preparation for the handover of responsibility to East Surrey.

Finally, thank you to my family and friends. The extra childcare, school runs, family dinners missed, and the many hugs when I needed them most — without that steadfast support, the campaign would have been so much harder. I am deeply grateful.

I look forward to getting to work for Epsom Town & Downs. This is just the beginning.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Roy Deadman
Epsom Town & Downs Ward

East Surrey Unitary Council

Late hour Epsom kebab decision gets a grilling

5 June 2026



Fans of late-night burgers, kebabs, and wraps are in for a treat after the Epsom Grill was given permission to extend its opening hours. The hot food takeaway in Waterloo Road, between High Street and Epsom Railway Station, can currently

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keep cooking until 2am to close at 2:30am at weekends. On Monday to Thursday it can serve until 1am, and on Sundays this is brought back to midnight.

Now, following a January licensing application that granted the extension, and a 'Pythonesque' planning meeting where Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillors almost voted against its own decision – those hours are to be extended.

The grill originally applied to allow service and closure until 4am, with all remaining days unchanged, but this was revised to 3am on weekends, subject to a condition requiring security door staff until 3:30am.

It then went to planning to be confirmed.

Councillor **Robert Leach** (Residents Associations of Epsom and Ewell: Nonsuch Ward) told the May, Thursday 28 planning committee. "This area is next to a railway station that has two lines going up to London. Every few minutes 300 tons of metal storms through Epsom station creating socking great sound and we're worried about the disturbance from a few people sitting in a grill eating burgers? I mean this is something straight out of Monty Python. I don't see why we have any restrictions on any hours at all.

"Frankly, if someone wants to eat a burger at 3 o'clock in the morning and Epsom Grill is prepared to stay open and cook them, I mean, why should anybody stop them?"

The meeting, and subsequent vote, went back and forth; between those who thought the matter had already been decided at licensing and that the planning decision was a formality, and those who wanted to reopen the debate.

Cllr **Jan Mason** (Residents Associations of Epsom and Ewell: Ruxley Ward) said: "It's far too late, three. I think what the police are saying must be from past experience and my own experience of it all. I feel that that time is far too late, they'll all be as drunk as lords. They will cook to three, it wont be four until they get out and people live here. They live in flats in Station Approach.

"Surely they want a decent night's sleep and I think four o'clock is ridiculous. So as far as I'm concerned, I agree with the police."

Opponents pushed to reject the plan, only for the motion to fail by one vote.

It left the officer recommendation to approve as the sole option remaining – which only passed after the chair's deciding vote.

Cllr **James Lawrence** (Independents Group: College Ward) said: "We're at risk of duplicating the debates that happened at licensing and came to a decision."

He added: "We have case law in front of us that says…you need to have a really good reason why we are going go against a decision that we just made at our licensing (committee) and why you think it will hold up against a judge's decision that's just been made a few months ago."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

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Power changes. Our duty does not.

5 June 2026

One of the easier occupations in local journalism is to be a cheerleader. Another is to be a partisan attack dog. Epsom and Ewell Times intends to be neither.

Our role is simpler and harder: to report fearlessly, scrutinise those who exercise power, publish differing viewpoints, correct errors where necessary, and ask awkward questions whoever happens to occupy the seats of authority.

Readers familiar with our record know this is not a new posture adopted for convenience.

Over recent years, EET has carried extensive and often critical reporting concerning the record of the Residents' Association administration at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

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We reported searchingly on the Local Plan controversy — including questions surrounding process, oversight, governance and public confidence in decision-making.

We reported vigorously on the Bourne Hall redevelopment dispute, including clashes between councillors, scrutiny concerns, executive decisions and the wider debate about transparency and democratic accountability.

We covered controversy surrounding Rainbow Leisure Centre and wider issues of public assets, local services and decision-making priorities.

Those reports did not always please those holding office. That is not the point. The point is that power — especially long-established power — deserves examination.

Political circumstances in Epsom and Surrey are now changing rapidly.

The Residents' Association's once dominant electoral position has weakened dramatically. Liberal Democrats are increasingly influential in both Epsom and Ewell and the emerging East Surrey structures.

Some might therefore expect a local newspaper to change its tone, soften its scrutiny, or discover fresh loyalties.

They should not.

Our reporting has already shown this.

We reported concerns surrounding attempts to restrict candidate engagement with the press during the recent election period — what became known publicly as the "gagging order" controversy.

More recently, we examined the decisive leadership vote at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council in which two Liberal Democrat votes helped retain the incumbent leadership by a single vote. In doing so, we put questions directly to Liberal Democrat councillor Julian Freeman regarding his stated reasons for supporting the incumbent leader and the consistency of those reasons with aspects of his own political history.

That is not anti-Liberal Democrat reporting. Nor was previous scrutiny anti-Residents' Association reporting.

It is journalism.

There is a distinction.

Political parties, independents, residents' groups and elected personalities all understandably wish to advance narratives favourable to themselves. Newspapers have a different obligation.

We are not an extension of any political campaign, administration, opposition group, business interest or activist faction.

We are a local, community-based, not-for-profit news organisation. Our loyalty is to evidence, public interest and readers.

That means some reports will discomfort the Residents' Association. Others will discomfort Liberal Democrats, Conservatives, independents, campaigners, officials, developers, pressure groups — and occasionally ourselves.

So be it.

A healthy local democracy requires neither compliant journalism nor selective scrutiny reserved for yesterday's establishment while today's rising powers enjoy indulgence.

Power changes hands.

The duty to hold it to account does not.

LibDem vote kept RA's Dalton in power — but Cllr Freeman faces questions over his own political past

5 June 2026



The two Liberal Democrat councillors at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council appear to have played the decisive role in keeping Residents' Association leader Cllr **Hannah Dalton** in her Council leadership role despite the dramatic collapse of the RA's electoral position in the new East Surrey Unitary Council elections.

At the Borough Council's annual meeting, Dalton survived a leadership challenge from former Residents' Association councillor, now Independent, **Alex Coley**, by the narrowest possible margin — **15 votes to 14**.

The arithmetic of the vote suggests that at least two RA councillors backed Coley against their own group leader. Equally

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significant, had just one of the two Liberal Democrat councillors voted with the wider opposition bloc, Coley would have been elected leader.

The Liberal Democrat councillors, College Ward councillor **Julian Freeman** and Stamford Ward councillor **Alison Kelly**, backed Dalton.

Their decision has attracted attention because the Residents' Association's dominant local position has been severely weakened following the East Surrey Unitary Council elections, in which the RA was effectively wiped out, retaining only two successful candidates.

Asked by Epsom and Ewell Times why he supported Dalton, Cllr Freeman said he objected to politicians leaving the group under whose banner they were elected.

He stated: *"I do not support people who are elected as a representative of one political group and then decide to turn their back on those that voted for them. This is something that is happening with increasing regularity on the council at present."*

However, that explanation prompted questions about Freeman's own political history.

Material reviewed by Epsom and Ewell Times records that in 2006, while a councillor in the London Borough of Sutton, Freeman resigned from the Liberal Democrat group and sat as an Independent councillor. A published council decision notice recorded: *"Resolved: To note that Councillor Julian Freeman has resigned as a member of the Liberal Democrat Group and will sit as an Independent Councillor."*

When asked to explain the apparent inconsistency, Freeman disputed the comparison.

He replied that there was an "important distinction", stating: *"I was not approved as a candidate at the time due to an internal dispute with a ward colleague and stood as an independent at the following election. At no point did I willingly decide to change parties as this was not my decision."* He added: *"Your facts are wrong as I did not leave during my term of office."*

After EET provided him with evidence of the Sutton council record showing him resigning from the Liberal Democrat group and continuing as an Independent councillor, Freeman refined his position, replying: *"You can see that this was towards the end of my term of office and for just one full council meeting following deselection as a future candidate."*

Freeman also told EET that the decision to support Dalton was taken jointly between himself and Cllr Kelly. Kelly separately confirmed that account, stating that the leadership vote position followed discussions between the two councillors.

In a further explanation of his thinking, Freeman said he felt *"some sympathy for Hannah (Dalton) and Clive (Woodbridge) in losing their seats"* and argued that removing Dalton with just ten months left as leader would amount to *"rubbing salt in the wound and would achieve nothing of substance."*

The narrow vote leaves unresolved questions about the future direction of politics at EEBC. Since the last Borough Elections there have been seven councillors who have changed their party or group affiliation. The Residents Association losing five councillors and the Liberal Democrats two out of four and those two both having been leaders of the LibDem Group on the Council.

Dalton remains leader — but only just. The voting numbers suggest a council chamber in which party loyalties and traditional group boundaries are under strain, with dissension inside the Residents' Association itself and two Liberal Democrat votes proving decisive to the survival of an administration whose wider electoral base has been sharply diminished.

Sam Jones – Reporter

Fresh Local Plan row as residents challenge legality of latest Epsom and Ewell consultation

5 June 2026



A fresh dispute has erupted over Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's embattled Local Plan process after residents challenged the constitutional validity of the council's latest planning consultation.

The row follows an email issued by the council's Planning Policy Team reminding residents that consultation remains open until 15 June on "Additional Documents Submitted by the Council during the Local Plan Examination", ahead of a further examination hearing scheduled for 2 July at Epsom Town Hall.

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The consultation concerns documents submitted during the government inspector's examination of the borough's long-running Local Plan — a process that has already generated years of political controversy, debate over Green Belt development, and repeated questions about governance and committee oversight.

In one of a number of near-identical emails reportedly circulated by concerned residents to councillors and senior officers, resident Philip Brown argued that the current consultation "appears to have been launched in breach of the council's constitution" and therefore could not be regarded as valid.

Mr Brown's complaint centres on the role of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC), the council committee whose constitutional terms of reference include responsibility to "consider and approve" Local Plan documents for public consultation. According to the resident correspondence, there is no evidence in the published minutes of LPPC meetings in late 2025 and early 2026 that the seven consultation documents had been reviewed and approved by the committee before the consultation was launched.

The email goes further, alleging that at the LPPC meeting of 10 March 2026, "the Chair explicitly declined a request to allow the committee to review the Local Plan documents".

On that basis, the resident contends that "the current consultation appears not to be constitutionally compliant and is therefore invalid", adding that it would be "both inappropriate and pointless for consultees to comment on an invalid consultation". The email asks the council to arrange for the documents to be considered by LPPC and then to issue what it terms a "constitutionally-compliant consultation".

The issue touches on themes previously explored by the *Epsom and Ewell Times* during coverage of the borough's Local Plan disputes.

The Local Plan has divided opinion sharply over housing targets, Green Belt release, infrastructure pressures and the extent of member oversight of the process. Recent EET reporting on the LPPC proceedings highlighted tensions over whether councillors were being afforded sufficient opportunity to scrutinise crucial planning material and the degree to which committee oversight was shaping the evolving plan.

The controversy arrives against a backdrop of political transition. Following local government reorganisation, powers will ultimately pass to the new East Surrey Council in 2027, although Epsom & Ewell Borough Council remains the planning authority for the present Local Plan process.

Among those responding to the resident correspondence was David Buxton OBE, Liberal Democrat Shadow Councillor for Epsom West and Shadow Cabinet Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health on East Surrey Council.

Cllr Buxton stated that he was not involved in the current EEBC Local Plan process and therefore could not determine whether the consultation complies with the borough council's constitutional requirements, saying those matters are for "the Borough Council, its officers and, where necessary, independent legal advice".

However, he described the issues raised as "important matters" and said he would encourage relevant officers "to provide clarification so that residents can have confidence in the process and in any representations submitted".

Cllr Buxton also cautioned elected members involved in future Local Plan deliberations against prejudging specific proposals, saying councillors should remain able to consider evidence, hear residents' views and participate fully in future decision-making processes.

Restating the Liberal Democrats' previously expressed planning position, he said development should prioritise brownfield sites first, "underused land second", and only consider Green Belt land "as a last resort", adding: "no GP provision, no infrastructure, no development."

The latest consultation was initiated following a request by the government-appointed planning inspector in a letter dated 23 April 2026, according to the residents' correspondence.

EEBC has advised that interested members of the public may attend the further examination hearing on 2 July as observers. Those wishing actively to participate must indicate this in their consultation response and notify the Programme Officer before the consultation closes.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

Epsom and Ewell Local Plan next phase

Did Epsom and Ewell councillors approve more Green Belt release?

Persand parses the Local Plan process in Epsom

Next phase in the journey of the Epsom and Ewell Local Plan announced

Epsom and Ewell Local Plan tensions surface as committee debate curtailed by chair

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Epsom & Ewell's Council responds to Local Plan concerns

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Epsom and Ewell Local Plan next phase

5 June 2026





We are contacting you to remind you about a Planning Policy consultation being carried out by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council on Additional Documents Submitted by the Council during the Local Plan Examination. The consultation will close at 23:59pm on Monday 15 June 2026.Thank you to those that have responded to our consultation already.

The consultation, additional documents and response form can be accessed on our consultation portal using the link below:https://epsom-ewell.inconsult.uk/localplan.additionaldocuments

Reference copies of the consultation documents along with copies of the response forms are available from the Town Hall and borough Libraries during opening hours.

If you have any questions about the consultation, or do not wish to receive future communications on planning policy consultations in the borough, please contact a member of the planning policy team using the methods below:Email: localplan@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

Phone: 01372 732000Examination

Hearing:

Please note that a further Examination Hearing will be held on Thursday 2 July 2026 and will commence at 09:30am at:

Epsom Town Hall

The Parade

Epsom

Surrey

KT18 5BY

The Hearing can be attended by interested members of the public who wish to observe proceedings. Friday 3 July 2026 is a Reserve Day, if required. If you wish to participate in the Hearing you need to indicate this in your response to the consultation and confirm your request to attend with the Programme Officer by the close of the consultation by emailing: bankssolutionsuk@gmail.com.

Further information on the additional Hearing will be published on our Examination webpage:

Local Plan Examination | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

The Planning Policy Team

Epsom Councillor’s disclosure claims Bourne out on review

5 June 2026



The future of Bourne Hall and its museum has become one of the most contentious issues in Epsom & Ewell local politics in recent months. Debate has ranged from ambitious proposals for the landmark “UFO-shaped” building’s revival to sharp disagreements over governance, transparency and access to information. Earlier this year, councillors on the Community & Wellbeing Committee challenged elements of the Council’s approach, while a decision connected with the matter was later suspended by the Council’s Chief Executive acting in her statutory capacity. Central to the dispute has been a service review of Bourne Hall Museum, parts of which were initially withheld from councillors and the public.

In the following letter, Independent councillor Alex Coley sets out his view following a review and the subsequent

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disclosure of much of the report's contents.

A fuller background is provided in the following Epsom and Ewell Times reports:

Bourne Hall row escalates as Chief Executive suspends councillors' decision

Ewell's Bourne Hall plans knocked back by scrutiny

Independent view of Ewell's Bourne Hall

Ewell's "UFO" shaped Bourne Hall to take off anew

Letter to the Editor — Cllr Alex Coley

Dear Editor,

Amidst all the excitement of the Annual Council meeting on Tuesday 26 May, I received the outcome of an internal review into the FOI request that I submitted for the Service Review of Bourne Hall Museum at the beginning of February.

We should be very grateful to the service review author for the depth of understanding and breadth of appreciation for the questions they were asked to explore. This document is absolutely fundamental for elected members to deliberate the future of the museum. It should never have been withheld.

Comparing the redacted and unredacted versions side by side, it becomes apparent that an almost paranoid sensitivity to potential embarrassment has played a part in non-disclosure.

Unredacted sections describe the absence of any visitor data or visitor research, siloed working at EEBC, and the lack of structured objectives for the museum. Yet all these were laid bare in the LGA Cultural Peer Challenge and disclosed in full.

Recognising and acknowledging these issues are crucial to assuring councillors that the issues are understood sufficiently and that an injection of new funding will be used appropriately and effectively. This cannot be achieved behind a veil of secrecy. Trust must be earned rather than demanded.

From the original FOI request to the delayed response took 109 days — almost four months. The normal expectation is 20 days. The initial response was a mish-mash of erroneous case law and political deflection disguised by the application of Section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act — "to prejudice commercial interests".

I had to make a formal complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office when our Council failed to conduct an internal review within 40 days. The resulting correspondence makes it clear that it was ICO intervention which led to the information being disclosed properly.

Subsequently, the Council has disclosed most of the information unredacted.

However, the belated introduction of Section 36 of FOI in the response is an intriguing piece of code-switching. This relates to the "effective conduct of public affairs" and was not used in the original response. In layman's terms, this concerns the ability of council officers to give free and frank advice.

Section 36 was engaged as a reason not to disclose advice given by a consultant to council officers. While I agree that it is important for such advice to be given freely, the need to do so openly, honestly and transparently is critical when spending public money — not least to the decision-makers who are accountable for public expenditure.

Fortunately, with ICO involvement, a strong public interest has been shown to outweigh concerns.

For those who explore the response in full, you will note that the respondent decides: "the majority of the report contains high-level, non-controversial analysis and recommendations that do not meet the threshold of demonstrating a likelihood of prejudice."

Well, hurray!

I must conclude that significant effort and energy is being expended by both officers and councillors in battles over secrecy. This is a waste of public money and an affront to the representation of electors. Councillors should not have to become investigative journalists to know what is going on in the organisation they have been appointed to run.

Transparency is significantly better value for money and, as the unredacted contents of the service review reveal, a far better means for deciding how public money should be spent in future. Democracy should be done and seen to be done.

I hoped that this item would be brought back to the Community & Wellbeing Committee to be determined in the manner it always should have been — openly and with all the information available.

However, recent correspondence to councillors on Thursday 28 May seems disconnected from the FOI request. It refers to a Special Community & Wellbeing Committee on 9 June and states:

"Following the invitation to revisit the non-inclusion of the Bourne Hall Service Review in the previous committee papers, it is the decision of the Council's Proper Officer for access to information that the decision will not be overturned."

The missive goes on to say:

"However, in order to move this item forward, the Council's Proper Officer proposes to limit access to the Bourne Hall Service Review to the voting members of the Community & Wellbeing Committee that shall be in attendance at the 9 June special meeting and she will be present to discuss why the information will remain restricted."

Finally, the message concludes:

"Please note that no photographs or copies of the exempt document are permitted to be taken."

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Readers of a certain vintage may recall sitcoms of the 1970s and 1980s — Dad's Army, 'Allo 'Allo and, of course, Yes Minister. What a pity the writers never delved deeper into local government. There is a richness of material for satire and farce that is unmatched.

Perhaps we should reach for some of that Sir Humphrey comedy wisdom:

"If the right people don't have power, do you know what happens? The wrong people get it. Politicians, councillors, ordinary voters!"

As we say in Epsom & Ewell: None Such.

Alex Coley
Independent Councillor – Ruxley

From hospital setback to global sales: Epsom entrepreneur's own brand reaches 26 countries

5 June 2026



An Epsom woman who says she left her job at a local hospital after experiencing workplace difficulties has turned an unexpected hobby into an award-recognised business exporting handmade products to customers in 26 countries.

Miriam Faragalla, Chief Executive and Co-Founder of Fragranced With Love Limited, runs the business from her home in Epsom, producing handmade soaps, candles and wax melts marketed as luxury personal and home fragrance products.

The business, founded in May 2024, has recently achieved a string of milestones, including becoming a finalist in the 2026 Small Business Awards UK, winning entrepreneur Theo Paphitis' Small Business Sunday (SBS) award scheme, expanding into retail partnerships, and developing an international customer base.

Faragalla told the Epsom and Ewell Times that the company arose from difficult personal circumstances.

She said: "I started this venture completely by accident in May 2024. Prior to this, I was working as an HR Advisor and experienced severe workplace bullying that ultimately forced me to resign."

"Rather than letting that traumatic experience defeat me, I channelled my pain and energy into building my own brand."

Operating from a home workshop in Epsom, Fragranced With Love manufactures a range of scented soaps, candles and wax melts, with an emphasis on handmade production, fragrance combinations and gift presentation.

According to the company's website, the brand describes itself as offering "luxury" handmade products created with careful attention to ingredients, fragrance and aesthetic design, aiming to provide "highly scented" home and personal care products.

One of the company's recent achievements came in May 2026 when it was selected as a winner in Theo Paphitis' Small Business Sunday initiative, a scheme founded by the former *Dragon's Den* investor to promote small businesses through social media and business networking.

The business has also been named a finalist in the 2026 Small Business Awards UK in the "Best Small Business" category, with winners due to be announced later this year.

Faragalla said the company now dispatches products internationally to 26 countries and has secured its first physical retail supply agreements.

Those include arrangements with Ruxley Pharmacy in Surrey and OZA Chemist in Fulham Broadway.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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A motion in note or a note in motion?

5 June 2026



Dear Editor,

Thank you as always for your coverage of last night’s council meeting.

You correctly report that the mayor refused to allow councillors to debate my motion on the constitution, falsely framing it as an attempt to change the constitution, and that I denied this.

As both councillors and the public were prevented by the mayor from even seeing the motion, I thought your readers might like to. It was not a motion to amend the constitution but to amend the recommendation in the report, to add two unarguable factual points. Both were framed as to “note”, meaning that no action was required.

Had they been allowed, councillors would have been invited to:

• Note that, while the constitution states at paragraph 2.1: “The Code of Conduct for councillors is available in Appendix 1 and the arrangements for making a complaint and dealing with complaints can be found in the council’s Operating Framework”, no such arrangements exist in the Operating Framework.

• Further note that while the live register of delegations and the Terms of Reference for the Full Council and other Council Committees, Sub-Committees, Advisory Panels and Joint Arrangements delegate to hearings panels the determination of complaints referred by an Investigating Officer regarding alleged breaches of the councillors’ Code of Conduct, neither document provides any authority for such panels to issue any sanction.

It was my intention to draw the attention of councillors and the public these deficiencies in the constitution that councillors were being asked to approve, but with no attempt to amend it, as claimed by the mayor.

To be fair to Cllr McIntyre, it was obvious that she was merely reading from a script given to her by the administration, probably by those who are responsible for ensuring that the constitution is fit for purpose and who have a vested interest in concealing its failings. It was her first meeting as mayor and we might hope that she will learn from the incident.

My mistake was not that I submitted the amendment to the recommendation “late”, as there was no requirement to submit it in advance, but that I submitted it in advance at all, giving the administration the opportunity to engage in procedural shenanigans. I will learn from this.

Of course, as Cllr Lawrence eloquently and movingly attested, the absence of a proper procedure for complaints against councillors has real world consequences. The administration has targeted a number of opposition councillors, including myself, with code of conduct complaints while shielding senior Residents Association councillors.

Finally, you are right that the underlying problem with the meeting was that many councillors regard a meeting where matters of such importance as the council’s constitution are considered as a purely “civic” event, and any discussion to be keeping them from the refreshments provided at council tax payers’ expense.

Cllr Chris Ames

Labour, Court Ward

Related report:

May’s heat infuses Epsom and Ewell Council Chamber with leadership closely contested

May’s heat infuses Epsom and Ewell Council Chamber with leadership closely contested

5 June 2026

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On one of the hottest days of the year, with councillors and guests in Epsom Town Hall using agenda papers as improvised fans, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council held what was in effect the beginning of its final chapter — the Annual Council meeting that will oversee the borough's last year before abolition under local government reorganisation.

The evening of 26th May combined civic ceremony, nostalgia, political tension and procedural wrangling, culminating in a knife-edge vote for Council leadership and a heated row over the Council's constitution.

Councillor **Lucy McIntyre** (RA) was elected Mayor for what will be the borough's final mayoral year, with veteran Independent councillor **Julie Morris** chosen as Deputy Mayor.

McIntyre, among the younger and longer-serving members of the chamber, described the appointment as "particularly special because this borough really has always been my home", speaking movingly of family ties, her late brothers, and the borough's impending disappearance into the new East Surrey Council.

"This will be the final mayoral year of Epsom and Ewell in its current form, as we know it," she said. "It makes it even more of an honour and a privilege to serve you all."

Her chosen charities include Fab for Epsom & Ewell, Girlguiding Epsom District and Sunnybank Trust, with ten principal events planned during the roughly ten months remaining before the borough's end. "The countdown has already begun," she told the chamber, "because after all, it's the final countdown — so let's make it unforgettable."

Outgoing Mayor Councillor **Robert Leach** offered a characteristically humorous farewell, reflecting on a year that took him from the Derby and Buckingham Palace to community groups, Ukrainian refugees, disability charities and opening Primark.

"It has been a great honour to be the mayor of the borough for the last year," he said. "This was a position I had not expected and… not one that I sought." He praised the borough's "more than 100 charities and voluntary groups", remarking that a mayoral visit "means so much to the people", and expressed hope that some civic role might survive local government reorganisation.

But the political temperature rose sharply when councillors turned to the appointment of Council Leader.

Councillor **Hannah Dalton** (RA), the incumbent leader, was nominated by Councillors **Liz Frost** and **Christine Cleveland**. Frost urged members to back continuity in the borough's final year.

"This… is going to be the last year of the council," she said. "It is really, really important that we all pull together… and leave the council in a good position."

Cleveland praised Dalton's work through "very turbulent times" in local government and added: "It would be really nice to end our time in Epsom with a female leader of the council as well."

The challenge came from Independent councillor **Alex Coley**, once a prominent Residents' Association figure before breaking away from the ruling group.

Nominating Coley, Councillor **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) launched a stinging critique of the outgoing year.

"Last year this council agreed strategic priorities," she said. "It's safe to say these did not go according to plan."

She referred to "a committee meeting where the leader of the council [was] absent from a vote to fund a strategic priority" and another where "an RA CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) bid was proposed and not voted through by the RA members."

"If the leader stays the same, these priorities will not be worth the paper they are written on," she argued. "We need a new leader… one who will deliver and work across all political groups… As long as this ship is still afloat, we must look after it. But it's time for a new captain."

The most striking intervention came from RA Councillor **Kim Spickett.**

Visibly framing her choice as a painful one, she revealed the intensity of lobbying behind the scenes.

"The choice today… has been very difficult for me," she said. "I've had a lot of calls, I've had a lot of messages, and I've had a lot of pressure put on me. I'm not happy about it. It's made me very sad."

Declaring pride in the borough and its people, she nevertheless backed Coley as the person to steer the authority through its closing months.

"We need the proven leadership of a councillor who's dedicated to delivery and puts outcomes first… somebody I'm proud to call my friend."

"Delivery is what we need to set this community up for success… and I believe Alex will deliver."

The vote that followed demonstrated just how finely balanced the chamber had become.

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Dalton survived — but only narrowly.

The official tally: **15 votes for Hannah Dalton, 14 for Alex Coley.**

Having retained the leadership by a single vote, Dalton struck a conciliatory note.

“Being leader is never easy, and you’re not going to take everybody with you all of the time,” she said. “I’d say the last year to 18 months has been the hardest it has ever been.”

She acknowledged the challenge of leading a Residents’ Association group that, she insisted, operates without a formal whip: “Whatever they do say, they do not have a political whip, and they discuss everything.”

In remarks that reflected the strains of both local government reorganisation and evident political divisions inside the chamber, she appealed for unity.

“We’ve got to deliver a lot. We need stability. We need to get to the end of next March in one piece, without ripping each other apart, or leaving this council in a really bad way.”

“We’ve been here for 90 years, we’ve done an incredible job together. Let’s keep it together, just for the last ten months.”

If the leadership contest exposed the chamber’s political fault-lines, the next item — approval of the Council’s constitution — produced a procedural clash that left tempers noticeably frayed in the overheated room.

Mayor McIntyre announced that a late proposal concerning the constitution would not be accepted, ruling that substantive constitutional changes required proper routing through the Standards and Constitution Committee, officers, or a formal motion process.

Councillor **Chris Ames** (Labour) objected fiercely.

“As might have been predicted, the administration has sought to close down debate about this,” he said.

“We’re going to be asked to agree a constitution that we should know is defective.”

Denying that he had proposed a constitutional amendment, Ames said he had merely sought to highlight concerns. “The usual procedural shenanigans that we get here doesn’t surprise me one bit,” he said. “It’s absolutely disgraceful. It’s the typical corruption of this administration.”

Councillor **James Lawrence** (Independent) followed with his own criticism, citing what he said were deficiencies in the complaints process as described across the Council’s constitution, operating framework and website.

He argued that a councillor complaints procedure was either missing or unclear, describing a complaint against him that had remained unresolved for months.

But when Lawrence attempted to continue, the Mayor curtailed him.

“The meeting this evening is for a civic event,” she said, directing him instead toward the processes set out elsewhere in the Council framework.

Lawrence pushed back, asking: “Can you point in the constitution why I can’t speak?”

The exchange carried a certain irony: debate was being restricted on the basis of the meeting’s civic character while the approval of the constitution itself remained a formal agenda item before members.

When the vote finally came, the constitution was approved **15 votes to 9**.

The meeting then moved on to committee appointments and other routine business without further fireworks.

Yet for a council entering its final year of existence, the evening had already revealed much: pride in civic tradition, uncertainty about the future, visible political strains — and a leadership retained by the narrowest of margins in a chamber made short-tempered by heat, history and the approaching end of the borough council era.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Image: Cllr Kim Spickett addresses the Council – Epsom and Ewell Borough Council YouTube

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Epsom Vladiator fights wifi, mobile and computer

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problems

5 June 2026



From PC problems to smart homes, websites and more — Vladiator is here to help in Epsom and across Surrey.

Technology should make life easier, not more complicated.

Whether it is a slow laptop, unreliable Wi-Fi, a troublesome smartphone, a new website, or simply figuring out why something refuses to work, local tech specialist Vladiator offers practical, hands-on support for homes and businesses across Epsom and Surrey.

Based in Epsom, Vladiator provides setup, repair and troubleshooting services covering PCs, laptops, phones, tablets, networking, smart home devices and websites.

The business supports both home users and organisations, offering clear advice and solutions designed to solve problems rather than confuse customers with technical jargon.

Services include:

• PC and laptop diagnostics, repair and optimisation
• Phone and tablet setup, troubleshooting and repairs
• Wi-Fi and network setup and performance improvement
• Smart home installation and configuration
• WordPress, website and app development support
• Cyber-security setup and guidance for homes and businesses

Cyber-security has become an increasing concern for many households and small organisations. Vladiator also assists clients with safer device setup, secure Wi-Fi configuration and practical measures to help reduce online risks.

The business is led by a local Epsom-based technology professional who also volunteers providing IT and media support within the community.

Trusted by local organisations and residents alike, Vladiator aims to combine professional expertise with the kind of friendly, responsive service that only an independent local provider can offer.

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Don’t Believe Everything You Read Online? EET Stands By ‘Gagging’ Report After Epsom MP’s Westminster Jibe

5 June 2026



A row over media access to newly elected Liberal Democrat councillors has escalated after Epsom & Ewell MP Helen Maguire publicly challenged an Epsom and Ewell Times report – only for subsequent correspondence to confirm that a restriction on councillors speaking to the media did in fact exist.

The dispute centres on events at the Count for the East Surrey Unitary Council elections at Bourne Hall on 8 May.

In an earlier report, Epsom and Ewell Times’ (EET) Lionel Blackman described being in a media interview room speaking with a soon-to-be-elected Liberal Democrat candidate when Helen Maguire’s communications officer entered and stated that Lib Dem candidates were not to talk to the press and that journalists should speak only to the MP.

The report described the instruction as neither “liberal” nor “democratic” and criticised what it characterised as a “gag” on successful candidates.

Ten days later, at a reception at the Palace of Westminster hosted by Ms Maguire and attended by a couple of hundred leading figures from Epsom and Ewell’s business and voluntary sectors, the MP appeared to reference the controversy directly.

Introducing newly elected councillors present at the event, she said: “There are a number of our new Councillors present today and contrary to what you may have read in the press they are free to speak and if there are any members of the press here you may talk to them. Do not believe everything you read online.”

The remark prompted EET to challenge the implication that its reporting had been inaccurate.

In a subsequent email exchange, Helen Maguire’s communications officer, Esther Holland, denied that the MP had imposed any “gag” on councillors but acknowledged that a restriction on media engagement had indeed been in place.

Ms Holland wrote: “Helen can confirm that while she knew the East Surrey campaign team had asked for a pause in media engagement during the election week, this was entirely the East Surrey campaign team’s decision. Helen played no part in directing this; she did not ‘gag’ her new councillors.”

She later provided a statement attributed to an East Surrey Liberal Democrats spokesperson saying: “The pause in media engagement was a decision made by the central campaign team for the Liberal Democrats in East Surrey — not Helen Maguire MP — based on the advice to make the incoming leadership contest as democratic and fair as possible.”

That explanation narrows, but does not extinguish, the dispute.

EET’s original report did not merely allege that Helen Maguire personally invented the policy. It reported that the instruction was delivered by her communications officer, directing journalists away from councillors and towards the MP.

Mr Blackman replied that, in the circumstances, it had been entirely reasonable to report the matter as “Helen’s gag”, noting that the instruction had been communicated by an employee acting under the MP’s banner and that the strategy would have been ineffective without at least some degree of cooperation from the MP’s operation.

The exchange then moved into more sensitive territory concerning the role of MP’s parliamentary staff in party political activity.

Responding to questions raised by EET, Ms Holland stated she had been acting “in my capacity as local party communications, not as an employee of Helen Maguire MP” when communicating the media strategy at the Count, adding that her role was “split between parliamentary and local party work.”

That explanation may itself invite wider questions about the sometimes blurred boundary between parliamentary communications roles and local party political operations.

No evidence has been produced that any parliamentary or IPSA (Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority) rules were breached. However, parliamentary staffing arrangements are ordinarily expected to distinguish between parliamentary duties funded through MPs’ allowances and party political campaigning or organisation.

The issue here is not merely semantic.

If, as the correspondence confirms, a restriction on councillors speaking freely to journalists existed, then the remaining questions become who owned it, who delivered it, and whether the MP’s Westminster remark – “Do not believe everything you read online” – fairly represented EET’s reporting or risked leaving a large public audience with the impression that the newspaper had reported something untrue.

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EET stands by the factual accuracy of its original report.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related report:

Epsom’s LibDem MP gags her Party’s new councillors in their moment of triumph

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Epsom pensioners lost £148,000 in fraud as laundering network sentenced

5 June 2026



Two elderly Epsom siblings lost around £148,000 after being repeatedly pressured into paying for unnecessary home repair work, as members of a criminal money-laundering network were sentenced at Guildford Crown Court.

The Epsom victims were among those targeted in a wider operation spanning Surrey, Essex and London between February and September 2019, according to Trading Standards investigators.

The case concluded this week with sentences being handed down to five defendants following a lengthy investigation involving Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards, Essex Police and the National Trading Standards Regional Investigations Team. Authorities said the network laundered a total of £331,223 taken from victims.

At the centre of the operation was Lee Cross, 54, originally from Romford, who was convicted of fraud and money laundering offences. Prosecutors said Cross provided banking infrastructure used to move and conceal criminal proceeds through numerous business accounts operating under different trading names, including “A-Z Repairs”.

Cross was sentenced to eight years and seven months’ imprisonment.

Others sentenced were:

- Sorise Richardson, 45, Romford – 12-month community order with rehabilitation activity requirement
- Zoe Hoskyn, 40, Hornchurch – two-year suspended sentence and 12-month rehabilitation order
- Jason Walker, 35, Blackburn – two-year suspended sentence and 180 hours’ unpaid work
- Pauline Walker, 70, Romford – 22-month suspended sentence

Trading Standards said victims were commonly approached by unsolicited callers claiming urgent repairs were needed to their properties. Homeowners were allegedly persuaded to pay substantial sums for unnecessary, poorly executed or uncompleted building works. Some were asked to fund equipment such as cranes and scaffolding that investigators said were never needed or supplied.

In Epsom, investigators said two elderly siblings were repeatedly pressured into paying for external works to their home that “didn’t need to be done”.

Amanda Poole, Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Assistant Director, said: “Today’s sentencing marks the final step in bringing these fraudsters to justice, and most importantly, means the man at the heart of this operation — Lee Cross — will be behind bars.”

She added: “Today’s sentences are also a testament to the vital, diligent work undertaken by our Trading Standards officers, and those of our partners, in protecting our residents from harm.”

Lord Michael Bichard, Chair of National Trading Standards, said the case showed how organised criminals exploited elderly and vulnerable people, sometimes extracting “life-changing” sums for unnecessary or poor-quality work.

He said: “The harm caused by this type of fraud goes far beyond the money stolen, often leaving victims robbed of their confidence, independence and peace of mind.”

Trading Standards advises residents to be cautious of unsolicited traders, avoid agreeing to work on the spot, obtain multiple written quotations, and avoid paying cash or large sums upfront for building work.

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