EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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Bourne Hall hosts Summer Festival

22 May 2026



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is pleased to announce that Bourne Hall will host a free Summer Festival on Saturday, 20 June 2026, from 12pm until 5pm.

The free event promises fun for all the family, with live music, food, fairground activities, craft stalls and plenty to enjoy throughout the day.

The main stage will showcase a variety of live music performances, featuring talented local artists and bands. Artists supported by iPlay Collective, a local creative organisation that nurtures emerging performers and champions inclusive access to the arts, will perform across the day. Audiences can expect a lively and varied programme celebrating local talent and a wide range of musical styles, with a DJ host keeping the atmosphere buzzing between sets.

Festival-goers can browse a wide selection of market stalls showcasing unique handcrafted items from local makers and artisan sellers. Visitors will find a diverse range of goods including seated acupressure therapy, hand-turned wooden gifts and homeware, jewellery, laser-engraved cheese and serving boards, handmade woodwork and textiles, locally produced Tropic organic skincare and make-up, daily essentials and health supplements, alongside homemade gifts, keyrings, stickers, prints and cross-stitch items. There will also be handmade natural soaps, stone and crystal candles, as well as stalls supporting good causes, including a dog rescue offering gifts and a tombola. The Rainbow Leisure Centre will also be present, promoting healthy lifestyles and community wellbeing.

In addition to the stalls, several local organisations and venues will be hosting activities throughout the day. These include the Home Improvement Agency, Epsom Playhouse, the Dementia Hub, Bourne Hall Museum and Ewell Library, ensuring there is plenty to explore and engage with for all ages.

For those looking for thrills, the fairground will feature trampolines and teacup rides. There will also be merchandise stalls selling balloon animals and bubbles, adding to the festive atmosphere.

A variety of outdoor food options will be available, including burgers, nachos, ice cream and candyfloss, alongside refreshments from the Flying Saucer Café, which will be open from 9am until 5pm serving hot and cold drinks and treats.

Speaking of the upcoming event, Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee said:

“The Bourne Hall Summer Festival is a wonderful opportunity for our community to come together and enjoy a full day of free, inclusive entertainment. We’re delighted to be showcasing talented local musicians, including artists supported by iPlay Collective, who play such an important role in nurturing emerging performers.

“Alongside the live music, visitors can explore a fantastic selection of artisan and craft stalls, offering unique handmade goods from local makers – the perfect chance to support independent businesses and discover something special. With great food, creative talent and activities for all ages, the festival really highlights the vibrant community spirit of our borough.”

Event timetable is subject to change.

The Bourne Hall Festival is an annual event with a different theme each year. Previous iterations have included Sustainability, The Herald of Spring and New Beginnings. This year’s festival will run from 12pm to 5pm.

Bourne Hall’s address is Spring Street, Ewell, Surrey, KT17 1UF.

www.bournehall.org

Driving Directions:
Bourne Hall is easily accessible from:
Gatwick via M25 – A217 – A240
Heathrow via M25 – A3
London via A3
Please check your directions at www.theaa.com/route-planner/index.jsp

Parking:
Local pay & display car parks:
Bourne Hall, Spring street
24 hours Monday to Sunday
High Street, Ewell

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24 hours Monday to Sunday
Dorset House, High street, Ewell
24 hours Monday to Sunday

Train:
The nearest railway station is Ewell West (5 minutes' walk) with regular direct rail routes between Guildford and Waterloo. Please plan your journey at www.nationalrail.co.uk

Bus
Bus number 293, 406, 467, S2 and E16

Live Music: 12:00 – 17:00
Enjoy a diverse range of musical genres that will keep you entertained and dancing all day long with a DJ host.

Market Stalls: 12:00 – 17:00
Explore a vibrant array of market stalls showcasing local crafts, products, and more. It's the perfect opportunity to support local businesses and find unique treasures.

Food Stalls: The Flying Saucer Café 09:00 – 17:00, Food stalls 12:00 – 17:00
A selection of food will be available, offering a range of tasty treats and refreshments.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Epsom boxer Amelia, 12, wins National Schools title

22 May 2026



A 12-year-old boxer from Epsom has brought home the town's first National Schools boxing title in 15 years after a series of dominant performances at the England Boxing National Schools Championships.

Amelia O'Hagan, of Epsom Boxing Academy, claimed gold in the Class A 44kg category after progressing through Surrey, Southern Counties and the national finals.

Having qualified through the county and regional stages, Amelia faced London champion Davene Asabere of Newham's Fight for Peace club in the quarter-finals.

Coach Joe Harding described Amelia's performance as explosive from the outset. Starting at high tempo, she used fast attacks to head and body to control the bout, before forcing a stoppage early in the second round after a sustained assault left her opponent unable to continue.

The championships then took Amelia north to Newcastle for the semi-finals and finals weekend.

In the semi-final she met Midland Counties champion Hollie Browne of Black Country Boxing Club. Determined to improve on last year's runner-up finish, Amelia produced what her coaches described as a controlled and disciplined display.

Using speed, footwork and sharp combinations, she repeatedly caught the taller opponent with attacks to head and body before moving safely out of range. After three rounds of sustained pressure and tactical boxing, Amelia secured a unanimous 5-0 points victory to reach the final.

There she faced local favourite Imogen Paylor of Felling ABC, champion of Tyne, Tees and Wear and a boxer with significantly more competitive experience.

According to Epsom Boxing Academy, Amelia again began strongly, attacking with body-to-head combinations and forcing her taller opponent backwards. The second round saw more sustained exchanges, with Amelia's footwork and ring movement proving key.

Knowing the final round would bring an all-out response from her opponent, Amelia maintained the pace, countering

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effectively and finishing strongly. The judges awarded her a second unanimous 5-0 victory, crowning her National Schools Champion for 2026.

The success marks Epsom's first National Schools "Golden Gloves" champion since Charlie Eastwood, who won the title 15 years ago and later added further national honours.

The victory also secures Amelia a place on the England Boxing National Development Pathway.

Joe Harding, head coach at Epsom Boxing Academy, said: "This girl is an amazing talent and at 12 years old this is only the start. She is hard-working and determined and I'm certain she will go on to represent her country.

"We have come close several times since starting our new Epsom club four years ago, with several silver and bronze medals, so bringing home the Golden Gloves with Amelia was a little emotional, to say the least."

Epsom councillors handed key roles on East Surrey's new Shadow Council

22 May 2026



The newly elected East Surrey Shadow Authority met for the first time on Wednesday 20 May, taking another formal step towards the creation of the new East Surrey Council due to replace existing county, borough and district councils on 1 April 2027.

The meeting marked the transition from the former East Surrey Joint Committee arrangements to the newly elected "shadow authority", following this month's elections to the new unitary council covering Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge.

With the Liberal Democrats holding a working majority on the 72-member authority after the May elections, councillors confirmed leadership and cabinet appointments that will oversee the transition year.

Councillor Steve Wotton was confirmed as Leader of the East Surrey Shadow Authority, with Councillor Kirsty Hewens appointed Deputy Leader.

Of particular local interest, two councillors representing Epsom & Ewell secured places in the shadow cabinet.

Councillor **David Buxton**, a Liberal Democrat councillor from Epsom & Ewell, was appointed Cabinet Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health — one of the most substantial service portfolios in local government, covering responsibilities that currently account for major areas of county council expenditure and public concern.

Councillor **Julian Freeman**, LibDem also from Epsom & Ewell, was appointed Cabinet Executive Member for Housing. The appointment places an Epsom representative at the centre of housing policy discussions as the new authority prepares to assume responsibilities from existing councils amid continuing pressures around affordability, development and future planning arrangements across East Surrey.

The full cabinet allocation agreed by the authority included:

- Steve Wotton – Transformation, Digital and People
- Kirsty Hewens – Economy and Regeneration
- Andrew Burton – Finance and Resources
- Ashley Tilling – Children's Services and Education
- David Buxton – Adult Social Care and Health
- Andrew Matthews – Transport, Highways and Infrastructure
- Bradley Nelson – Strategic Planning and Growth
- Julian Freeman – Housing
- Abhiram Magesh – Leisure, Culture and Communities
- Claire Malcomson – Climate, Environment and Waste

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The cabinet roles are presently shadow positions linked to the local government reorganisation programme and will operate in that form until the new authority formally assumes full powers in April 2027.

The meeting also approved governance arrangements for the shadow council, endorsed initial transition priorities, and designated interim statutory officers to steer the authority through its establishment phase.

Among the appointments, Adam Chalmers, currently Chief Executive of Elmbridge Borough Council, was designated Interim Head of Paid Service. Nikki O'Connor, Assistant Director of Finance (Corporate) at Surrey County Council, was appointed Interim Chief Finance Officer, while Daniel Bainbridge, Head of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) at Elmbridge, became Interim Monitoring Officer.

Speaking after his appointment, Cllr Steve Wotton said: "This is a significant moment as we work to bring services together under a single organisation. Our priority is to ensure residents see the benefits of the new East Surrey Council – one that is responsive, well run and able to deliver high-quality services from April 2027."

He added: "We recognise the scale of the task ahead, but also the opportunity for a fresh start to shape a council that reflects and serves our communities."

The new East Surrey Council forms part of Surrey's wider local government reorganisation, under which the county's existing councils are to be abolished and replaced by two large unitary authorities – East Surrey and West Surrey.

Until April 2027, existing county, borough and district councils will continue running day-to-day services. The shadow authority's role is to prepare the structures, governance and leadership arrangements for the incoming council.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Photo right to left: Julian Freeman and David Buxton

Did Epsom and Ewell councillors approve more Green Belt release?

22 May 2026



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's special Licensing and Planning Policy Committee ("LPPC") meeting on 19 May — convened after a motion by Cllrs **Kieran Persand** (Conservative – Horton), Rob Geleit (Labour – Court) and **Julian Freema**n (LibDem – College) — produced one clear answer to the question troubling many residents: LPPC did not itself vote to approve additional Green Belt land for development.

In summary the effect of the lengthy five-part motion was to ensure Council officers should not be sending revised Local Plan evidence and potentially significant Green Belt-related material to the Inspector without renewed political scrutiny and approval by LPPC / Full Council. All parts of the motion were defeated.

But the two-and-a-half-hour meeting revealed a deeper and increasingly bitter dispute over whether officers have already steered the Local Plan examination towards further Green Belt release without fresh political approval.

The meeting unfolded against the backdrop of continuing examination of EEBC's Local Plan by the Planning Inspectorate and followed recent publication of officer work identifying additional sites "potentially suitable for allocation", including five Green Belt sites, as part of the Inspector's request for further work.

At the centre of the argument lay a constitutional question: once the Local Plan entered examination, did political control of substantive Green Belt decisions remain with councillors — or had delegated authority lawfully passed practical control to officers working under the Inspector's direction?

The atmosphere in the chamber suggested members were debating much more than planning procedure.

Before debate even began, Cllr **Shanice Goldman** (Conservative Nonsuch) made an unusually direct statement from the public seating area challenging how the council had reached this stage. She said delegated authority granted in November 2024 had been understood to concern "small grammatical errors", but had, in her view, later been exercised more broadly than members intended.

"These are not minor administrative matters," she told the committee. "They are material decisions which properly fall

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within the remit of elected councillors who are accountable to the public." She added: "This issue is bigger than one site or one submission. It goes to the heart of governance, transparency, constitutional process, and public confidence in decision making."

Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development Ian Mawer then delivered a lengthy procedural update attempting to clarify what officers say has — and has not — happened.

Mawer stressed repeatedly that the Local Plan remains the version submitted in March 2025 and that no modifications have yet been made.

"I wish to emphasize that the Local Plan remains as submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in March 2025 as it stands — no changes have been made to it," he said. "It is the Inspector alone that can make changes known as main modifications to address soundness issues."

He explained that the Inspector had required additional work after October 2025 hearings, including revisiting part of the Green Belt Topic Paper and reassessing urban sites. That work, he said, eventually produced 17 sites considered "potentially suitable for allocation" — 12 urban and five Green Belt — but only as evidence to assist the examination.

He also cautioned against confusion over "Grey Belt", noting EEBC's plan is being examined under a pre-Grey-Belt version of national policy.

The procedural explanation did little to calm critics.

Persand opened by objecting that no legal officer was present, saying he had only been informed late in the day. "I feel that we should push this to another date, and then discuss it with a legal officer present," he said. "This is about the delegation of power that was out of scope by officers in the submission of documents."

His motion to defer was seconded by Freeman but failed.

From there the meeting descended into repeated procedural clashes.

When Persand attempted to play a recording from a previous meeting concerning how delegated authority had been described, Chair **Peter O'Donovan** (RA – Ewell Court) stopped him: "You can't play recording… it's not relevant to the motion." Persand countered that recordings were permissible and argued earlier comments were directly relevant to understanding what members thought they had approved.

Freeman challenged the Chair's ruling: "How is it not relevant? Comments that were made at a previous meeting of this committee… when you said something along the lines of… minor grammatical errors and omissions." O'Donovan replied: "I said there were minor grammatical errors… it is not relevant to the motion in front of us."

The core disagreement, however, concerned substance rather than theatre.

Persand argued that documents identifying additional Green Belt land had gone well beyond anything councillors believed officers were authorised to do.

"Submitting a document that has 40% extra Green Belt sites to be allocated, and you're changing the evidence base, is not minor amendments," he said. "That is major material changes. That is completely out of scope of this delegation of power." He warned: "This will go to JR, this will go to Judicial Review."

Freeman broadly backed that critique while distancing criticism from officers personally.

"With the greatest of respect to Mr Mawer, and I know he's an officer doing his job… this plan is for councillors to review and approve, not for officers," he said. "We are the councillors who have been elected to represent this community… and we should not be putting that on officers. I find that behaviour to be disgraceful and reprehensible."

Mawer firmly rejected the suggestion that officers had independently redirected policy.

"We've prepared the documents… under the advice of the Inspector," he said. "We've done the work that is necessary for the examination to proceed." The documents, he stressed, are now published and subject to consultation. "It will be the Inspector ultimately who decides if any extra sites go into the Local Plan."

Pressed by Persand on whether the Inspector had ever explicitly required more Green Belt allocations, Mawer drew a distinction between the Inspector's concerns about unmet housing need and the work requested in response. The Inspector had asked for reassessment, he said; the resulting correspondence led to officers being asked to identify sites "potentially suitable for allocation".

Vice-Chair **Clive Woodbridge** (RA – Ewell Village) attempted several times to steer discussion toward a pragmatic middle ground.

At one point he suggested the motion had been "overtaken by events" but that the committee might still usefully discuss the submitted material. "I don't really see why this committee shouldn't… have the chance to ask questions about the work they've done on the Green Belt."

Later, seeking a compromise on future meetings, Woodbridge proposed softening one motion element so that further LPPC meetings would "update on the Local Plan examination" rather than purport to re-approve already-submitted documents. He acknowledged limits on councillors' powers once the examination is underway but argued members should not face "a complete gap without the opportunity to ask questions."

Labour councillor Rob Geleit was unconvinced by the dilution. "Surely that amendment really eviscerates the whole point, does it not?" he asked.

Substitute member **Christine Howell** (Independent Nonsuch) repeatedly returned the discussion to democratic legitimacy and Green Belt trust.

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“If there is even the slightest doubt in anyone’s mind about the integrity of this process, it must be reviewed again thoroughly and transparently,” she argued, saying residents had expressed “serious concerns and lack of trust” regarding Green Belt inclusion.

In one of the evening’s more striking exchanges, Howell sought clarity about councillors’ practical role if the Inspector ultimately proposes extra sites.

“So… some [sites] have been identified, and at any set time the Inspector could put them all in… and then we don’t have any ability to question that?” she asked.

O’Donovan’s reply was blunt: “Yeah, basically, but you have ability to question it through the consultation.” He added that members would later be able to vote on the final modified plan. Howell observed that during consultation councillors would effectively be participating “just as a resident, as a neighbour, and not in any position of power or influence.” O’Donovan answered: “That’s right.”

In procedural terms, the committee rejected all five elements of the motion, including proposals to require LPPC review of documents before submission, tighten delegated authority wording, revisit earlier submissions and mandate additional scrutiny meetings.

So did LPPC approve more Green Belt release?

Not directly. The committee did not vote to allocate new Green Belt sites on 19 May. Officers maintained throughout that the Local Plan remains unchanged and that only the Inspector can propose “main modifications”. Critics, however, argue that by submitting revised evidence identifying additional “potentially suitable” Green Belt sites without renewed member approval, the council has already moved materially toward expanded Green Belt release during examination.

The public consultation on the new documents runs until 15 June, with a further Inspector’s hearing scheduled for 2 July.

For residents trying to understand the state of play, one point emerged clearly from an evening of procedural warfare: the argument is no longer simply about how much Green Belt land might be released, but about who, in practice, is making the decisions.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

Persand parses the Local Plan process in Epsom

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Fresh Local Plan row as councillor questions Green Belt revisions and governance at Epsom and Ewell

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Image: Cllrs Freeman, Persand and Geleit at the LPPC meeting – EEBC YouTube channel.

Epsom Council Rainbow Centre secrecy row deepens over “pre-election silence” advice

22 May 2026



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s attempt to justify refusing answers to Epsom and Ewell Times before May’s elections has itself become the subject of a fresh transparency dispute.

The Council has now disclosed, following a Freedom of Information request, that the decision to rely on Section 2 of the

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Local Government Act 1986 (prohibition on Council promotion of political parties) involved the Council's Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, senior corporate and communications officers and Cllr Neil Dallen (RA Town), Chair of Strategy and Resources.

Yet the Council simultaneously claims it holds no legal advice, governance advice, briefing or equivalent guidance explaining why Section 2 supposedly prevented answers being given to press questions about the Rainbow Leisure Centre controversy.

The issue concerns Cllr Neil Dallen's (RA Town Ward) refusal before the election to answer questions relating to the Rainbow Leisure Centre, where a confidential urgent decision warned of dilapidations potentially costing "up to £500k".

He has *post-election* offered a response which is the subject of our report: No end to Epsom's Rainbow Leisure Centre controversy

Guidance relied upon appears to undermine Council's position

The Council disclosed a Surrey local government pre-election guidance document as the material relied upon. However, the guidance appears to say something rather different from the position adopted by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

The document emphasises political neutrality, impartiality and avoidance of electioneering by councils during election periods. But it also expressly states that councils may continue normal business and are allowed to "publish factual information to counteract misleading, controversial, or extreme information".

It further stresses even-handed treatment of information requests and continuation of ordinary council business.

Epsom and Ewell Times' questions to Cllr Dallen and others sought factual explanations of decisions already taken — not campaign material, political advocacy or commentary on electoral opponents.

"No advice held" raises further questions

The Council's response identifies senior officers and a senior councillor as participants in the decision to invoke Section 2. However, when asked for legal advice, governance advice or internal briefing supporting the decision, the Council replied: "This information is not held by the Council."

That response raises obvious questions. Was no legal or governance reasoning recorded despite involvement of the Monitoring Officer and senior management? Was advice given informally but not documented? Or has relevant information been withheld under another exemption?

The Council has separately relied on Section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act to refuse disclosure of internal communications concerning the decision-making process.

Neutrality — or protection from scrutiny?

The controversy touches on a sensitive constitutional question.

Pre-election restrictions exist to prevent councils using public resources to influence elections or support political parties. They are designed to preserve political neutrality.

But critics may ask whether refusing factual answers on controversial matters involving the ruling administration risks producing the opposite perception — namely that council machinery is being used to shield politically damaging issues from scrutiny immediately before voters go to the polls. That concern is sharpened by the context.

The Rainbow controversy involved questions about a confidential urgent decision, possible dilapidations of up to half a million pounds, the Council's inspection responsibilities over a major public asset, and the role of the Chair of Strategy and Resources, Cllr Dallen, who was standing for election to the new East Surrey Council.

Whether the officers involved were properly protecting neutrality, or whether the interpretation adopted had the practical effect of protecting the ruling political group from uncomfortable questioning during an election campaign, is likely to remain contested.

Internal review sought

Epsom and Ewell Times has now requested an internal review by an officer independent of those involved in the original decision.

The review request challenges the Council's use of Freedom of Information exemptions, the apparent absence of recorded legal reasoning, and the interpretation of the very guidance relied upon to justify pre-election silence.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports

No end to Epsom's Rainbow Leisure Centre controversy

"It's my meeting": Cllr Dallen stops questions about his role in alleged Rainbow "cover-up"

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Cllr Dallen accused of £1/2 m Epsom & Ewell Council cover-up

Epsom’s Rainbow Leisure Centre Places new operators

Persand parses the Local Plan process in Epsom

22 May 2026



The Epsom and Ewell Times has seen detailed exchanges of correspondence between Cllr **Kieran Persand** (Conservative – Horton) and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council concerning the torturous progress of the Local Plan.

The correspondence from Kieran Persand reveals a serious and highly technical dispute about governance, constitutional compliance and member oversight in the handling of the Epsom and Ewell Borough Council. The exchanges suggest a widening disagreement between some councillors and officers over who was authorised to make and submit significant Local Plan amendments during the examination process, and whether the council’s Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (“LPPC”) has effectively been bypassed.

The background is the troubled examination of EEBC’s draft Local Plan, particularly its Green Belt strategy and housing allocations. During the public examination hearings in October 2025, the Planning Inspector criticised Topic Paper TP02 dealing with Green Belt assessments. In the appendix circulated by Persand, the Inspector is quoted as saying that conclusions within the paper were inconsistent with the evidence, that errors existed in individual site assessments, and that the approach lacked consistency.

Persand’s central concern is that following those criticisms, officers produced revised documents — particularly COUD_020 and COUD_021 — and submitted them to the Inspector in January 2026 without prior scrutiny or approval by LPPC or Full Council. He argues this breached both the committee’s Terms of Reference and the council’s wider obligations as Local Planning Authority under section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The key constitutional dispute concerns delegated authority known as “P7”, granted in November 2024. Officers rely on this delegation to justify submitting amended Local Plan material directly to the Inspector. Persand argues the wording only permitted officers “to propose changes and corrections” and did not authorise officers actually to make substantive policy changes or submit revised documents independently.

He also says councillors originally understood the delegation to mean officers would propose changes back to LPPC for political scrutiny and approval, not directly to the Inspector. In his later emails he repeatedly presses officers to explain:

- under whose authority the consultation was launched;
- whether any councillor ever reviewed or approved the revised Green Belt conclusions;
- whether the council’s constitutional obligations had effectively been suspended; and
- whether the Inspector had in practice been allowed to influence policy direction indirectly through officer-led document revisions.

A particularly sensitive issue concerns Green Belt sites. Persand points out that the Inspector never explicitly instructed the council to release more Green Belt land. Rather, she criticised weaknesses in the council’s evidence base and requested further work. He argues that revised papers subsequently reached different conclusions about some sites — including areas in Horton Ward — without those new judgements ever being debated politically.

Persand therefore contends that:

- officers may effectively have altered strategic planning policy without member authority;
- LPPC’s statutory oversight role was bypassed;
- and Full Council approval may also have been required before revised submission documents were sent to the Inspector.

The appendix attached to his email is effectively a constitutional and legal critique of the process. It proposes:

- mandatory LPPC review of all future submission documents;
- clarification and narrowing of delegation P7;
- retrospective review of COUD_020 and COUD_021;

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- further LPPC meetings during purdah if necessary; and
- possible revised submissions to the Inspector after member scrutiny.

The response from Ian Mawer, Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development, rejects much of Persand's interpretation. Mawer argues that once the Local Plan was submitted in March 2025, the examination process became led by the Planning Inspectorate. He relies on national examination guidance stating that inspectors may request additional work and that modifications can be consulted upon during examination.

Mawer further states:

- LPPC already fulfilled its constitutional role through Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 stages;
- the additional work requested after October 2025 was carried out under delegated authority granted in November 2024;
- only the Inspector can recommend "main modifications" required for soundness;
- and the council remains formally committed to the submitted Local Plan unless and until the Inspector proposes modifications.

However, Persand's subsequent emails demonstrate that he remains unconvinced by that explanation. He repeatedly distinguishes between:

- the Inspector controlling the examination process; and
- the council still retaining responsibility for the accuracy, content and strategic direction of its own documents.

His concern appears to be not merely procedural, but constitutional: whether councillors have in practice surrendered political control over crucial Green Belt decisions to officers during the examination stage.

The issue does not appear fully resolved in the correspondence provided. Instead:

- officers maintain the process was lawful and properly delegated;
- Persand maintains that substantive constitutional obligations remain unmet;
- and he continued pressing for additional LPPC meetings and wider member scrutiny as recently as 18 May 2026.

The significance of the dispute is broader than procedural technicalities. It touches directly upon:

- democratic oversight of Green Belt decisions;
- transparency in Local Plan governance;
- the balance of power between elected members and officers;
- and whether major planning policy shifts can emerge during examination without fresh political approval.

A further politically sensitive dimension is timing. Persand repeatedly objected that consultation on revised documents commenced before LPPC had debated the issues, and during the post-election transition period leading into the new East Surrey Council arrangements.

There will be a special meeting of the LPPC tomorrow evening at The Town Hall.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

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No end to Epsom's Rainbow Leisure Centre

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controversy

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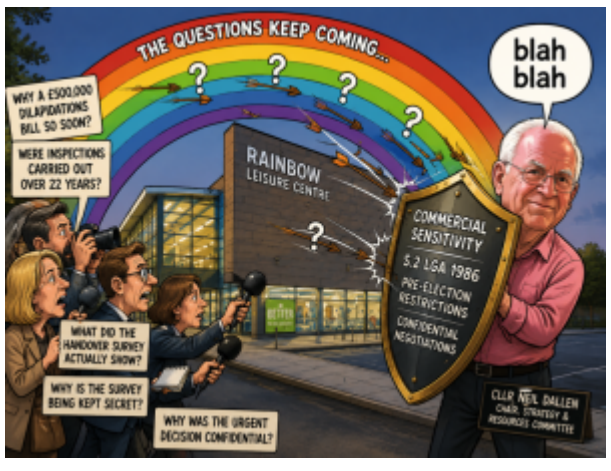

Rainbow reply from Dallen leaves key questions unanswered.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Chair of Strategy and Resources, Cllr Neil Dallen (RA Town), has finally responded to questions from Epsom and Ewell Times about the Rainbow Leisure Centre dilapidations controversy — nearly two months after first declining to do so while citing "pre-election" restrictions under Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986.

Readers will recall that the controversy arose after disclosure of a confidential "urgent decision" approved in December 2025 which stated: "The costs of the dilapidations are not yet fully known… However, an estimate is that this could cost up to £500k."

The same document referred to issues affecting fire alarms, ventilation, damp, glazing, lifts and possible roof defects, with some matters said to raise health and safety concerns.

The issue quickly developed into wider questions about governance and transparency after Epsom and Ewell Times established that:

- the former operator, Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), maintained the building had been handed back in satisfactory condition following survey and sign-off;
- the Council possessed contractual inspection rights throughout GLL's 22-year tenure;
- the Council nevertheless stated in Freedom of Information responses that it held no historic inspection reports prior to 2025;
- the Council refused to disclose the handover condition survey while simultaneously asserting legal privilege over it;
- GLL confirmed the same survey had been provided by the Council to all tenderers during the procurement process;
- and the Council relied on Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 to avoid answering further questions before the May elections.

The original questions sent to Cllr Dallen by Epsom and Ewell Times on 24th March stated:

"Dear Cllr Dallen,

Further to recent reporting and the Council's FOI response (attached) concerning the Rainbow Leisure Centre, I am seeking your view on the underlying explanation for the position that has now emerged.

As you will be aware, there are a number of possible interpretations arising from the material in the public domain and the Council's response. In short form, these appear to include:

That the former operator (GLL) is correct in its position that the building was handed back in the condition required following survey and sign-off;

That the Council did not, over a prolonged period, exercise its inspection and enforcement rights in a way that would have identified and addressed accumulating dilapidations;

That the incoming operator has identified defects not previously recorded and is now addressing these with the Council accepting a reduced management fee as part of the commercial resolution;

That the survey relied upon at handover is subject to differing interpretations as between the parties;

Or any other explanation you consider to be the correct one.

I would be grateful if you could indicate which of these (or any alternative) you consider most accurately reflects the situation.

I would also welcome any clarification you wish to provide regarding the basis on which the urgent decision was treated as confidential, and whether you consider that a public interest assessment was undertaken.

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I will, of course, reflect your response fairly in any further reporting.

With thanks in advance,

Sam Jones – Reporter."

At the time, the Council declined to answer, stating that pre-election restrictions prevented further comment.

Now, following the elections, Epsom and Ewell Times has finally received the following response from the Council, attributed to Cllr Dallen:

"Rainbow Leisure Centre transferred to a new operator, Places Leisure, on 1 October 2025. Since then, we've been pleased to see a number of improvements at the centre. This marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for the leisure centre, and Places Leisure has ambitious plans, including significant investment to upgrade the gym, studios, swimming changing rooms and more, which are already underway, with a new gym already open.

The confidential negotiations have resulted not only in an improved facility but also an improved financial position for the Council and therefore residents. With any handover, it is normal practice for there to be negotiations around works to be carried out which form part of the contract finalisation. Details relating to terms and financial arrangements are commercially sensitive and therefore not in the public domain.

We look forward to seeing the plans for Rainbow Leisure Centre come to fruition, as it continues to serve communities in Epsom & Ewell and the surrounding areas, offering superb leisure facilities and innovative opportunities for residents of all ages to improve their health and wellbeing."

The response notably does not directly answer any of the central questions posed.

No explanation is offered for how a potential £500,000 dilapidations liability apparently emerged so soon after handover. The response does not address whether the building was or was not handed over in satisfactory condition, whether inspections were carried out during the previous 22 years, why no historic inspection records are held, whether the handover survey identified the defects now being asserted, or why the survey itself remains undisclosed.

The statement instead emphasises future investment and commercial confidentiality while avoiding the underlying issue: how a building apparently considered acceptable at handover could within weeks become associated with extensive defects, some allegedly serious enough to threaten continued operation on health and safety grounds.

That leaves unresolved the same competing possibilities previously identified by Epsom and Ewell Times. Either the former operator's account is substantially correct and the current concerns arise from differing assessments or commercial negotiations; or significant defects accumulated over many years without effective intervention; or the handover survey failed to identify the building's true condition; or the scale of the dilapidations has itself been overstated or differently interpreted.

Whether Cllr Dallen's response genuinely clarifies matters, or simply restates the Council's preference for confidentiality while avoiding difficult questions, readers will judge for themselves.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

"It's my meeting": Cllr Dallen stops questions about his role in alleged Rainbow "cover-up"

Cllr Dallen accused of £1/2 m Epsom & Ewell Council cover-up

Epsom's Rainbow Leisure Centre Places new operators

Unitary in name, unitary in nature?

22 May 2026

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

19th November 2026

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Dear Editor

Your criticisms of the silencing of the newly elected Liberal Democrats Councillors by our local MP (8th May) is well founded, and will concern residents who may well wonder whose interests those Councillors will represent. However, I wish to raise another issue in relation to the management of the Election Count that I found disappointing and concerning.

Following the announcement of the result for my Division I sought to make the customary speech of thanks to officers, and to the residents who voted for me, but I was told that the Returning Officer in Reigate had determined that there would be no speeches at any Election Count across Surrey. So, hundreds of years of, sometimes, raucous hustings, elections, and speeches of thanks to the election team and voters, all dismissed by officialdom.

It got worse. I sought to have a photograph taken in the room following the announcement of the result, but I was told that was not allowed either, as it might "compromise the secrecy of the vote." As I watched the news on TV later in the day, with BBC cameras showing footage of a host of candidates in polling stations, and panning out across the counting room, I wondered what was so concerning that required the East Surrey election count to be sanitized and devoid of any of emotion, and the high and lows that come winning and, yes, with defeat.

So, because I could not do this on the day perhaps, through your on-line newspaper, I might be allowed to thank the teams at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council who undertook the work to ensure that on election day, and at the count, all went to plan. To Kerry Blundell, EEBC's Electoral Services Manager, whose tireless work over many years ensured a smooth and successful election outcome. My thanks also to the Polling Station teams, many up at 5.30am and not home until after 11.00pm. It is a long day, yet they maintained their welcoming and efficient presence through to the end. And to those undertaking the count which, whilst being more complex by voters having two votes, was completed in good time.

Finally, my colleague Cllr Peter O'Donovan and I wish to thank all those residents in Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington who voted for us on 7th May. We will work hard to repay your trust in us by following through the promises we made, but also by being accessible and responding swiftly to your enquiries. We will also be working for all the residents in the Ward, and look forward to working with and for them over the next five years

Yours faithfully,

Cllr **Eber Kington** (Surrey County Council and East Surrey Unitary Council)

Related reports:

Lib Dem Landslide Takes East Surrey

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

Lib Dems sweep up in East Surrey Unitary Council election for Epsom and Ewell

East Surrey Council leaders await anointment

22 May 2026



The Liberal Democrats who swept to power in the inaugural East Surrey Council elections have confirmed their leadership team for the new authority ahead of its first full council meeting on 20th May.

Cllr **Steve Wotton** has been elected Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, with Cllr **Kirsty Hewens** chosen as Deputy Leader following the party's commanding victory across the new council area, which stretches from Epsom and Reigate to Thames Ditton, Caterham and Horley.

As previously reported by Epsom and Ewell Times, the Liberal Democrats secured 40 of the 72 seats on the new authority — enough for a clear working majority — meaning attention will now turn to how the party intends to shape the politically and financially challenging transition to the new East Surrey unitary authority.

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The new “shadow authority” will oversee preparations for the abolition of the existing borough and district councils as part of Surrey’s Local Government Reorganisation programme, with the new unitary council expected to assume full powers in 2027.

In a statement following his election, Cllr Wotton said residents had voted for “a fresh start”.

He said: “Our immediate responsibility is to build a strong, effective and financially sustainable new council that works for communities across East Surrey.

“There is a significant amount of work ahead as part of Local Government Reorganisation; as part of the transition we are committed to establishing a culture that puts residents first, is compassionate and fights your corner.”

The Liberal Democrats said the new authority faces major pressures from the outset, including roads, social care, housing and special educational needs provision, as well as what they describe as an “up to £35 million shortfall awaiting the first budget”.

The party also signalled that it intends to distance the new authority from the culture of the former Conservative-led Surrey County Council, which governed the county for decades before local government reorganisation reshaped Surrey politics.

The Lib Dem victory was particularly striking in areas with Liberal Democrat parliamentary representation. The party claimed that in constituencies represented by Lib Dem MPs it won more than 75 per cent of available seats.

Cllr Hewens, who represents Walton South on Elmbridge Borough Council, has lived in Walton for more than 25 years and currently serves as Cabinet Member for Local Economy, Car Parking, Enterprise and Community Safety. The party said she had campaigned to support local businesses through free parking initiatives and had helped establish Business Improvement Districts across Elmbridge. She is also a long-standing food bank volunteer and recently became a trustee of a local arts charity.

Cllr Wotton lives in Horley and has a professional background in banking and financial services in London and Hong Kong. First elected to Horley Town Council in 2023 before joining Reigate and Banstead Borough Council the following year, he has campaigned on environmental and infrastructure concerns affecting Horley, including sewage flooding issues linked to the Horley treatment works.

The first meeting of the new council on 20th May is expected to formally establish the authority’s political leadership and governance arrangements as East Surrey begins one of the largest reorganisations of local government in Surrey for decades.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Left to right: Helen Maguire (MP for Epsom and Ewell); Steve Wotton (Leader and Cllr for Horley West, Salfords and Sidlow); Kirsty Hewens (Deputy Leader and Cllr for Walton South and Oatlands); Monica Harding (MP for Esher and Walton); Chris Coghlan (MP for Dorking and Horley)

Related reports:

Surrey’s Conservative leaders in Opposition

East Surrey Council in early formation

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

Lib Dems sweep up in East Surrey Unitary Council election for Epsom and Ewell

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Surrey’s Conservative leaders in Opposition

22 May 2026



The Conservative opposition groups at the newly formed East and West Surrey Councils have announced their new leaders.

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The party will be playing an unaccustomed role on the new councils having led Surrey since its inception – including holding the highest offices during the two spells it was under no overall control.

The Liberal Democrats, who won May's local elections, have yet to announce who will lead the the two councils after big wins last week – however leaders will be decided after new authorities first meet over May 20 and 21.

In West Surrey the Lib Dems won 56 seats to the Conservatives' 20, with Reform picking up nine, and independent and residents groups rounding out the council.

In East Surrey the Lib Dems took 40 seats to the Conservatives' 10, with the Green Party coming in third on eight. Reform UK and independents fill the remaining seats.

What we now know though is that the opposition at West Surrey will be led by current Waverley Borough Councillor Jane Austin, while Runnymede and Surrey County Councillor Jonathan Hulley will serve as her deputy.

Over in East Surrey the Conservatives have selected David Lewis, the current portfolio holder for finance at Surrey County Council, as its next group leader, with Reigate and Banstead's Cllr James King as deputy.

Cllr Austin was first elected on to the borough in 2023. At last week's West Surrey election she comfortably won her Waverley Eastern Villages Ward seat with 3,359 votes.

Cllr Hulley was first elected on to Runnymede Borough Council in 2019 and has served one term at county hall.

Cllr Lewis has served at Surrey since 2021 and won his new seat of Cobham and Oxshott South on East Surrey with 2,855 votes.

Cllr Austin, who trained as a chartered surveyor before becoming involved in politics, has lived in Bramley for 13 years and has four children, said: "Collectively, we are an impressive and experienced team, united by a commitment to stand up for Surrey residents.

"We will work together to hold the decisions of the incoming administration to account, provide strong local leadership, champion our communities, and help shape the new West Surrey Council so it genuinely delivers for the people we serve."

Cllr Lewis, who has 39 years'management experience in the oil industry and is the chair of Stoke d'Abernon Charities, said: "We will work together during this first transition year to ensure that the new East Surrey Council is established with strong foundations to enable it to deliver the services that our residents require."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Photos: Cllrs Jane Austin and David Lewis will lead the Conservative groups at West and East Surrey Councils (image UGC

Epsom's NESCOT wins 'Community Hero' award

22 May 2026



Nescot College in Epsom won the Community Hero award at last night's Central South Business Awards 2026, after staff and students impressed the judges with a wide range of voluntary community work. Nescot has been part of the community for 70 years, getting involved in countless initiatives, from cleaning storm debris and transforming a local underpass, to donating expertise, food and funding to those in need.

Students are encouraged to use their skills to make a difference locally. Art & Design students painted an incredible mural to transform a dirty underpass. Plumbing students stepped in to help a local resident who had been scammed after her boiler broke. Media students made a promotional film for a music therapy charity, and Hair & Beauty students ran a pop-up salon for children undergoing cancer treatment at the Royal Marsden.

Other recent projects at the college include supporting Ukrainian refugees to improve their English, partnering with a food bank, and running a summer school with Wates for 40 pupils at risk of leaving education with few prospects – aiming to help them into employment or training.

The college has also partnered with the Royal Society for Blind Children and Dorton College to provide facilities for young people who are blind or visually impaired in Surrey. Nescot was recently awarded Silver in the Armed Forces Employer Recognition Scheme, and students and staff have raised thousands for charity including their two chosen charities – The Royal Marsden and CALM.

Julie Kapsalis MBE, Principal and CEO at Nescot said: "Nescot is at the heart of the community, so it's important the college has a positive impact on local people, charities and the environment. We aim to empower staff and students to be compassionate, taking on projects that matter to them. We also want to demonstrate to students that their time and skills

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can be used as a force for good. I'm incredibly proud that we're now officially a 'Community Hero' as I see people's kindness in action every day."

The Central South Business Awards celebrate the exceptional achievements of businesses across the region. The annual awards, in association with Business South, acknowledge those businesses and individuals that have gone above and beyond, achieving great results, inspiring others and demonstrating best practice. Entry is open to businesses based in Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Surrey, West Sussex and Dorset.

Nescot offers a wide range of college courses for school leavers and adults, including Animal Care, Business, Computing and IT, Construction, Performing Arts, Travel & Tourism, Childcare, Health & Social Care and Beauty Therapy. To find out more about studying at Nescot call 020 8394 3038, visit www.nescot.ac.uk, or email adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk

NESCOT

Staff and students from Nescot with the newly painted underpass they worked on.

East Surrey Council in early formation

22 May 2026



The Liberal Democrats have secured a commanding working majority on the new East Surrey Council after winning 40 of the authority's 72 seats in the first-ever election to the unitary authority.

With no other party coming close to challenging their dominance, all eyes will now turn to the Liberal Democrat group's choice of leader — a decision which, given the party's majority, is widely expected to determine who will become leader of the new council.

The full political make-up of East Surrey Council is:

40 Liberal Democrats
10 Conservatives
8 Greens
5 Reform UK
2 Ashtead Independents working with Ashtead Residents
2 Independents
2 Nork and Tattenhams Residents' Associations
2 Residents Association of Epsom and Ewell
1 Molesey Residents' Association

A total of 379 candidates contested the 72 seats across 36 wards covering the geographic areas of Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge.

Across East Surrey, 199,485 ballot papers were issued from an electorate of 406,177.

Votes for the new West Surrey Council were also counted at the same time.

Full ward-by-ward results, including total votes cast for every candidate, are available on the Future Surrey website.

East Surrey Council and West Surrey Council will formally come into existence on 1 April 2027. Until then, the newly elected councillors will serve as "shadow authorities", preparing the ground for the biggest reorganisation of Surrey local government in decades.

The first meeting of the East Surrey Shadow Authority will take place in Reigate on Wednesday 20 May, with West Surrey's first meeting following in Guildford on Thursday 21 May.

At those inaugural meetings, councillors will elect council leaders, who will then appoint deputy leaders and shadow executive members.

The new unitary councils will eventually replace Surrey County Council along with the county's existing borough and district councils, bringing all local government services within each geographical area under a single authority.

During the shadow year, councillors will be responsible for designing the new councils' structures and governance systems. This will include setting the first budgets and council tax levels for 2027/28, agreeing staffing arrangements, adopting codes of conduct and overseeing the transfer of powers and responsibilities from the existing councils.

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Existing county, borough and district councils will continue operating normally until April 2027, and residents are being advised to continue contacting their current councils and councillors regarding day-to-day services during the transition period.

Sam Jones – Reporter



New Surrey County Council HQ, Woodhatch Place on Cockshot Hill, Reigate. Credit Surrey County Council. Home of the new East Surrey Unitary Council.

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

22 May 2026







Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has opened a further public consultation on documents submitted during the examination of its draft Local Plan, as a Conservative councillor has questioned whether the process has bypassed the council committee responsible for planning policy.

The Local Plan, covering the period to 2040, is now at examination stage, described by the council as the final stage before the plan can be legally adopted. EEBC says the government-appointed Planning Inspector instructed the council to carry out additional work on potential further sites that could be allocated through main modifications to the plan. The consultation opened on Monday 11 May and closes at 11.59pm on Monday 15 June 2026.

The council says the consultation is limited to the additional documents submitted to the Inspector since October 2025, which identify potential additional sites that could increase housing delivery. It says all comments will be passed to the Inspector and published on the council's website, with a further one-day hearing to follow after the consultation closes.

Council documents sent to residents state that the Local Plan was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 10 March 2025, with public hearings held in September and October 2025. Following those hearings, the Inspector required further work, resulting in the submission of additional documents identifying extra potential sites for allocation. Responses are being invited on those additional documents only.

Councillor **Peter O'Donovan**, (RA Ewell Court) chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee, said the submitted Local Plan "provides less than 50% of the identified housing need within the borough", which the council had considered to be a balance between meeting development needs and protecting green spaces, heritage and character. He said the additional work had been required to progress the plan towards adoption and urged residents to review the documents and respond.

However, Cllr **Kieran Persand**, Conservative councillor for Horton Ward, has written to senior councillors and officers raising what he describes as a "significant governance and constitutional concern". In emails dated 9 and 11 May, he said the additional sites were "put forward by the Council itself" and were not requested or identified by the Inspector. He also said the documents had been submitted, and the consultation launched, without prior scrutiny or approval by the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee.

Cllr Persand cited the committee's terms of reference, saying it is responsible for considering and approving Local Plan documents for public consultation. He asked why the consultation had started without the committee first considering it, what legal advice had been taken, and whether the chair and officers regarded the process as compliant with the council's constitution. He also asked whether the consultation should be postponed until the committee meets on 19 May, not to stop the process, but to allow member oversight.

The issue now places two questions before residents: what they think of the additional potential development sites, and whether the route by which those documents reached consultation has followed the council's own democratic procedures. For a Local Plan already politically sensitive because it falls well short of assessed housing need while seeking to protect parts of the borough from development, the latest consultation may prove as much about governance as about planning policy.

Residents wishing to examine the latest documents or submit comments can do so through the council's consultation portal at EEBC Local Plan consultation platform. Background examination papers, inspector correspondence and post-

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hearing documents are also available via the council's Local Plan Examination webpage, including the Post Hearing Documents library and Documents from the Inspector. Responses can be submitted on a form available through the consultation portal, by email to localplan@epsom-ewell.gov.uk, or by post to Planning Policy, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom, KT18 5BY.

Comments can be submitted by email to localplan@epsom-ewell.gov.uk or by post to Planning Policy, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5BY. The deadline is 15 June 2026.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

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

Stage 2 Examination of Epsom & Ewell's Local Plan opens Tuesday

Epsom & Ewell's Local Plan under the Green microscope

Epsom and Ewell Local Plan Submitted for Examination

Ex-local LibDem leader explains part of her departure

22 May 2026



Dear Editor

It is indeed regrettable that our (otherwise rather good) MP, Helen Maguire, wished to control what each and every new Liberal Democrat councillor has to say, and presumably fears they are not competent to string a few words together and celebrate their victory.

Not every Liberal Democrat victory in Surrey belongs to Ms Maguire, much as she wishes it does.

It seems to be a problem for Ms Maguire to be a team player, to delegate and trust — and one of the reasons I left the Liberal Democrats after 25 years, the majority of those years leading the Opposition on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

It was also partly the reason Cllr James Lawrence left the Liberal Democrats more recently and similarly became an Independent councillor for the final year of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

She would do well to concentrate on giving the new team in Surrey the respect and degree of autonomy they have earned — and will cherish — in local government, and which will be necessary for them to run East Surrey Council and fulfil the promises made in their election literature and on the doorstep.

Cllr Julie Morris

Independent Councillor for College Ward – Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

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

22 May 2026

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A team of researchers volunteering for the local charity The Friends of Horton Cemetery have reached a milestone in their quest to write the histories of 9000 patients buried in the abandoned privately owned Horton Cemetery. The cemetery, reputed to be the largest asylum cemetery in Europe, is situated at the junction of Hook Road and Horton Lane. The story of Marjorie is the 500th published on the charity's website

A discarded headstone rescued from a skip more than forty years ago led researchers to uncover the poignant story of a young woman buried at Horton Cemetery — and reconnect her memory with living family members.

Before the cemetery was sold by the NHS in 983 to a property speculator, notices appeared in the local press informing relatives that they could reclaim the headstones of loved ones buried there. Families were warned that any memorials left behind would be destroyed.

At the time, an electrical engineer working on a project within the former Epsom hospital cluster discovered one such stone which had been thrown into a skip. Appalled at what he later described as a "blatant disregard" for somebody's final resting place, he rescued the memorial and took it home for safekeeping.

Today, the headstone remains carefully preserved, with the hope that one day it may be returned to the cemetery where it was originally intended to stand in perpetuity.

The inscription reads simply:

Marjorie Young
14th September 1948
Aged 27 years
R.I.P.

As researchers from the Friends of Horton Cemetery began investigating Marjorie's life, they were astonished to discover that a relative was still alive and able to shed light on her tragic story.

The relative, whose mother was Marjorie's first cousin, said: "Your message is a welcome bolt from the blue. I can't believe that after all these years somebody is interested in Marjorie. I didn't know her but my mother so often talked about her. My mother died in 2015 but she still had nightmares about the life Marjorie led."

His words underline one of the central aims of the Friends of Horton Cemetery — ensuring that those buried in the former asylum cemetery are not forgotten.

Research into burial records revealed another heartbreaking detail. The cemetery register records that Marjorie was buried in grave 2892b alongside a "stillborn female child". Marjorie was buried with a stillborn child who researchers believe belonged to an unknown patient.

Such practices were sadly not uncommon. Before changes introduced during the 1980s, hospitals frequently arranged the burial of stillborn babies with little or no consultation with grieving parents. Often, infants were buried in existing graves within institutional cemeteries.

A Family Marked by Tragedy

Marjorie's father, Charles Young, was born in 1894 to Harry Young and Ellen Fanny Young, née Chesterman. According to family recollections, Ellen gave birth to as many as 23 children, though only a handful survived infancy.

The family experienced repeated tragedy. In 1905, Charles's younger sister Minnie died after suffering an epileptic seizure during the night. An inquest heard that Minnie sometimes endured as many as thirteen fits a day. Researchers later discovered that Marjorie herself also suffered from epilepsy.

Charles married Ethel Mary Davis at St Augustine's Church in 1920.

A Childhood of Fear and Isolation

Born on 10 June 1921, Marjorie was an only child. Family testimony has painted a troubling picture of her upbringing. Her cousin recalled stories passed down by his mother: "Marjorie was very clever and wanted to study. She was an only child so welcomed the company of my mother. As time went on it became clear to my mother that Marjorie was terrified, the reason being that her parents went out every night and left her alone in the dark. Neighbours talked of Marjorie standing at the window looking out in the dark.

"Eventually poor Marjorie had a breakdown and was admitted to hospital and my mother never saw her again."

Public records relating to Marjorie are scarce. In the 1939 Register, compiled at the outbreak of the Second World War, she was living in Lambeth and working as a civil servant for His Majesty's Office of Works, the government department responsible for public buildings.

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The next surviving record appears nine years later.

On 14 September 1948, Marjorie died at Long Grove Hospital aged just 27. Her death certificate records broncho-pneumonia and exhaustion caused by epilepsy. She was buried at Horton Cemetery on 21 September 1948.

Someone Cared Enough to Remember

Researchers believe one detail about Marjorie's story is especially important. She had a headstone.

At Horton Cemetery, where thousands were buried in unmarked graves, memorial stones were rare. Someone cared enough to arrange and pay for a marker. Someone completed the paperwork and ensured her resting place was acknowledged. It is also possible that family members attended her funeral.

For her surviving relative, the rediscovery of the headstone has brought comfort. "It is wonderful to hear that her gravestone survives and that has led to her being your 500th story. If only I could tell my mother. She would have been so pleased to know that somebody still cares about Marjorie.

"I think you've done a wonderful job and somehow righted some of the wrongs."

Today, the rescued headstone stands not only for Marjorie Young, but symbolically for the estimated 9,000 forgotten souls buried within Horton Cemetery.

Perhaps one day it will stand there once again.

More research stories can be found on the Horton Cemetery website at Horton Cemetery

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The Friends of Horton Cemetery seek to restore the cemetery to community ownership. The case for a compulsory purchase order was blocked by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council. The charity now pins its hopes on a fresh approach from the East Surrey Unitary Council. The charity has the support of Epsom and Ewell's MP Helen Maguire, who is engaging with the Ministry of Justice on the issue.

Theresa Keneflick-Conway

Related reports:

Friends of Horton Cemetery influence law reform

Epsom and Ewell's MP champion's Friends of Horton Cemetery mission on "Time to Talk Day"

Epsom's Horton Cemetery gets attention of two kinds

Petition to reclaim Horton Cemetery from property speculator

Local community gathered at Horton Cemetery

Redhill data hub plugs into AI boom

22 May 2026



A major expansion of a Redhill data centre campus worth an estimated £500 million has been approved by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.

The development at Foxboro Business Park, Holmethorpe, will see older industrial buildings demolished and replaced with a large new data centre building containing four server halls, offices, electrical infrastructure and cooling equipment.

The scheme was approved by councillors at RBBC's Planning Committee subject to conditions, including controls over construction activity and further work into the possible reuse of waste heat from the site.

The project is being brought forward by property investor Castleforge in partnership with Galaxy Data Centers, which operates data centre facilities.

Data centres are effectively the industrial warehouses of the digital age. Instead of storing goods, they house vast numbers of computers and data storage systems that support cloud computing, artificial intelligence, online banking, business systems, streaming services and internet communications.

The Redhill expansion is intended to strengthen the area's role as part of London's growing digital infrastructure network,

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with the developers saying demand for computing capacity continues to rise rapidly because of AI and other data-heavy technologies.

Planning papers show the new building will provide around 15 megawatts of computing power capacity — enough electricity usage to rival that of a small town.

The council report describes a highly serviced technical building featuring secure server rooms, cooling systems, rooftop plant equipment, backup diesel generators and new electricity substations to ensure uninterrupted operation during power outages.

The development will also include roof-mounted solar panels and has been designed to achieve a BREEAM “Very Good” environmental rating.

One feature highlighted by both the developers and council planners is the potential reuse of heat generated by the computers inside the building.

Data centres produce very large amounts of heat, normally removed by industrial cooling systems. In this case, the planning permission requires further investigation into whether excess heat from the site could eventually be exported to nearby homes through a district heating network.

The approved site lies within the Holmethorpe Industrial Estate, about a mile north-east of Redhill town centre.

Planning documents indicate the wider Redhill Data Centres campus already occupies around 11,800 square metres across three buildings and serves clients in sectors including finance and artificial intelligence.

The site was already authorised for data centre use under earlier planning permissions dating back to 2007 and 2009, meaning the latest approval represents an intensification and modernisation of an existing technology campus rather than an entirely new industrial use.

Residents raised concerns during the planning process over issues including traffic, construction disruption, noise, flood risk, visual appearance and possible health impacts.

However, specialist consultees including Surrey County Council officers, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, Surrey Police and London Gatwick Airport did not object, subject to planning conditions.

The development also reflects a much wider national trend as Britain competes to expand the infrastructure needed for AI and cloud computing.

The UK Government designated data centres as Critical National Infrastructure in 2024, recognising their growing importance to the economy and public services.

Industry analysts CBRE describe London as Europe’s largest data centre market and one of the most important globally, although growth has increasingly been constrained by electricity supply and the difficulty of finding suitable sites close to major urban areas.

Castleforge says it has already invested more than £100 million into the existing Redhill campus since 2024 and now intends to proceed with a further major phase of development following the council’s approval.

For local residents, the project represents another sign of the gradual transformation of industrial estates into high-value digital infrastructure hubs serving the modern economy — largely unseen by the public, but increasingly essential to everyday life.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Epsom “Library of Things” Delayed by Council Stand-Off

22 May 2026



A volunteer-led scheme to open a “Library of Things” in Ewell has been delayed for months amid a stand-off between Surrey County Council (SCC) and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) over who has the authority to approve a key lease.

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The project, led by the Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Network (eeCAN), aims to allow residents to borrow household tools and equipment rather than buy them—an initiative already operating successfully in other parts of Surrey. However, despite securing planning permission for an external storage unit at Bourne Hall in early April, the scheme remains unable to open to the public.

At the heart of the delay is confusion between the roles of the county and borough councils. SCC operates the library service within Bourne Hall and has entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with eeCAN covering the delivery of the service. But the land and building are owned by EEBC, meaning any lease for the external storage facility must be agreed with the borough.

In correspondence seen by the Epsom and Ewell Times, a senior SCC officer states that the county council "would not be a contracting party nor is there a requirement for a formal approach from us," adding that any lease should be agreed directly with EEBC.

However, EEBC's Head of Property and Regeneration takes a different view. He explains that under his delegated authority he can only progress matters involving Surrey County Council, which he describes as the legal occupier of the Bourne Hall library space. He also cites legal obligations requiring any new lease to be openly marketed to ensure "Best Value," rather than agreed directly with a single organisation.

The result is an impasse: SCC says it is not required to initiate the lease, while EEBC says it cannot proceed in the way requested. Meanwhile, the community group finds itself unable to move forward.

William Ward, Chair and Co-founder of eeCAN, describes mounting frustration. Writing to both councils, he points to months of correspondence since December and says the group now has "many local residents who have already signed up… asking why the opening has been delayed and when they can borrow the donated items they need."

The delays have already forced the postponement of the scheme's planned launch around Earth Day, with construction of the storage unit also on hold pending agreement of the lease.

The situation also raises questions about consistency across Surrey. Ward notes that similar "Library of Things" schemes elsewhere in the county do not appear to have encountered the same requirement for formal inter-council processes, suggesting potential differences in how local authorities interpret their responsibilities.

For observers, the episode offers a practical illustration of the challenges inherent in Surrey's two-tier system of local government. Responsibilities for a single site are split between county and borough, with separate legal, operational and property roles. While each authority's position may be individually justifiable, the combined effect can be delay, duplication and uncertainty for community groups trying to deliver local services.

The issue comes at a time when Surrey is preparing to replace its current structure with unitary authorities. Proponents of reform argue that merging responsibilities into a single tier could reduce exactly this kind of confusion. Critics, however, warn that large new authorities risk becoming more remote from local needs.

In the case of the Bourne Hall Library of Things, the immediate concern is more practical. Without resolution between the two councils, a project intended to promote sustainability, reduce household costs and strengthen community engagement remains on hold, it has been claimed.

Surrey County Council and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council joined forces in issuing a response to these claims. A spokesperson said:

"Surrey County Council (SCC) Libraries enables external providers to operate a "Library of Things" service across the county. Under the agreed arrangements, all "Library of Things" providers are responsible for organising off-site storage for larger items, while smaller items may be stored within library buildings where space allows.

"Ewell Library is located at Bourne Hall, which Surrey County Council leases from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC). As both the planning authority and freeholder of Bourne Hall, EEBC is responsible for approving any external storage within the grounds.

"Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Network was advised at an early stage that planning permission and landowner agreement would be required for an external store to house larger items. Planning permission was granted earlier this year, and the proposal will be presented to the next meeting of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Environment Committee which is scheduled to take place on 23 June. Committee agreement is required before volunteers can manage the store.

"Both councils look forward to welcoming a new "Library of Things" to Ewell, building on the success already seen at Dorking, Godalming, Guildford and Haslemere Libraries, supporting residents to share resources and reduce waste."

Sam Jones – Reporter



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