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Locators looking for Surrey home seekers

10 May 2026



Channel 4’s long-running property programme Location, Location, Location is searching for Surrey house hunters to take part in its next series filming this June.

Fronted by property experts Kirstie Allsopp and Phil Spencer, the show has been a fixture on British television for more than 20 years, helping buyers across the UK find their ideal homes.

The programme makers are now looking for individuals, couples and families across Surrey who need help finding their next property — whether they are first-time buyers, upsizing, downsizing, relocating or searching for a “forever home”.

A spokesperson for Channel 4 said: “We are casting for the new series, and we are interested in hearing from chain-free (or SSTC) house hunters who would be ready to buy in June this year.

“Applications are now open and we’re looking to spread the word to the community to encourage house hunters to apply and get the help they need.

“We are looking for individuals, families and couples who need Kirstie and Phil’s expertise to buy their dream home.

“Whether applicants are first-time buyers, looking for their next dream home, downsizing or relocating — whatever the reason they’re moving, we love to hear from them.”

The broadcaster said it strongly encourages applicants from all backgrounds and identities to apply as part of its commitment to greater inclusivity on screen.

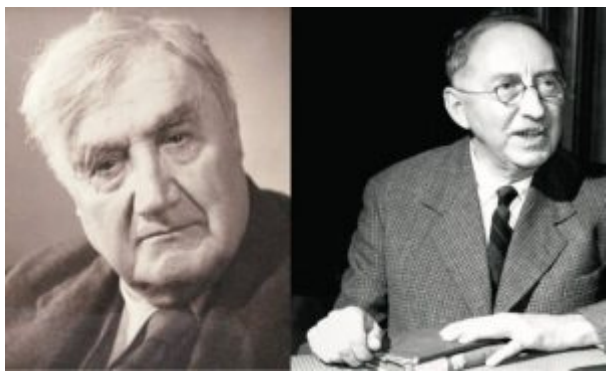
LocaroApplications can be made through the programme’s official application page: Location, Location, Location applications

Applications will be handled by IWC Media, which will contact applicants directly if they wish to take the application further.

Photo: Presenters Phil Spencer and Kirstie Allsopp

Dorking’s role as a refuge from Nazi oppression

10 May 2026



Papers documenting how novelist E.M. Forster and composer Ralph Vaughan Williams helped refugees fleeing Nazi persecution find shelter in the Surrey town of Dorking are to be made fully accessible online for the first time, through a new project led by the University of Surrey and Dorking Museum.

The Dorking and District Refugee Committee was established in 1938 to support people escaping Nazi oppression in central Europe. Operating throughout the Second World War, the committee found housing, work and medical care for refugees, and later helped Dorking’s German and Czech nationals apply to Home Office tribunals to avoid internment as enemy aliens. Its records – held by Dorking Museum – are of national and international significance, containing individual stories of displacement, solidarity and community response during one of the darkest periods in modern history.

The project, Accessing Refugee History in Surrey, is funded by the Community Foundation for Surrey and led by Professor Constance Bantman and Dr Beth Palmer from the University of Surrey’s School of Arts, Humanities and Creative Industries. It will create a new web-based archive, making the committee’s records fully searchable and publicly available, alongside teaching and support resources for schools, researchers and community groups. A launch event and other activities to publicise this significant resource will take place later in 2026.

Among the stories contained in the records is that of Sir Erich Reich, who arrived in Britain on a Kindertransport in 1939,

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aged four. With his older brothers sent elsewhere, Vaughan Williams personally brought the young boy to Burchett House in Dorking – a hostel provided rent-free by the Duke of Newcastle – where refugees received support from the committee. Reich went on to become a successful entrepreneur and philanthropist, and credited Dorking with saving his life.

The committee's work extended beyond housing. When war was declared in 1939, Dorking's German nationals faced internment. The committee intervened on behalf of individuals, including Erika Schmidt-Landry, a former journalist whose husband had been interned on the Isle of Man, and who faced the prospect of placing her three children in an orphanage. Forster and Vaughan Williams took up her case directly.

Professor Constance Bantman, Head of Literature and Languages and Professor of French History at the University of Surrey, said

"These records tell the stories of people who were forced to leave everything behind, and of a community that chose to help them. Making this archive accessible means those stories – of both the refugees and the people of Dorking who supported them – can be understood and learned from by a much wider audience. At a time when questions about refuge and displacement remain urgent, this history has a great deal to teach us."

Dr Beth Palmer, Associate Professor in English Literature at the University of Surrey, said:

"The Dorking Refugee Committee papers are a remarkable collection. They document not just the administrative work of the committee but the human detail – the individual cases, the letters, the decisions that changed lives. Our aim is to make all of this available to researchers, educators and the public, and to provide resources that help people engage with this important chapter of Surrey's history."

Kathy Atherton, Chair and exhibitions, Dorking Museum, said:

"The papers of the Dorking Refugee Committee are one of the most popularly requested by researchers in the archive. Covering the period from 1938 into the post-war period and immensely detailed, the papers are of national interest in documenting the refugee experience during these years.

"We are very pleased to be working with the team from the University of Surrey to bring these papers to a wider audience whilst at the same time protecting the originals from excessive handling."

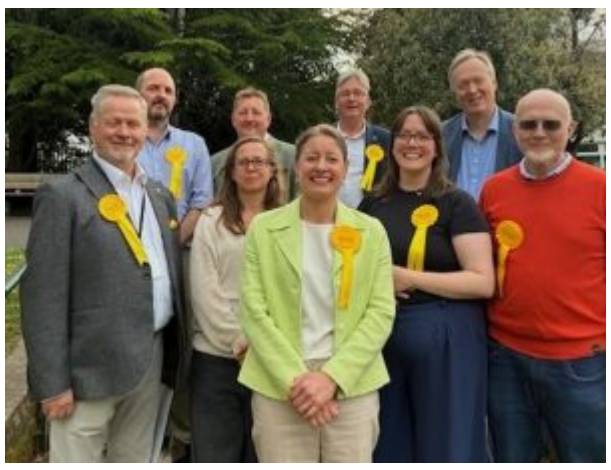
The project will also produce teaching resources designed to support engagement with the collection, making the archive a practical tool for education alongside its research value.

Surrey University

Image: R Vaugan-Williams and EM Forster

Lib Dem Landslide Takes East Surrey

10 May 2026



The Liberal Democrats have won the first ever election for East Surrey Council winning a huge majority on the newly formed authority. The party surged to an early lead as the votes began to trickle in during the Friday, May 8 count and never looked back as seat after seat turned yellow.

When the votes were all counted they won 40 of the 72 seats up for grabs, giving them a huge lead over the second placed Conservatives who managed 10. What had been expected to be a close race with no single party being able to command an outright win soon turned into a landslide with the Lib Dems saying the result offers people a "fresh start" after years of Conservative rule.

The old county council had previously always been under Tory control but in borough elections over the past five years the Liberal Democrats have made significant gains. Today, they said, that the decades-long journey was complete.

Liberal Democrat spokesperson for East Surrey Bridget Kendrick said: "I personally thought we had a very strong chance of taking control and a lot of people underestimated the power of Epsom and Ewell Liberal Democrats but we saw it on

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the ground day in and day out on the door. We've been very clear that this is an incredible opportunity for a fresh start in East Surrey. This is really about a cultural change of transparency.

"Our priority is adult social care and special education, and across Surrey we have been delivering good services and being financially competent. It's a fresh start for culture and transparency. I'd like to thank everyone who campaigned for so long, for everyone who stood, regardless of parties -for the democratic process. For everyone voting for hope.

"We are going to have our own significant challenges (early estimates suggest the new authority faces an immediate £35m budget shortfall). We need to put people at the forefront of decisions. Turnout was high, it was a good moment for democracy. It's a good moment for Liberal democrats. We have worked for this moment for decades."

The new East Surrey Council will sit in shadow for its first year as the old two tier system of Surrey County Council and its 11 boroughs and districts is wound up. East Surrey is the merger of Elmbridge, Reigate and Banstead, Epsom and Ewell, Mole Valley, and Tandridge – and the eastern half of the county council.

West Surrey, which was also won by the Liberal Democrats comprises Runnymede, Spelthorne, Waverley, Guildford, Surrey Heath and the eastern half of the county council.

East Surrey results in full:

Liberal Democrats, 40 seats
Conservative, 10
The Green Party, 8
Reform UK , 5
Residents Associations of Epsom and Ewell, 2
Independent, 2
Ashtead Independent, working with Ashtead Residents, 2
Tattenhams Residents' Associations , 2
The Molesey Residents Association, 1

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Related reports:

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 results for Epsom and Ewell

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

10 May 2026



Bourne Hall, Ewell, Friday 8th May – the Count of the five local divisions in the East Surrey Unitary Council elections.

As reported elsewhere, local Liberal Democrats took eight out of ten seats in the Epsom and Ewell Area on Thursday's local elections.

Our reporter, in the room reserved for media interviews at the Count, was talking to soon to be elected Liberal Democrat candidate Roy Deadman. Entered the room Helen Maguire's communication *(sic)* officer who stated her party's candidates were not to talk to the press! The press were only to talk to her boss.

What hare-brained politics studies undergraduate idea this was of a communications strategy is any body's idea. Neither "liberal" nor "democratic". Ms Maguire, you can do better than this.

Somewhat handicapped by this injunction your reporter had more time to gauge feelings and responses from the other parties.

Clearly a very poor showing from Labour who had a proud record of consistent representation in Court Ward and a succession of highly respected Labour Mayors.

Reform posted substantial votes in most of the five divisions but failed to get even a second place.

The Conservatives appear to be saying goodbye to Epsom and Ewell as a safe Conservative parliamentary seat, that it had been for ever, up to Helen Maguire's Liberal Democrat victory in July 2024.

The Greens polled admirably but failed to make the breakthrough that they were hoping for.

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The Residents Associations' faces were saved by the personal appeal and integrity of Eber Kington and Peter O'Donovan who won their seats by substantial margins. Elsewhere, the RA leaders Hannah Dalton and Neil Dallen fell woefully behind both Liberal Democrats and Reform by hundreds of votes.

It would seem that the direction, motivation and relevance of the long-ruling Residents Association has been lost and a new era has dawned.

The full EAST SURREY election results will be published HERE in due course.

On a lighter note. Council issued coloured rubber thimbles sparked controversy. Handed out to the dedicated and hard-working counters, they were brightly coloured green, red and yellow. Were they for counting particular party votes? No, just a co-incidence but that did not stop one Reform candidate asking why there were no purple ones.

Lionel Blackman

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

10 May 2026



The results are in.

Of the 10 seats in Epsom and Ewell the Liberal Democrats dominate with the election of 8 of their candidates. The Residents Association took 2. None of the other parties gained any seats. See full results below.

Announced from the count by deputy returning officer and EEBC CEO Jackie King at Bourne Hall in Ewell on Friday 8th May.

You may need to refresh your browser during the results period for the updating to appear.

The top two in each division are elected.

Epsom Town & Downs

Epsom West

Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington

Ewell Village, Stoneleigh & Nonsuch

West Ewell

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According to the Council the full results for the East Surrey Council will be published on the Future Surrey website.

View of Bourne Hall and Museum, Spring Street, Ewell. (Credit: Google Street View)

You can now watch online the Epsom & Ewell Times Election Hustings

10 May 2026



Residents from across the borough gathered at NESCOT on Wednesday (29th April) evening for a wide-ranging East Surrey unitary council election hustings, hosted by Epsom and Ewell Times and chaired by local solicitor Lionel Blackman.

Six candidates representing the main political groups contesting the forthcoming elections addressed the audience, setting out their priorities and responding to questions on key local issues. Those taking part were Eber Kington (Residents' Association), David Buxton (Liberal Democrats), Robert Geleit (Labour), Kieran Persand (Conservative), Yvonne Grunwald (Green Party) and Ben Cronin (Reform UK).

You can view the recording of the husting here.

Opening statements revealed both shared concerns and sharply differing approaches to local governance. Conservative candidate Kieran Persand emphasised his party's campaigning record on issues such as Green Belt protection and crime, arguing that "track record" was the key distinction between parties.

Labour's Robert Geleit drew on his long experience as a borough councillor, highlighting community engagement and investment in disadvantaged areas, while also reflecting on his own personal journey overcoming adversity.

Liberal Democrat David Buxton focused on what he described as the need for "practical, joined-up solutions", particularly in road maintenance, special educational needs provision and infrastructure planning, arguing that current systems were not delivering for residents.

Green Party candidate Yvonne Grunwald highlighted cost-of-living pressures, environmental protection and the need for more community and youth spaces, pointing to her party's growing representation locally.

Reform UK's Ben Cronin centred his remarks on transparency and accountability, calling for a "full review" of council decisions and criticising what he described as wasteful spending, including issues surrounding the Rainbow Leisure Centre.

Residents' Association representative Eber Kington positioned his group as a non-party alternative focused purely on local issues, stressing a positive campaigning approach and independence from national politics.

A lively question-and-answer session followed, with residents pressing candidates on practical concerns.

Road maintenance and potholes dominated the opening exchanges. Candidates broadly agreed the current system is too reactive, though solutions varied. Conservatives pointed to increased funding and a need for more strategic planning, Liberal Democrats argued for improved management and more in-house delivery, while others called for a return to long-term resurfacing programmes rather than repeated short-term repairs.

Youth provision emerged as another major concern, with audience members highlighting the decline of youth clubs and

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accessible spaces. Candidates across the political spectrum acknowledged the gap, suggesting a mix of direct council investment, partnerships with charities and sports organisations, and better use of existing community facilities.

Questions on the future structure of local government prompted discussion on how communities would be represented under the proposed East Surrey unitary authority. Candidates spoke of the need for stronger consultation, local committees and improved transparency, though some warned that new structures must avoid becoming ineffective "talking shops".

Throughout the evening, a common theme was the challenge of translating broad promises—on roads, youth services and local accountability—into deliverable policy within a new council structure.

The hustings provided voters with a rare opportunity to hear directly from candidates across the political spectrum ahead of polling day. While there was broad agreement on the issues facing residents, the event highlighted clear divisions over how they should be addressed—and who is best placed to deliver change.

Photo: Hustings platform – L to R: Buxton, Persand, Kington, Blackman, Geliet, Grunwald, Cronin

Solar Panels green-light in Mole Valley a grey area?

10 May 2026



Solar panels powering up to 5,500 homes have been approved for prime Surrey agricultural land that could have been used to put the "wheat in our Weetabix". Mole Valley District Council's April development committee green lit the renewable energy plant for Little Flanchford Farm in Flanchford Road, Leigh.

The former green belt site was considered to be some of Surrey's best and most versatile agricultural land, but the plans were recommended because the council sees renewable energy as central to achieving a sustainable, low-carbon future. The panels will convert light into electricity and contribute enough renewable electricity and low carbon energy to cut 4,052 tonnes of CO_2 per year from the atmosphere, with the development standing for up to 40 years before being decommissioned and the site returned to agricultural use.

Residents objecting said special circumstances of the solar farm were not enough to outweigh the harm it would cause to green belt land, with one saying it would significantly affect the area for up to 10 years as planting would be ineffective for the first quarter of its lifespan and, even when fully in place, would not provide screening for several months a year, adding: "A decade of admitted damage is a serious policy conflict."

Councillor Joanne Willoughby of Leigh Parish said the council was not against the principle of solar development but was concerned that open undeveloped agricultural countryside within the wider rural green belt was being classed as grey belt. The solar farm's agent said the plant would improve local energy resilience and support businesses and homes through lower network charges, and would also curb the need for pylons crisscrossing the country.

Councillor Simon Budd (Conservative: Brockham, Betchworth, Buckland, Box Hill and Headley) said: "Saying that it is a grey belt, that is an absolute nonsense. That is green belt all day long. Nothing is out there. I'm told that green belt is only to protect Dorking and Reigate merging, well I don't think it is. I think the green belt is there to protect the villages. I'm in favour of solar panels on top of buildings, on top of car parks, but not now on 'best and most versatile land. And that is what it is, that is the land that feeds us, that puts the wheat in your Weetabix."

The plans were approved by eight votes to four with three abstentions.

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Flanchford Road, Leigh (image Google)

Related reports:

Mole Valley Solar farm decision

Party divide on Surrey solar farm?

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Arrests from Epsom’s April disorder

10 May 2026



Surrey Police have confirmed that **10 people have now been arrested** as part of an ongoing investigation into violent disorder in Epsom town centre earlier this month.

The arrests relate to incidents on **Wednesday 15 April and Monday 20 April**, when protests escalated into disorder in the town centre.

In a detailed update published on 5 May by Surrey Police, officers set out the ages and home areas of those arrested, showing a mix of local individuals and others from outside the immediate area.

The arrests were carried out over several days:

On 17 April, an 18-year-old man from Banstead was arrested on suspicion of public order offences.

On 20 April, a 23-year-old man from Richmond-upon-Thames was arrested on suspicion of public order offences and was further arrested on suspicion of criminal damage.

On 21 April:
• a 21-year-old man from Epsom was arrested on suspicion of public order offences
• a 20-year-old man of no fixed address was arrested on suspicion of public order offences
• a 15-year-old boy from Purley was arrested on suspicion of public order offences and further arrested on suspicion of criminal damage

On 23 April:
• a 12-year-old boy from Epsom was arrested on suspicion of public order offences
• a 12-year-old girl from Epsom was arrested on suspicion of public order offences
• an 11-year-old boy from Epsom was arrested on suspicion of public order offences

On 24 April, a 16-year-old boy from Leatherhead was arrested on suspicion of public order offences.

On 27 April, a 20-year-old man from Epsom was arrested on suspicion of public order offences.

Police confirmed that **all 10 individuals have been released on bail with conditions**, and that enquiries are continuing.

The latest update follows an earlier statement on 23 April in which five arrests were initially confirmed. At that stage, those detained were identified as a 15-year-old boy from Purley, an 18-year-old man from Banstead, a 20-year-old man of no fixed address, a 21-year-old man from Epsom, and a 23-year-old man from Richmond-upon-Thames.

Detective Chief Superintendent Jon Groenen said: “Whilst we support the right to lawful protest, we will investigate those suspected of committing criminal offences and causing damage, disruption, and disorder.

“We continue to review footage to identify those responsible and will take appropriate action against them.”

The investigation remains ongoing, with officers continuing to examine CCTV, social media and body-worn video footage.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Epsom and the Perils of Instant Judgement

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Classroom to Cruise: Epsom Student Wins Luxury Family Trip

10 May 2026



A Nescot student has won a luxury seven-night family cruise after taking part in an innovative work experience programme that swaps the classroom for life at sea.

Travel and Tourism students from **North East Surrey College of Technology** (Nescot) in Epsom joined peers from Itchen College, Southampton, on a five-day river cruise through Germany and the Netherlands as part of the Cruise Career Springboard initiative. The programme brings together education and the cruise industry, giving students hands-on experience while promoting careers in the sector.

During the trip aboard the VIVA Enjoy, students were tasked with creating social media content, planning excursions, and developing marketing ideas aimed at attracting younger travellers. The experience combined practical learning with the realities of working in a fast-moving hospitality and tourism environment.

Among the group was 17-year-old **Jordyn Leyland McKenzie**, whose work stood out and ultimately secured her the programme's top prize — an all-inclusive seven-night cruise for her family on the Rhine or Danube.

Jordyn said she had little idea what to expect when she first joined the programme.

"When I first joined the Cruise Career Springboard programme as part of our Travel and Tourism course, I had no idea I'd actually get the opportunity to go on a cruise. We found out later that a small group of us would get that chance by producing a presentation which impressed our tutors. I was over the moon when I found out I was one of the lucky ones."

Reflecting on the trip itself, she described it as far more immersive than she had imagined.

"We went on a four-day cruise on the VIVA Enjoy. On the first day, we had to post snapshots of the cruise on our social media stories. We also made a small video showing the rooms and the excursions, which I ended up using in my final presentation. My personal highlights were definitely the beautiful three-course meals, the hot tub on the top deck, and going on a bike ride in Amsterdam using the bikes VIVA kept on the boat. We saw so much, it felt like we were there for ages — it was just amazing."

After returning to the UK, students were invited to compete for the top prize through a second presentation. Jordyn took a creative approach, producing a TikTok-style promotional video aimed at younger audiences, alongside a quiz and a mock brand partnership idea.

"I adored the first experience so much, I was 100% up for the challenge," she said. "I did a TikTok video in an 'influencer style' to show how they could promote the cruise to younger people. I also created a quiz and an example of a brand partnership that might work for the company."

The result was announced during an online meeting at Nescot, with students gathered in a classroom and judges joining via video call.

"We had to wait a month to find out the results. We were all dressed smartly at college and the judges were on a Zoom call. When they eventually said my name, I didn't even hear it at first until I saw everyone looking at me. I was lost for words. After the call, they filmed me ringing my mum who was so excited. I can't even believe it's real."

She said the experience had a lasting impact on her confidence and ambitions.

"The Cruise Career Springboard experience has pushed me out of my comfort zone and really boosted my confidence. It's been incredible, and now I get to treat my family to a seven-night, all-inclusive trip. I'm just so grateful for the opportunity."

Julie Kapsalis MBE, Principal and CEO of Nescot, said the programme demonstrates the value of giving students real-world opportunities beyond the classroom.

"We always work to give our students real-world experiences and swapping the classroom for a cruise must be one of the most exciting we've ever offered," she said. "The programme develops confidence, self-belief and communication skills, while also giving the industry insight into how to attract a younger generation of customers."

Industry representatives involved in judging also praised the quality of the students' work. Michelle Daniels of VIVA Cruises said she took away ideas for her marketing team, while mentor Graham Sadler highlighted the transformation in students' confidence and engagement over the course of the programme.

The Cruise Career Springboard initiative, founded by Matthew and Edwina Lonsdale, brings together education providers

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and cruise industry professionals, with nearly 100 individuals contributing their time to support young people considering careers at sea.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

Ewell students cruise to new careers

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Teacher banned after fake war-zone stories to Epsom and Ewell pupils

10 May 2026



A former Epsom and Ewell High School maths teacher has been banned from teaching after a professional conduct panel found she fabricated stories to pupils about being in the army, going to war zones and suffering serious combat injuries.

The Teaching Regulation Agency report, published by GOV.UK, says Alexandra Slay began work as a maths teacher at Epsom and Ewell High School in December 2016 and became Head of Year on 26 May 2023. Concerns were raised in August 2023 about her communications with a pupil, leading to referrals to the Local Authority Designated Officer and police. The police informed the school on 18 September 2023 that they would not be continuing their investigation. Miss Slay resigned on 9 November 2023 and was referred to the TRA in December 2023.

The panel found proved that, between 2019 and 2023, Miss Slay gave her personal mobile number or personal email address to one or more pupils, sent inappropriate or over-familiar messages, shared details of her personal life, and fabricated stories about “being in a conflict and/or war zone and/or sustaining injuries”.

The official report says Miss Slay “appeared to have fabricated a narrative to pupils which involved her having a role in the army, where she would often take trips to war zones, undertake training and/or be involved in conflict.” In her disciplinary interview, when asked about the messages, she said they were “all fabricated” and added: “I made up the lie to feel that I belong, was a part of the world.”

The Times reported that Miss Slay had falsely claimed to have served in the Australian army and had sent one pupil more than 2,500 emails and other messages. It also reported that messages from an invented “Lieutenant Danny Blackburn” described her supposed combat injuries.

The TRA decision records that messages said to be from “Lt. Danny Blackburn” included claims that “Cpt Slay’s body is at a weak stage” and that she was being put on oxygen. Other messages referred to gunshot wounds, “severe amounts of blood”, cardiac arrest and having “flatlined”. The panel found the fabricated injury messages had the potential to cause stress and alarm to pupils.

The panel also found Miss Slay had failed to maintain appropriate teacher-pupil relationships and had instead developed relationships “more akin to friendships”. It found she had breached the Teachers’ Standards, including the requirements to observe proper professional boundaries and safeguard pupils’ wellbeing.

In deciding sanction, the panel said prohibition was “both proportionate and appropriate”, noting that Miss Slay had developed inappropriate relationships with a number of children through “highly inappropriate and unprofessional communications” and had failed to report multiple safeguarding concerns. The Secretary of State’s decision-maker

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imposed a prohibition order.

The order prevents Miss Slay from teaching indefinitely in any school, sixth-form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England. She may apply for it to be set aside, but not until 21 April 2028.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Epsom and Ewell High School – Google street view

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Luxury spa and restaurant coming to Ockley

10 May 2026



A "beautiful" and "fantastic" high-end luxury hotel, spa and fine dining restaurant set in the Surrey countryside has been approved.

Gatton Manor and Country Club will be transformed as part of a £41 million project to demolish the closed hotel and failing golf course and replace them with 81 guest rooms, two restaurants, and a spa featuring indoor and wild swimming pools, a gym, and treatment and relaxation areas.

The 22-hectare site near Ockley is expected to generate around 290 construction jobs during the two-year build, followed by 145 permanent roles once the development is operational.

Planning officers told Mole Valley District Council's April development committee that the proposal would create a destination venue in the borough and bring significant investment into the rural economy. They added: "It is such a beautiful site, it is such a large site, it has got woodland, open areas, it is really a lovely, lovely, rural area and because of its size and the amount of landscape it is more than capable of absorbing this amount of development."

In addition to the hotel, new facilities will be open to the public, including a fine dining restaurant and gym. The scheme also includes two tennis courts and three padel courts, with up to 100 gym memberships offered at preferential rates to residents living within 3km of the site.

Access to the hotel and spa will be via Standon Lane, linking the A29 Stane Street with Horsham Road. The existing hotel closed in 2022, and its adjoining 18-hole golf course had already been earmarked for closure regardless of the planning outcome.

Officers noted the development would also support businesses further along the supply chain. However, some residents objected, raising concerns about the impact on the openness of the countryside and increased pressure on local roads.

Developers acknowledged the loss of the golf course was regrettable but said it had been operating at a loss for several years and was no longer viable.

Councillor Roger Adams (Liberal Democrat, Bookham West) said: "With global warming and rising temperatures I suspect a lot of people seeking a holiday will no longer be heading to the Mediterranean but may well seek to have staycations, and where better to stay for a holiday than Surrey. We've got beautiful country here and we do need developments such as this. It will provide employment and enhance the visitor offer."

Councillor Monica Weller (Liberal Democrat, Bookham West) added: "It really is quite fantastic as far as I'm concerned. A business like this has got to bring something really quite fantastic to our area and that is really to be welcomed."

Plans for new hotel and spa in Ockley (MVDC)

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Saturday 9 May is Surrey Day – and this year, we're digging deeper

10 May 2026

Now in its eighth year, Surrey Day is about bringing communities together to celebrate everything that makes this county so special. In 2026, the theme is Going Underground, and it's an invitation to see Surrey as you've never seen it before. Forget what you think you know about this beautiful county. Beneath the rolling hills and the familiar high streets of its market towns lies a world of hidden treasures just waiting to be unearthed.

Whether you fancy venturing into the literal underground or uncovering something altogether more unexpected, Surrey Day 2026 has something to spark the curiosity of all the family. Enjoy hands-on activities, torchlit tours, guided walks, unseen histories, a disco in a tunnel and stories in caves, re-enactments in shelters, castles to explore, fossils galore – and so much more!

While there will be events and activities countywide, this year, Epsom is taking centre stage as a key host town for the very first time. BBC Radio Surrey will be broadcasting live from Epsom from 12-3pm so keep your ears open – or better still, get down there and join in! The headline act is the extraordinary Ashley Road Deep Level Air Raid Shelter – a grid of brick-lined tunnels constructed 50 feet underground to shelter 1,500 people from the Blitz. Now hidden in woodland on the edge of town, there will be torchlit guided tours, but book early as these will sell out.

Many Surrey museums will also have Going Underground events such as Bourne Hall Museum in Ewell with an exciting full day of discovery, including an archaeological walk-and-talk, coin identification drop-ins and the remarkable story of the Epsom Aurochs which was a 3,500-year-old giant prehistoric animal unearthed locally in 2023. Or nearby in Dorking, there are castle and cave tours, guided history walks, and a chance to get hands-on with fascinating old inventions at Dorking Museum & Heritage Centre. A particular highlight is an impressively large-scale reconstruction of the very first Baronyx fossil discovery. On the other side of the county, Guildford Museum has fun hands-on fossil handling sessions, while Surrey History Centre presents a day of talks celebrating some of Surrey's lesser-known artists. At Brookwood, you can be taken on a guided tour of the American Military Cemetery or if you head out further towards Tilford, you can get involved in 2 thrilling days of re-enactments at the open-air Rural Life Living Museum, finding out what daily life was like amid rationing and air-raids. If you've never visited, this is an experience you won't forget in a hurry!

Find out more and plan your Surrey Day at visitsurrey.com/surrey-day and if you like a podcast, the BBC Secret Surrey series is a great companion to the day's events.

Surrey County Council

A call to vote at the new East Surrey Council election 7th May

10 May 2026



Voters Urged to Have Their Say in First East and West Surrey Council Elections

With just one week to go until polling day on Thursday 7 May, voters across Surrey are being urged to take part in the

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first elections for the new East Surrey and West Surrey unitary councils.

The vote marks a major step in the reorganisation of local government across the county. From 1 April 2027, the new councils will assume responsibility for all key local services currently split between county and district/borough councils. These include education, waste collection, highways, housing, planning, children's services, adult social care and more.

Those elected next week will initially sit on Shadow Authorities for East and West Surrey. These bodies will oversee the transition to the new system, including setting budgets and council tax levels, agreeing staffing structures and governance arrangements, adopting codes of conduct, and preparing for the transfer of services ahead of vesting day.

Mari Roberts-Wood, Returning Officer for the East Surrey elections, said: "These elections are your opportunity to choose who represents you on your new council and makes decisions on important local matters, including how the council is set up, so be sure to use your vote."

Andrew Pritchard, Returning Officer for the West Surrey elections, added: "Electors will be able to vote for up to two different candidates to represent their ward. Remember, your vote is your decision and yours alone. You do not need to tell anyone how you voted."

Polling stations open 7am–10pm

Polling stations will be open from 7am to 10pm on Thursday 7 May. Voters attending in person must bring an accepted form of photo ID. Without it, you will not be able to vote and will be asked to return with valid identification.

Accepted forms of ID include a UK, EEA or Commonwealth passport, a UK or EEA driving licence, biometric immigration documents, and certain concessionary travel passes such as an older person's bus pass or an Oyster 60+ card. A free Voter Authority Certificate is also valid. Expired ID can still be used if the photograph remains a good likeness, but the name must match the electoral register.

For full details of accepted identification, visit the Electoral Commission website.

Find your polling station

Voters are advised to check their poll card carefully before attending, as polling station locations may have changed. You do not need your poll card to vote, but it provides useful details including your polling station.

You can find your polling station, ward, and a list of candidates by entering your postcode here:

surreylgrhub.gov.uk/elections/vote-person

If you have lost your poll card, you can still vote.

Those voting as a proxy must attend the polling station allocated to the person they are voting on behalf of, not their own.

Postal voting guidance

If you are voting by post, it is important to follow the instructions carefully to ensure your vote is counted. You may vote for up to two candidates where applicable.

Make sure you:
complete your ballot paper in secret
fill in the postal voting statement correctly
place all documents in the correct envelopes
seal the envelope yourself

Postal votes should be returned as soon as possible. If you are unable to post it in time, you can hand it in at a polling station up to 10pm on polling day.

Emergency proxy voting

If you are unable to vote in person due to illness, an emergency, or because your photo ID has been lost or damaged, you can apply for an emergency proxy vote until 5pm on polling day.

Details and application forms are available via the Electoral Commission website.

Accessible voting

Polling stations are equipped to support voters with additional needs. This includes accessible entrances, low-level polling booths and assistance from trained staff. Voters are encouraged to ask for help if required.

Further information

You can find more details about the elections, including wards and candidates, at:
surreylgrhub.gov.uk/elections

For broader information about the local government reorganisation in Surrey, visit:
surreylgrhub.gov.uk

General guidance on voting is available from the Electoral Commission.

For residents without internet access, local electoral services teams at district and borough councils can provide assistance by phone.

The 7 May elections represent the first stage in establishing the new unitary councils, which will replace Surrey's current two-tier system in April 2027.

Sam Jones – Reporter

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East Surrey Council, an election that calls for distinction?

10 May 2026

As voters in Epsom and Ewell prepare to elect representatives to the new East Surrey Unitary Council on 7th May, two unfolding controversies raise a broader question: how should voters judge those seeking office when key decisions remain unexplained?

At the centre of both issues is a bizarre but all the same political deployment of Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 to justify a refusal to answer questions. As previously reported, this provision is aimed at preventing political publicity, not at preventing factual explanation. Yet it has been relied upon in two separate cases to decline engagement with legitimate enquiries.

One concerns the Rainbow Leisure Centre, where a confidential council decision identified potential dilapidations of up to £500,000 shortly after a change of operator. The public is still waiting for clarity on how such a liability arose. The other concerns the signing of a submission in the name of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council relating to a proposed second tier of governance above unitary councils, where questions remain about authority and process.

In both cases, the refusal to answer questions has come at a moment when accountability matters most — immediately before an election.

This matters because local elections are not simply about party labels. They are about judgement, competence and accountability. For nearly a century, the Residents' Association has governed Epsom and Ewell, attracting many capable and committed councillors who have avoided the severe financial problems seen in a number of Councils in West Surrey. That record carries weight.

But continuity also brings its own challenges. Some councillors, including among the four who have left the ruling group of Residents Association councillors since the last Borough elections, have raised concerns about the "undemocratic" style of leadership in recent years. Others, still within the group, have expressed to Epsom and Ewell Times unease but privately. Many councillors are not political operators by instinct and appear reluctant to challenge leadership decisions publicly or otherwise "rock the boat". Though the former main opposition LibDems on EEBC have not been without their own divisions; they lost two of their four councillors to independent benches.

For voters, that creates a need to distinguish between individuals as well as affiliations. A candidate's independence of judgement, willingness to question, and approach to transparency may matter as much as their political alignment.

At the same time, the forthcoming election is not for the existing borough council but for a new authority covering a much wider area. The East Surrey Council will bring together multiple districts into a single body responsible for all local services. That change introduces a second consideration for voters: influence.

Available projections and polling suggest that no single grouping is guaranteed dominance, but that larger national parties — including the Liberal Democrats and others with broader geographic bases — may be well placed to secure significant representation across the new authority. A recent JLP Partners opinion poll has placed the Liberal Democrats a nose ahead at 29% over a split right vote between Conservatives (25%) and Reform (27%). At a national level, the political landscape itself appears increasingly fragmented, with gains forecast for smaller and emerging parties alongside shifts in traditional support.

In that context, voters may find themselves weighing two different questions. One is who best represents Epsom and Ewell locally. The other is which candidates are most likely to have influence within the Unitary Council that will take decisions affecting the area for years to come.

Neither question has a simple answer. Voting for independent or Residents' Association candidates may prioritise local identity and continuity. Voting for candidates aligned with larger parties may offer a greater chance of being part of the administration of the new authority.

What the current controversies underline is that accountability, transparency and willingness to engage with scrutiny are central to that judgement. When questions about significant public decisions remain unanswered, voters are entitled to take that into account.

The ballot on 7th May is therefore not only about the future structure of local government. It is also an opportunity for voters to decide what standards they expect from those who seek to represent them.

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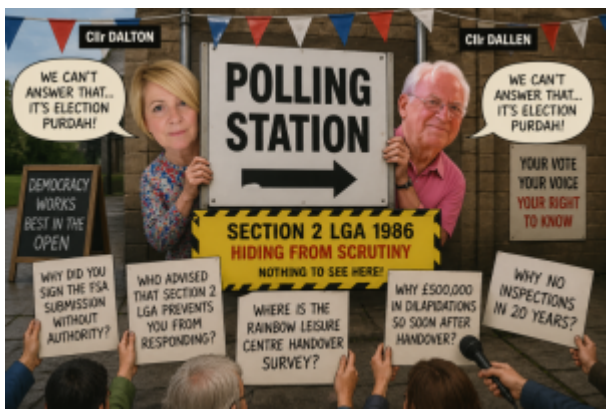
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Dalton and Dallen double-down disclosure denial

10 May 2026



Two senior Residents Association Epsom and Ewell Borough Council figures have refused to answer questions from Epsom and Ewell Times, both claiming pre-election restrictions under the Local Government Act 1986 — prompting fresh concerns over transparency and accountability at a time when public scrutiny is arguably most important.

Cllr **Neil Dallen** (RA Town Ward) is standing with his daughter Lucie McIntyre for election to the East Surrey Unitary Council in the West Ewell Division and Cllr **Hannah Dalton** (RA Stoneleigh) is standing in the same 7th May election in the Ewell Village, Stoneleigh and Nonsuch Division.

In both cases, Section 2 of the Act — which prohibits councils from publishing material designed to influence support for a political party — has been relied upon to justify a refusal to respond. However, expert advice provided to Epsom and Ewell Times indicates that the provision is directed at political publicity, not factual explanations of decisions already taken, and does not require councils or councillors to remain silent when asked legitimate questions about the use of public powers and resources.

Rainbow Leisure Centre: £500,000 repairs and unanswered questions – the case concerning Cllr Neil Dallen

The first case concerns the Council's handling of the Rainbow Leisure Centre following a change of operator in October 2025.

A confidential urgent decision taken in December 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 recorded a wide range of issues affecting the building, including fire alarms, lifts, ventilation, damp and possible roof defects, with some matters raising health and safety concerns requiring immediate action.

Such costs are not unusual over the lifetime of a large public building. But they are typically managed through regular inspection and timely maintenance. When issues are identified early, they can be addressed incrementally and at lower cost. When they are not, problems can accumulate — and costs can escalate sharply.

The central question therefore remains: how did a building that had just been handed over from one operator to another without closure come to present a potential £500,000 repair liability within weeks?

Conflicting accounts of the building's condition

The former operator, Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), has maintained that the building was handed back in the condition required under its contract. It stated that the Council commissioned a full survey prior to handover, that all identified works were completed, and that these were signed off on the Council's behalf.

GLL has further confirmed that the Council provided a condition survey to all tenderers as part of the tender process.

In contrast, the incoming operator, Places Leisure, identified extensive defects shortly after taking over, including issues said to affect the safe operation of the building.

Either the building was handed over in an acceptable condition following survey and sign-off, or significant defects existed which were not addressed and may have been present for some time.

No inspection records despite long-standing rights

In response to Freedom of Information requests, the Council confirmed that it held contractual rights to inspect the building throughout GLL's 22-year tenure.

However, it also stated that it holds no inspection or survey reports prior to 2025.

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If accurate, that absence of records raises further questions about how any accumulating defects — if they existed — were monitored, recorded or addressed over such a prolonged period.

The missing survey and disputed confidentiality

At the centre of the dispute lies the condition survey said to have been carried out prior to handover.

The Council has refused to disclose that survey, citing legal professional privilege and the possibility of litigation. Yet the same document was provided to tenderers, including GLL, during the procurement process.

GLL has indicated that it has access to the survey but has declined to provide it to Epsom and Ewell Times.

This leaves a situation in which a document said to be too sensitive for public disclosure appears to have been shared among commercial parties — raising questions as to whether the exemption is being applied too broadly.

If the survey identified the defects now being asserted, questions arise as to why the incoming operator proceeded with the contract before those issues were resolved. If it did not, questions arise as to whether the survey was incomplete or inaccurate, and who was responsible for its preparation.

Competing explanations

A number of explanations remain possible.

It may be that the former operator’s account is correct and the current dispute reflects differing interpretations of the building’s condition.

It may be that defects accumulated over time and were not identified or addressed due to a failure to exercise inspection rights effectively.

It may be that the survey itself failed to identify the true condition of the building.

Or it may be that the scale of dilapidations has been overstated or differently assessed by the new operator, which is carrying out repairs in return for a reduced management fee shortly after securing the contract through a competitive tender process.

At present, none of these explanations has been confirmed, and key documents remain undisclosed.

Refusal to answer questions

Epsom and Ewell Times put a series of questions to the Council and to Cllr Neil Dallen, Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, who supported the urgent decision and its initial classification as confidential.

The response received stated: “We cannot provide any further response as we are within the pre-election period and must follow restrictions governed by Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986.”

Epsom and Ewell Times submitted a Freedom of Information request seeking to establish who advised that Section 2 applied in these circumstances. At the time of publication, no response had been received within the statutory timeframe.

Second case: Dalton and the FSA submission

A similar position has been taken by Cllr Dalton in relation to a separate matter concerning the signing of a submission connected to proposals for a new tier of local governance, referred to as an FSA (Foundation Strategic Authority).

Questions were put to Cllr Dalton as to the basis on which the submission was signed by her as leader of the ruling Residents Association group and whether it had received the necessary Council authority. Those questions have not been answered, with reliance again placed on alleged pre-election restrictions.

Expert advice

Expert advice provided to Epsom and Ewell Times by Nathan Elvery, former Chief Executive Officer of Croydon Council and now Director of Imagine Public Services Ltd, states: “The questions posed… are factual in character… A factual response explaining what occurred and why would not constitute political publicity within the meaning of the Act… The Council is not being asked to promote a political position; it is being asked to account for its stewardship of public funds.”

He added that reliance on Section 2 in such circumstances risks appearing as “a mechanism to avoid scrutiny during a period when accountability arguably matters most.”

The same advice notes that Section 2 applies to councils as corporate bodies and does not impose a personal duty of silence on councillors responding to press enquiries about decisions they have supported.

Transparency or silence?

The common thread in both cases is the use of Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 to justify a refusal to engage with questions about decisions already taken.

The law requires councils to avoid political publicity. It does not require them to avoid explaining themselves.

At a time when significant public decisions are under scrutiny — including those involving large sums of public money — the question for residents is whether the current approach reflects appropriate caution, or an avoidance of accountability.

Sam Jones – Reporter

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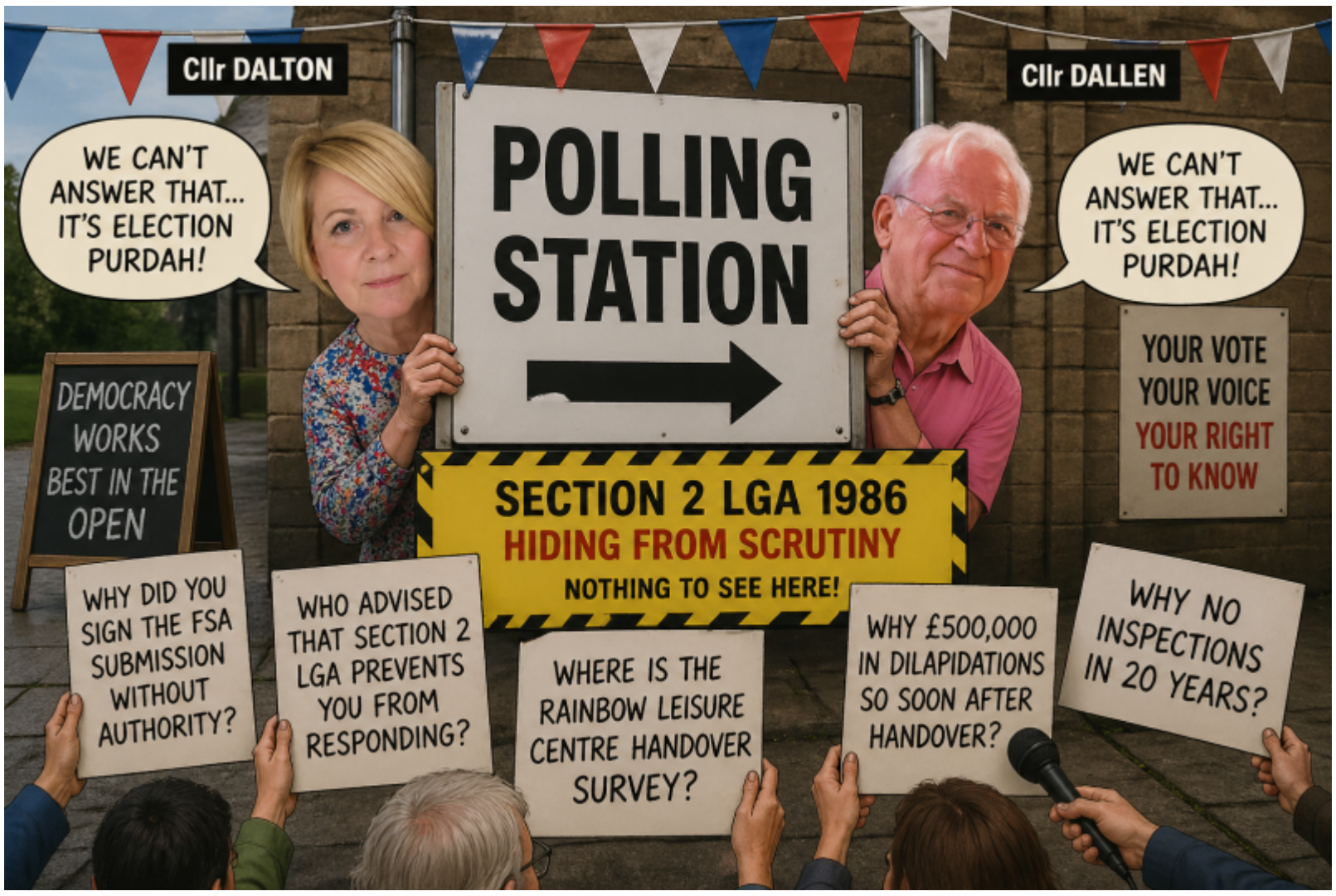
Epsom’s Rainbow Leisure Centre Places new operators

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Devolution or dilution? And who decides?

Cllr Dalton seeks another layer of local government



Cleaning up crime hotspot in Epsom

10 May 2026



Last weekend, volunteers from Rotary, local residents’ groups and community organisations gathered behind Epsom Centre to clean a small alleyway that has become a hotspot for litter and anti-social behaviour after dark.

The clean up may have taken place in daylight, but the focus was firmly on what happens at night.

Figures from the police crime map reveal a worrying pattern. Between January and August 2025 alone, **at least 50 crimes** of all types were reported on or near this small stretch of road, including 6 violence and sexual offences, plus vehicle crime, anti-social behaviour, drug offences and public order incidents. The exact locations are harder to detail, so this is an area on the map. The problem is not isolated. In October 2025, the area saw a spike of **9 crimes in a single month**, 3 of which were linked to violence or sexual offences. Reported crimes continue into January and February 2026, showing the issue has not gone away.

According to residents living in Oaks Square, these figures may only scratch the surface. Many of the publicly recorded cases end with the same outcome: “There is insufficient evidence to bring anyone to justice at this time. The investigation

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may be reopened if more information becomes available." This highlights that useful CCTV coverage is patchy, and it is hard for police to gain convictions.

"Keeping in groups, leaving no one behind, and avoiding the fenced alleys and the car parks at certain times is easy to achieve by staying in the High St and walking the extra 200 meters the cut throughs save. Peak trouble in these areas is as you might expect after dark 10:00 pm until 04:00 am in summer and 8:00 pm to 08:00 am in winter".

Clean spaces change behaviour.

Clive, Maria and Chris, speaking on behalf of Rotary, said: "We're here to tidy up an area just off the High Street. Working with Rotary and other groups, we've found all sorts. The issue here is that people throw rubbish over the fence onto the railway and it just builds up."

Sharine, from Central Epsom, said it was her first time joining, "I didn't expect this level of mess or to hear about crime linked to the area. Seeing it first-hand is surprising. It makes me want to raise awareness and look for real solutions."

Steve McCormick, (RA EEBC Woodcote and Langley Vale) Residents' Association county councillor and Rotary member, explained the wider impact: "When an area looks neglected, it attracts more problems. When it is clean and tidy, people take more pride in it. Criminals tend to stay away. If a place looks looked after, you get less anti-social behaviour."

Much of the litter appears to be carelessly thrown away, sometimes even from car windows or over fences. Organisers say this reflects a wider throwaway culture.

"It's frustrating," one volunteer said. "You clean an area and shortly after it can be messy again."

In Austria, even small waste offences can lead to fines of around £80. A minor mistake might include leaving a bin bag outside a container instead of placing it inside, or putting rubbish in the wrong bin. Dumping rubbish in public spaces or beside containers can result in fines ranging from around £630 to £31,000. The idea is simple. If you cannot keep the environment clean and safe, you pay the price. Experience shows that people learn very quickly when clear rules and consequences are in place.

Another approach comes from Sweden, where "plogging" has become a popular trend. Plogging combines jogging or walking with picking up litter, turning exercise into a practical way to care for the environment. The term comes from the Swedish words plocka upp, meaning pick up and jogga, meaning jog, and the movement began around 2016. Founded by Erik Ahlström, plogging encourages people to stay active while helping reduce pollution.

A small effort with a bigger message: This clean-up focused on one small road behind Epsom Centre, but organisers say it is just the beginning. Future efforts will aim to tackle and highlight other areas identified on crime maps. The group completed the clean-up in less than an hour, but the aim is long-term change. "By focusing on litter in areas highlighted by crime data, especially those active at night, we hope to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve safety by letting everyone know where to avoid and when, whilst making the less well motivated people aware that we care.

Organisers say that "now Keep Epsom and Ewell Tidy has shut we do need to help each other to keep the town clean". Anyone can take part and make a difference: "It's an easy thing to do. You feel better after helping, you meet people, and together you can create change." If you would like to get involved in future clean-ups or community projects, contact your local Rotary group and help create a safer, cleaner Epsom.

Romy Sustar

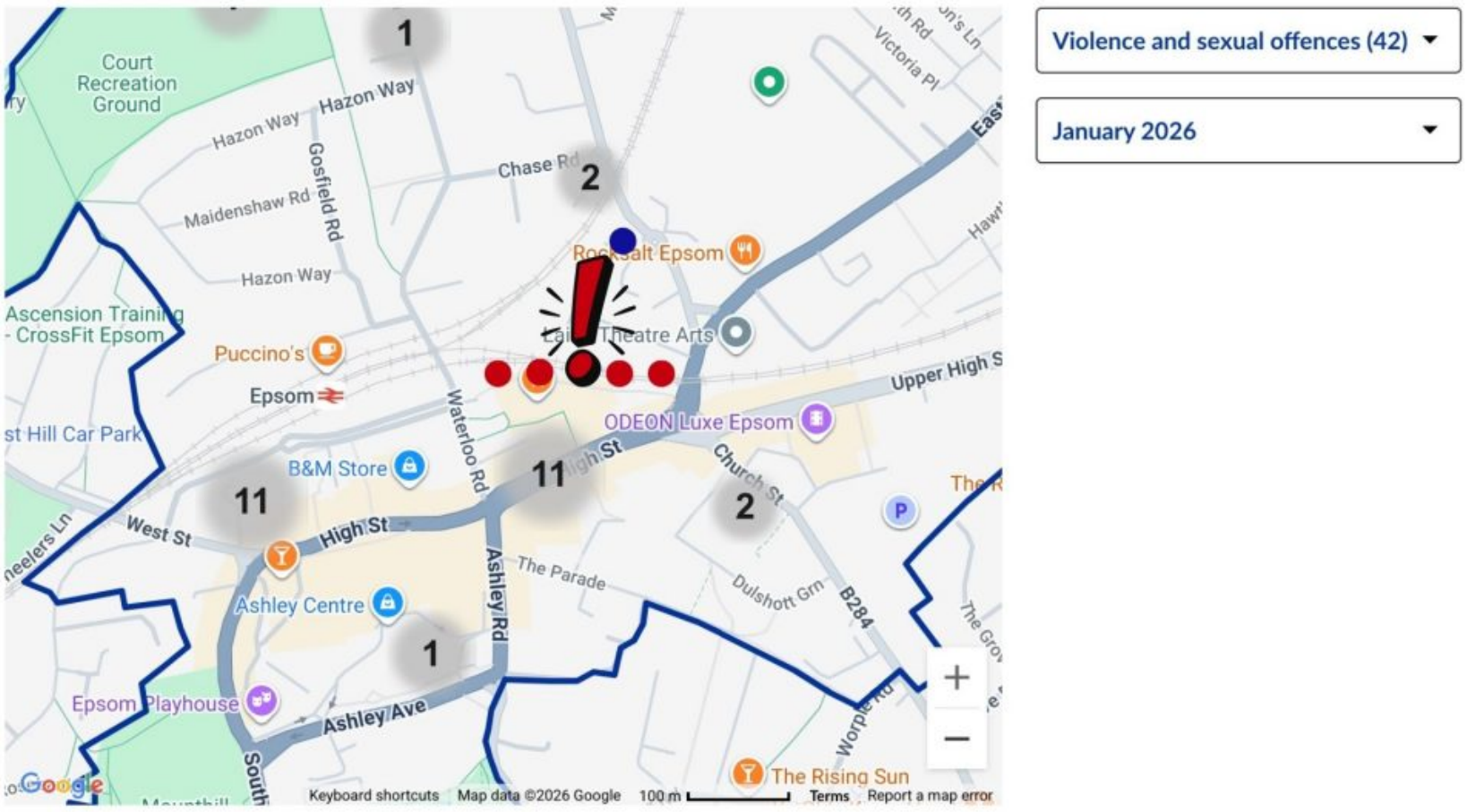


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150KG in Two Hours: Volunteers contribute to Epsom’s clean environment

10 May 2026



Volunteers from the World Mission Society Church of God carried out a community clean-up in Epsom on Sunday 26 April, collecting over 150kg of litter in just two hours.

41 volunteers gathered to help tidy key areas of the town. After a short briefing, they split into two teams to cover locations including the town centre, Epsom Square, Rosebery Park, Mount Hill Gardens and the car park near Lidl. The event forms part of an ongoing litter-picking initiative by the group which has been carried out for 8 years, reflecting the group’s continued commitment to the community and growing volunteer participation in recent years.

Working between 11am and 1pm, the teams focused on known litter hotspots, aiming to collect 40 bags and 150kg of waste. Residents showed their appreciation throughout the morning, encouraging volunteers and recognising the positive impact of their efforts. Alongside general litter, volunteers removed larger discarded items such as chairs, a vacuum cleaner, toys, carts and even a traffic sign. These were sorted for proper disposal and recycling. By the end of the event, 49 bags of waste had been collected, weighing a total of 150.34kg exceeding the original target.

Volunteers said the result highlighted how teamwork can make a meaningful difference to the local environment. Sarah, a first-time joiner of the clean-up campaign, shared that she was inspired by how the volunteers dedicated themselves to helping the community and expressed her willingness and intention to take part in future activities. Andrei, a frequent volunteer who has been taking part for four years, shared that it is the spirit and attitude of the volunteers that keeps him coming back. “They are always ready to help the community,” he said, adding that everyone deserves to live in a cleaner, more pleasant environment and that though our individual actions may seem small, in reality these can make a real difference.

Staff from the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council also said to the volunteers, “Thank you to you and all of the society for your continued efforts with events such as these; it is very much appreciated…”

Volunteers from the World Mission Society Church of God hope their efforts will continue to inspire others and contribute to a cleaner, safer Epsom.

World Mission Society Church of God

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