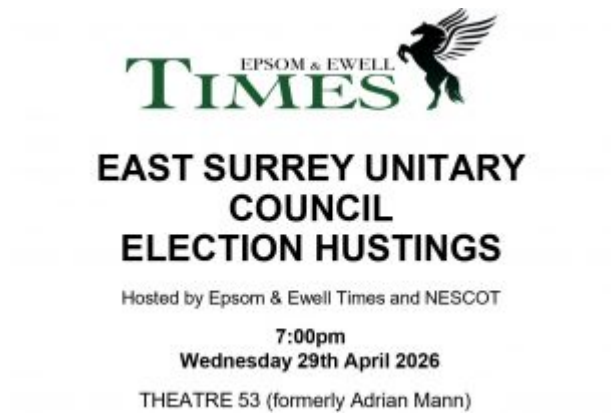
EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Have Your Say: Epsom & Ewell Times to Host East Surrey Election Hustings at NESCOT

28 April 2026



With one of the most significant changes to local government in a generation fast approaching, residents in Epsom and Ewell will have a rare opportunity to question those seeking to shape the area's future.

Epsom & Ewell Times is hosting a public hustings for candidates standing in the forthcoming East Surrey Unitary Council elections. The event will take place at 7pm on Wednesday 29th April at **Theatre 53** (formerly The Adrian Mann Theatre), **NESCOT**, Reigate Road, Ewell, and is open to all members of the public.

The elections on 7th May form part of the wider reorganisation of local government across Surrey, which will see the abolition of existing borough and district councils, including Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, and the creation of new unitary authorities. The new East Surrey authority will assume responsibility for a wide range of services currently split between county and borough levels, including housing, planning, social care, highways and local infrastructure. Decisions taken by the new council will therefore have a direct and lasting impact on the character, services and finances of the area.

Against this backdrop, the hustings offers voters a vital opportunity to hear directly from leading candidates representing the main political parties, to understand their priorities, and to challenge them on the issues that matter most locally. From council tax and development to community services and democratic accountability, the evening will provide a forum for open questioning and informed debate.

Epsom & Ewell Times is grateful to NESCOT for hosting the event, and in particular to its Chief Executive, Julie Kapsalis MBE, for making the theatre available for what promises to be a well-attended and important civic occasion.

The format will allow candidates to outline their positions and respond to questions from the audience, ensuring that residents are able to test the ideas and commitments of those seeking election before casting their votes.

With the move to a unitary system raising important questions about local representation and governance, turnout and public engagement will be crucial. Events such as this aim to strengthen local democracy by giving residents direct access to those who wish to represent them.

Doors will open shortly before 7pm, and seating will be available on a first come, first served basis.

Residents are encouraged to attend, take part, and ensure their voices are heard ahead of polling day.

Attendance and any question for the hustings form

East Surrey Unitary Council candidates' statements – Epsom and Ewell

Guide to Epsom and Ewell candidates standing in the 7th May East Surrey Unitary Council elections

Epsom and Ewell: East Surrey Unitary Council Hustings

Related reports:

Epsom and Ewell unitary election, a family affair?

Unitary Council candidates standing in Epsom and Ewell

Two unitary proposal confirmed

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council agrees to submit proposal recommending three unitary councils for Surrey

County council set to propose two unitary councils for Surrey

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Surrey Open Studios Returns – Discover Artists Near Epsom

28 April 2026



Art lovers in Epsom and Ewell are being invited to step inside artists' working spaces this summer as the annual Surrey Artists Open Studios returns from 6th to 21st June 2026. The county-wide event sees hundreds of artists open their doors to the public, offering a chance to meet creators, view works in progress and buy original art directly.

Studios are organised into geographic areas across Surrey, with those closest to Epsom and Ewell forming part of the East Surrey grouping, alongside nearby towns such as Reigate and Redhill. Visitors are encouraged to plan their visits in advance, with many artists opening on selected days throughout the two-week period.

Among the participating studios within easy reach of Epsom is AJ Studio Gallery, where visitors can view a large collection of oil paintings. Also in Epsom, Terry O'Brien and Jacky Cowdrey Studio will be welcoming guests to explore their work in an informal studio setting.

A little further afield in Redhill, Heart and Home Studios brings together a range of disciplines including sculpture, handmade books and jewellery, while other studios across East Surrey showcase everything from ceramics and textiles to contemporary painting and mixed media.

The appeal of the Open Studios format lies in its accessibility. Visitors can explore a wide variety of creative spaces—from garden workshops to established studios—and speak directly with artists about their techniques and inspiration. Many venues also offer smaller works, prints and cards, making the event an opportunity to purchase unique pieces at a range of prices.

Full details of all participating artists, including opening days, times and exact locations, are set out in the official Surrey Artists Open Studios programme, available here:

https://surreyopenstudios.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/SAOS-2025-Programme-PAG.pdf

With dozens of studios within a short drive of Epsom and Ewell, the event offers a simple way to explore Surrey's vibrant arts scene and support local artists this June.

Lionel Blackman

Epsom Family Highlights "Hidden" Loneliness Among Young Adults with Mild Autism

28 April 2026



Friendship is one of life's quiet essentials. It brings variety, confidence, and a sense of belonging. Yet for a growing number of people, that connection is missing. National estimates suggest around 7% of UK adults experience chronic loneliness — a figure that runs into the millions.

For people on the autistic spectrum, the risk can be even greater.

An Epsom couple have contacted the *Epsom and Ewell Times* to share their son Jon's experience, in the hope it may resonate with others and spark a local solution. Jon, now a young adult, once enjoyed the structure and social circle of a youth group. But as his peers moved on to university, careers, and later relationships and family life, those connections gradually fell away.

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What followed has been a pattern familiar to many families in similar situations. While services exist, they often do not meet the needs of those with higher functioning autism. Groups run by organisations such as the National Autistic Society tend to focus on those with more complex needs, while mainstream clubs and societies can feel overwhelming and inaccessible.

The result is a gap — one where individuals like Jon, who wish to participate in everyday social life, find themselves increasingly isolated.

There are long periods where Jon may not meet peers socially at all, spending most of his time at home with family. Yet the contrast when he does connect is striking. A simple outing — a trip to the pantomime, or even the anticipation of a game of adventure golf — can transform his mood for weeks or months, replacing low mood with excitement and purpose.

“It doesn’t take much,” his family explain. “Just a small amount of time from someone willing to meet up makes an enormous difference — not only to Jon, but to all of us.”

From this experience has come a simple idea: a local “befriender scheme” in the Epsom area.

The concept is straightforward. Volunteers — individuals or couples — perhaps of a similar age bracket – would offer a couple of hours occasionally to meet a young adult like Jon in a safe, public setting. That might mean a coffee, a meal, a cinema trip, or a game of bowling. Expenses would be covered, but the real value lies in building confidence, companionship, and mutual enjoyment.

The family stress that such a scheme would need to be properly organised, with appropriate safeguards in place. But they believe the community already has what matters most — people willing to show a little kindness.

They are now asking a simple question: is there enough interest locally to make it happen?

Anyone who feels they could offer time as a befriender, or who knows someone who might benefit, is invited to get in touch. If there is sufficient response, the idea could develop into a structured community initiative.

Contact: epsombefrienders@gmail.com and they will get back to you.

Lionel Blackman

Epsom Racecourse: preview and tips for today’s opening Spring Meeting

28 April 2026



The Flat season at Epsom is back as the Spring Meeting, the traditional season opener at the track, arrives this afternoon.

Six races are slated for the card, kicking off at 2.05pm with a novice stakes in class four before ending at 4.58pm as a field of ten heads to the stalls for the mile handicap in class four.

Read below for a full rundown of the Epsom card on Tuesday courtesy of Racing TV, who have the very latest ***free bets*** *offers throughout the Flat season.*

Runman looks very much the way to go in the opening race of the new season at Epsom (2.05) as nine runners take on the novice stakes in class four over the mile trip. The John and Thady Gosden-trained runner was a winner at Salisbury on debut in October and under top jockey Oisin Murphy, is very hard to oppose here to follow up.

The Listed Blue Riband Trial Stakes is up next at 2.40 with a handy £34,026 going to the winner. Of the six runners, it is tough to look past Frankel colt New Zealand for the all-conquering duo of Aidan O’Brien and Ryan Moore, last seen when finishing fifth behind stablemate Puerto Rico in the Group 1 Criterium at Saint-Cloud but only by three lengths, while New Zealand has Group 1 entries further down the track this season including in the English and Irish Derby’s so this could be a stepping stone to major success later in the year.

A class two handicap marks race three on the card (3.15) over the mile and a quarter distance. Aurel has had some time off since finishing seventh in the Golden Gate Stakes at Royal Ascot but was a fine winner at Leicester prior to that so a repeat of that previous form should see him go close here for the Ralph Beckett team.

A mile and a half handicap in class three is up next (3.50) and five runners are set to head to the stalls. Topteam has been very progressive for the Andrew Balding team, having resumed winning ways at Kempton on seasonal return and was a hat-trick winner last campaign so gets the vote in this one over Asgard’s Captain, who won twice last year – one of those being in this exact race 12 months ago – for trainer Dylan Cunha.

Six runners will line up for the penultimate race of the Spring Meeting card at 4.23 where On Message could pick up a

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second winner on the card having got off the mark in good fashion at Wolverhampton in October and progress is expected here after now being sent handicapping for the prominent yard.

Finally, the card concludes at 4.58pm with a mile handicap in class four. Defending champion Tribal Rhythm is back for more having won this race 12 months ago for the Denis Coakley team. He could be a good shout to repeat the trick 12 months on with Oisin Murphy booked to ride following an encouraging second on his seasonal reappearance at Bath 23 days ago.

Epsom selections – Tuesday

2.05 – Runman

2.40 – New Zealand

3.15 – Aurel

3.50 – Topteam

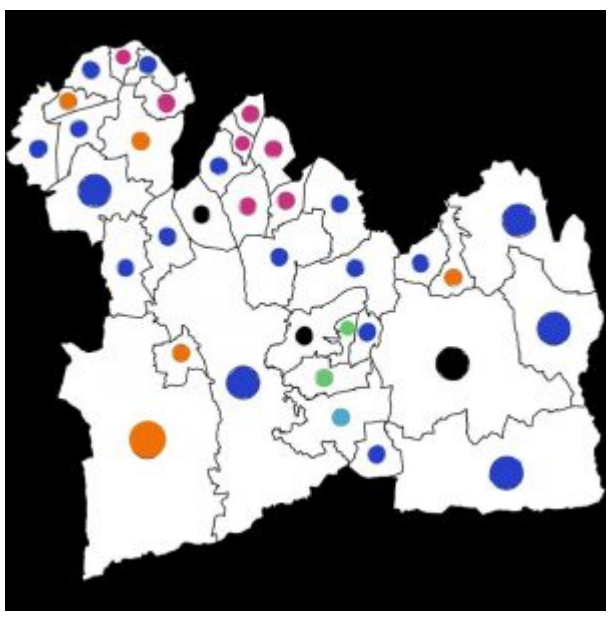
4.23 – On Message

4.58 – Tribal Rhythm

Image: Horses racing Image: Credit Paul. CC BY 2.0

East Surrey Political Map

28 April 2026



Surrey’s political map is looking far less predictable than it did five years ago, with Surrey County Council now under no overall control ahead of crucial elections in May 2026.

The Conservative Party has lost its majority for the first time since the 1990s, leaving a fragmented council where no single group dominates. With power up for grabs, the election is set to decide who can harness this opportunity and shape the new East and West Surrey councils.

From safe Tory majority to political battleground

Back in 2021, the Conservatives held a commanding position, winning 47 of 81 seats. The Liberal Democrats secured 14, while Residents’ Associations and independents held 16 seats combined. The Labour Party and the Green Party of England and Wales took two seats each.

Fast forward to now, and that dominance has eroded. A series of by-election losses, defections and political shifts has chipped away at Conservative control, culminating in a high-profile Liberal Democrat win in Hinchley, Claygate and Oxshott last year.

The Lib Dems, buoyed by strong recent performances, believe momentum is on their side heading into 2026 turning parts of Surrey into competing seas of orange and blue.

Fragmented council, rising pressure

Without a majority, the Conservative administration is now more exposed, relying on support from other groups. Criticism has intensified over key issues including finances, service delivery and infrastructure, all likely to dominate the campaign. Adding to tensions, the elections were delayed from May 2025 to 2026, a move opponents say has prolonged uncertainty.

Local politics defies party lines

Beyond the county council’s headquarters, Surrey’s political picture is even more complex.

Areas like Epsom and Ewell have long been strongholds for Residents’ Association groups, where hyper-local issues often outweigh national party politics. In contrast, districts such as Tandridge highlight split loyalties — Conservative at county level, but frequently led by residents’ groups locally.

The result is a county shaped as much by local identity as party allegiance, with independents often holding the balance of

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power.

Major shake-up: Surrey to be split in two

The 2026 elections come amid one of the biggest structural changes in decades. Surrey is set to be divided into two new unitary authorities, East Surrey and West Surrey, replacing the current two-tier system from April 2027.

The elections will create “shadow councils” to oversee the transition, with new boundaries and significantly fewer councillors. West Surrey will have 90 councillors across 45 wards, while East Surrey will have 72 across 36 wards. This redraw is expected to reshape political representation across the county.

The current councillors at the county, district and borough level will stay in place and act as responsible figures until April 1, 2027.

Key figures stepping down

The political reset is also marked by a wave of departures. Among those stepping down are county council leader Tim OliverOBE and long-standing Labour figure Sir Robert Evans OBE, alongside several senior councillors from across parties and residents’ groups. Their exits add further uncertainty to an already volatile political landscape.

The issues: potholes, finances and the future

Despite structural changes, everyday concerns remain central. Potholes, council debt and the long-term direction of Surrey continue to dominate debate, with parties clashing over how best to manage services and finances during the transition to new authorities.

All to play for

As it stands, Surrey’s politics are more mixed than at any point in recent memory. With no party in control, strong performances from Liberal Democrats, entrenched residents’ groups and a weakened Conservative base, the 2026 elections are shaping up to be a decisive moment.

More than a routine vote, they will determine not just who runs the council but what Surrey’s political future looks like as it diverges in East and West.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Political map code:

*** Blue: Conservative**
*** Orange: Liberal Democrat**
*** Red: Labour**
*** Light blue: Reform**
*** Black: Independent**
*** Pink: Residents’ Association (various)**
*** Green: Green Party**

East Surrey Political Map. (Credit: Wikipedia/ Emily Dalton)

Related reports:

Guide to Epsom and Ewell candidates standing in the 7th May East Surrey Unitary Council elections

East Surrey Unitary lack of devolution detail

Have Your Say: Epsom & Ewell Times to Host East Surrey Election Hustings at NESCOT

Guide to Epsom and Ewell candidates standing in the 7th May East Surrey Unitary Council elections

28 April 2026



The Epsom and Ewell Times has invited the candidates to submit their personal statements for publication.

You can find which division you are voting in by inspecting the reverse side of your polling card as illustrated.

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Click below for candidate details submitted so far:

East Surrey Unitary Council candidates' statements – Epsom and Ewell

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AN ELECTION HUSTINGS

Do please consider attending the Epsom and Ewell Times East Surrey Unitary Council Elections. One candidate for each main Party will sit on the stage. Other candidates are invited to attend and there may be an opportunity to ask questions of them as well as the stage representatives.

You can just show up on the night but it will help the management of the event to fill in this form, especially if you want to ask a question of all the representative candidates on stage.

Attendance and any question for the hustings form

Epsom and Ewell Times is grateful to NESCOT for agreeing to host the event. It will start at 7pm on Wednesday 29th April in Theatre 53 (formerly known as The Adrian Mann Theatre) on the NESCOT campus in Reigate Road Ewell KT17 3DS. There will be ample parking available. The hustings will be chaired by local solicitor and director of Epsom and Ewell Times, Lionel Blackman.

Related reports:

Have Your Say: Epsom & Ewell Times to Host East Surrey Election Hustings at NESCOT

Police confirm a female's report of Epsom gang-rape was false

28 April 2026



In a statement issued by Surrey Police the report by a female of being the victim of rape by several men in Epsom on Saturday 11th April near the Methodist Church, was without foundation. This is the Surrey Police statement in full:

"This is an update in relation to a report of a rape in Epsom which we received in the early hours on Saturday, 11 April.

A thorough investigation, including an extensive examination of CCTV footage of the woman's movements, house to house enquiries, interviewing witnesses and forensic tests, has been carried out. Through this examination of all evidence, we can conclude that no sexual offence occurred on this occasion, and we are closing the investigation.

What has become clear is that a woman in her 20s during a night out in Epsom, sustained an accidental head injury prior to making a confused report.

The woman involved has given us permission to share this information with you and she continues to be supported by relevant services.

To be clear, we take every report of sexual offending seriously, and any such report is treated with sensitivity. To do this, it is imperative that the appropriate time is allowed to complete a thorough investigation and support is given to the complainant to progress enquiries at their own pace. This limits what information we are able to release publicly.

At the early stages of this investigation, we issued an appeal for any witnesses or information that could help us progress our enquiries and identify any potential suspects. There was a lack of information in our initial appeal particularly regarding potential persons of interest. This was because the descriptions given were vague and limited. We recognise this caused concern amongst the community. We are now confident that there was no offence, and there were no suspects.

Our local officers will maintain a visible presence in Epsom over the coming days so please speak to them if you have any concerns or questions."

Sam Jones – Reporter

Related reports:

Epsom and the Perils of Instant Judgement

Surrey Police update on alleged sexual assault in Epsom

Church service following sex attack in Epsom

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Epsom to sit in protest against violence against women

You Are Not Alone, Epsom Stands Against Rape

Epsom shock as police probe serious assault

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Epsom Oddballs Bring Back the 2000 Perch as Beloved Local Race Returns

28 April 2026



Epsom Oddballs Running Club is bringing back a much-loved local race this summer, as the 2000 Perch returns to Epsom Downs after years away from the Surrey running calendar.

Set for Friday 26 June 2026, with a 7pm evening start at Epsom Downs Racecourse, the revived event aims to capture the spirit of the original Perch races while introducing a refreshed format suited to today's runners. Open to all levels, the race will cover a 10km single-lap route across the Downs, combining scenic views with a gently challenging profile.

The "Perch" takes its name from an old English unit of measurement—2000 perch equates to just over six miles—reflecting the distance of earlier editions that were popular throughout the 2000s. Those races, held on Epsom Downs and in Nonsuch Park, built a loyal following among local runners.

In its 2026 return, the race has been extended to 10km, but organisers say the essence remains the same. The focus is still on accessibility, community, and showcasing the natural beauty of the area.

The race begins and ends inside Epsom Racecourse near Tattenham Corner, taking runners on a loop that is approximately 70% off-road. After heading west along the racecourse railings, participants join Chalk Lane and Grandstand Road before moving into open downland.

The route passes through bridleways towards Langley Vale, dips slightly, then climbs steadily through the village edge and into the peaceful Langley Vale Centenary Wood. From there, runners loop back north, tackling a longer incline near Epsom Lane North before returning across the Downs. A final downhill stretch brings competitors back into the racecourse for the finish.

Organisers describe the route as "undulating but very runnable," making it suitable for both seasoned athletes and newcomers to mixed-terrain racing.

The return of the 2000 Perch is as much about community as it is about competition. The club is currently working with local businesses and organisations to support the event through sponsorship, prizes and race-day assistance.

Organisers say they are keen to involve as many local partners as possible, helping to re-establish the Perch as a key fixture in the area's sporting and social calendar.

Early bird entry is open until 30 April 2026, priced at £22 for affiliated runners and £24 for unaffiliated runners. Standard race rules apply.

Book here: https://register.enthuse.com/ps/event/EpsomOddballs2000Perch2026

Get Involved with Epsom Oddballs: Try before you join, everyone is welcome to attend a couple of free, coached training sessions with no commitment. For more information, prospective members can contact the Membership Secretary at membershipsecretary@epsomoddballs.org

Romy Sustar

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Freelance journalist | SIA-certified | Covering crime & community safety.

Email: romana.epsomandewelltimes@gmail.com Linkedin: https://www.linkedin.com/in/romanasustar/

X:@RomanaSustar

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Living Rivers Exhibition Opens in Epsom

28 April 2026



“Our rivers bring the community together and inspire people to protect them,” organisers said as the *Living Rivers Exhibition* officially opened at the Ebbisham Centre this week.

The community-led exhibition, organised by Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Network (eeCAN), welcomed residents, partners and supporters to its launch on 22 April. The event was led by eeCAN Chair William Ward and formally opened by the Mayor and Mayoress of Epsom and Ewell, Robert and Marilyn Leach.

Visitors also heard from several contributors, including Peter, Chair of Epsom Camera Club, local artist David Ede, a Hogsmill River citizen scientist, and representatives from Emma’s Bubble Trust.

The exhibition brings together artwork from local schools, colleges, art groups and individual artists, offering a wide range of interpretations of rivers and their importance to the environment and community life.

Inspired by Robert Macfarlane’s *Is A River Alive?*, the collection highlights both the beauty of local waterways and the environmental challenges they face, including pollution and neglect. Organisers say the aim is to raise awareness while celebrating creativity across all age groups.

A spokesperson for eeCAN praised the contributions from across the community. “The artwork brings our rivers to life and encourages people to think about how we protect them,” they said.

The exhibition is located on the first floor of the Ebbisham Centre, just outside the library in Derby Square. Entry is free, and visitors can also take part in family-friendly activities, with refreshments available on site.

Running until 22 May 2026, the *Living Rivers Exhibition* invites residents to explore, reflect and engage with the future of local waterways.

Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Network has also announced a Heritage Walk along the Hogsmill River, taking place on Thursday 30 April at 1:30 p.m.

A limited number of places are still available. Those interested can reserve a place by emailing: eeclimateactionnetwork@gmail.com

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61573916432364

Webpage: https://www.eecan.org/home

Romy Sustar



Freelance journalist | SIA-certified |

Email: romana.epsomandewelltimes@gmail.com Linkedin: https://www.linkedin.com/in/romanasustar/

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Epsom & Ewell Through to Cup Quarter-Finals After Shoot-Out Drama

28 April 2026



Epsom & Ewell FC Sunday progressed to the quarter-finals of the Combined Counties Premier Challenge Cup after a tense 0–0 draw with Sutton Common Rovers was settled by a composed 5–3 penalty shoot-out victory at Chalky Lane. The win sets up a Saturday away tie at Abbey Rangers.

There were several changes from the final league fixture of the season. Kit Fletcher returned in goal following injury, while Stefan Aiwone slotted into the back line in place of the injured Tom Collins. In midfield, captain Brendan Murphy-McVey continued his partnership with Callum O'Keeffe, and Craig Dundas came in for the cup-tied Courtney Swaby.

The opening half was evenly contested, with both sides creating chances but neither able to take control. The Salts appeared the more organised of the two, moving the ball with greater fluency and showing more attacking intent, yet the breakthrough proved elusive and the match remained goalless at the interval.

A similar pattern followed after the break, although Epsom & Ewell began to assert greater pressure. Several promising opportunities came and went as the home side spent long spells on the front foot, but the final touch was missing. With neither side able to find a winner, the tie was ultimately decided from the penalty spot.

Epsom & Ewell were clinical in the shoot-out. Brendan Murphy-McVey, Ryley Merrett and Toby Young all converted confidently, while Sutton Common Rovers missed one of their attempts. Substitute Karl Bailey then scored to maintain the perfect record before Ali Fofahan stepped up to convert the decisive penalty.

With five successful strikes and just a single miss from their opponents, the Salts secured a deserved 5–3 shoot-out victory and a place in the next round.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media

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

28 April 2026

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A historic community building at the heart of Ewell is at risk of being lost permanently unless urgent support can be secured.

Glyn Hall, situated on Cheam Road in Ewell Village, has served local residents for generations as a space for education, social gatherings and community activity. The hall traces its origins back to around 1870 and was later bequeathed for the benefit of Ewell residents by local benefactor Margaret Glyn in 1946.

However, after more than a century and a half of use, the building has now reached the end of its functional life. The ageing wooden structure has been closed, leaving the future of the site in doubt.

Volunteer trustees responsible for the charity have spent recent years working to secure the hall's future. Plans have been developed to demolish the existing building and replace it with a modern facility better suited to contemporary community use. Planning permission for the redevelopment was granted in January 2024.

Fundraising efforts have already attracted strong local backing, with approximately £85,000 raised from community sources. Despite this, trustees say they have only reached around half of the funding required to deliver the project in full.

They now warn that, without additional financial support or new volunteers willing to take the project forward, the consequences could be stark. The land may have to be sold, the charity dissolved, and with it the long-standing legacy of Glyn Hall brought to an end.

Trustees are therefore issuing what they describe as a final appeal to residents, local organisations and potential benefactors to come forward.

"This is a final opportunity to save Glyn Hall for future generations," they say.

Anyone interested in supporting the project or seeking further information is invited to contact trustee Matthew Anderson at mjranderson64@gmail.com.

The future of one of Ewell's longstanding community assets now depends on whether sufficient backing can be secured in the coming months.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Image: Glyn Hall now (Google) and the plan

Related report:

Campaign to save Ewell Village's Glyn Hall



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Surrey environmental group gets global recognition

28 April 2026



A Surrey-based grassroots campaign that reshaped national climate law has received one of the world's most prestigious environmental honours, in a development that will resonate locally given the long-running controversy over oil drilling at Horse Hill.

Climate campaigner Sarah Finch, who led the legal challenge on behalf of the Weald Action Group, has been named one of six global winners of the Goldman Environmental Prize for 2026. The annual award recognises grassroots activists from each continent who have made significant contributions to environmental protection.

The recognition follows Finch's landmark victory in the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom in June 2024, in a case brought against Surrey County Council over oil drilling at Horse Hill. As previously reported by Epsom and Ewell Times, the case became a focal point for national debate on fossil fuel extraction and planning law.

The court's ruling—now widely referred to as the "Finch judgment"—established that planning authorities must take into account the downstream climate impact of burning extracted fossil fuels when considering applications. This marked a significant shift in legal interpretation, extending environmental assessment beyond the immediate site of extraction.

Campaigners say the implications have already been far-reaching. The judgment has influenced decisions affecting fossil fuel projects across the UK, including developments in Cumbria and the North Sea, and has been cited in wider planning and legal contexts such as aviation and intensive farming. Courts in other jurisdictions, including Norway, Guyana and Australia, have also drawn on similar reasoning.

Finch said she was "honoured" to accept the award on behalf of the Weald Action Group and communities campaigning against fossil fuel expansion. She described the ruling as evidence that "ordinary people organising together can win big victories," adding that the scientific consensus leaves "no room for any more extraction and burning of coal, oil or gas" if climate targets are to be met.

The legal challenge was supported by Friends of the Earth, whose senior lawyer Katie de Kauwe described the ruling as "one of the most significant legal breakthroughs this century" in addressing the climate crisis. She said it had "fundamentally changed the rule book" by requiring developers to account for the full climate consequences of their projects.

Local campaigners involved in the Horse Hill dispute also welcomed the recognition. Lorraine Inglis of the Weald Action Group said the award reflected years of sustained community effort in Surrey and highlighted the role of grassroots activism in shaping national policy.

The Goldman Environmental Prize, established in 1989, has honoured 239 winners from 98 countries. This year's cohort is notable as the first made up entirely of women, with other winners including climate activists from Colombia and South Korea who have led successful campaigns against fracking and for legally binding emissions targets.

For Surrey residents, the award brings renewed attention to a campaign that has already left a lasting imprint on the local landscape and on national law. As Epsom and Ewell Times has previously reported, the Horse Hill case demonstrated how a dispute rooted in a single planning decision can evolve into a defining legal precedent with international consequences.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Photo: Sarah Finch and Weald Action Group at London's High Court

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Epsom and the Perils of Instant Judgement

28 April 2026

Epsom has, in recent days, found itself at the centre of a story that has travelled far beyond the town. What began as a serious and distressing report rapidly became something else: a test of how a modern community processes information in the age of instant communication, social media amplification, and deeply ingrained expectations of immediacy.

The latest position from Surrey Police is clear and must be the starting point for any responsible reflection: “To date, we have not found any evidence of the offence as reported but the investigation is ongoing.” That is neither a conclusion nor an exoneration of any set of facts. It is a statement of where the evidence presently stands.

Yet in the vacuum between allegation and verification, something else has taken hold.

Within hours of the initial report, narratives began to form. Some were expressions of genuine concern for a potential victim. Others moved swiftly into assumption: about what had happened, who may have been responsible, and what it meant for the safety and character of the town. From there, the escalation was almost predictable. Social media posts became assertions; assertions became “facts”; and “facts” became rallying cries.

Now, as the evidential position has shifted, a further turn is visible. Claims are being circulated that the police are engaged in a “cover-up”, often tied to the same earlier unsubstantiated assertions about those supposedly responsible. Calls for renewed protest have followed.

This is the cycle we must confront.

The combination of smartphones, social platforms, and the 24-hour expectation of updates has created a culture in which the absence of immediate answers is often treated as suspicious in itself. The slower, methodical process of investigation—gathering CCTV, interviewing witnesses, testing forensic evidence—sits uneasily alongside a public appetite for instant certainty. Where that certainty is not provided, it is too often manufactured.

This is not a criticism of concern. Communities are right to react when confronted with reports of serious crime. Nor is it a denial that the initial report was capable of causing profound alarm. But it is a warning about what follows when concern is overtaken by conjecture, and conjecture hardens into belief.

There are, however, questions that can properly be asked—calmly and without accusation. In particular, whether the sequence of communication in the early stages of the investigation may have inadvertently contributed to the intensity of the reaction. An initial appeal for witnesses, issued before a full review of available CCTV and other material, is entirely understandable in policing terms. But in a case of this gravity, it can also set in motion a chain of public response that is difficult to moderate once underway.

That is not to suggest fault, but to recognise reality: that in the current media environment, every official statement carries not only informational weight but social consequence.

There are lessons here, and they are not confined to any one institution.

For the public, it is a reminder that not everything that is widely shared is true, and that the speed with which information travels is no guarantee of its reliability. For those who seek to exploit events—whether for ideological, political or simply opportunistic reasons—it exposes the ease with which division can be stirred before facts are known. For public authorities, it underlines the delicate balance between transparency and timing.

And for the media, including this publication, it reinforces the obligation to distinguish carefully between what is known, what is alleged, and what is simply being said.

Epsom is not accustomed to finding itself at the centre of such a storm. That in itself may have contributed to the intensity of the response. But it is precisely because such incidents are rare that they demand the greatest care in how they are handled—by all of us.

The investigation continues. That must remain the focus. In the meantime, restraint, patience, and a commitment to evidence over assumption are not signs of indifference. They are the foundations of a community determined to remain both fair and united in the face of uncertainty.

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Surrey Police update on alleged sexual assault in Epsom

28 April 2026



Surrey Police have issued a further update following last weekend's reported incident in Epsom, stating that officers have not found evidence to support the offence as initially described, while confirming that enquiries remain ongoing.

In a statement published on the Surrey Police website, Assistant Chief Constable for Local Policing Sarah Grahame said:

"Over the past week, there has been widespread speculation and commentary regarding this report. We are aware of the strength of feeling this has created, and of the frustration caused by our limited public comment on the matter.

During this time, we have been investigating in depth to establish the sequence of events and to clarify the circumstances surrounding the reported incident. We have reviewed an extensive amount of CCTV footage from the area. We have also been interviewing potential witnesses, carrying out forensics investigations and conducting house-to-house enquiries.

To date, we have not found any evidence of the offence as reported but the investigation is ongoing.

There has been much speculation about the non-release of a description of any suspects, especially regarding the ethnicity. No descriptions have been released as the information about the incident and potential suspects is so limited. To address the specific commentary, there is no evidence that asylum seekers or immigrants were involved.

If you have any information or any CCTV, dashcam, or helmet camera footage, please contact us online, or via 101 quoting PR/45260041426.

We appreciate that you want information. We will continue to tell you as much as we can, to engage with you, to reassure you and to address concerns. We ask for space and time to work through the investigation.

There will be an increased police presence in Epsom over the weekend." (Surrey Police)

The update follows a week of heightened concern in the town and significant public reaction. National media have also reported the same position from Surrey Police, including the finding that there is currently no evidence of the offence as reported, alongside confirmation that the investigation continues. (The Times)

Police are continuing to appeal for information from anyone who may have been in the area or who holds relevant footage.

Sam Jones – Reporter

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Church service following sex attack in Epsom

28 April 2026



A service held at Epsom Methodist Church has brought together faith leaders, politicians and residents in a symbolic call for unity following recent events that have unsettled the town.

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The “Hope for Epsom” gathering, led by Superintendent Minister Reverend Catherine Hutton, was attended by community figures including Deputy Mayor Lucie McIntyre and Epsom and Ewell MP Helen Maguire, alongside members of the local congregation.

At the heart of the service was a simple but powerful act. Attendees were invited to build a “future of hope” by placing stones one by one, each contribution representing collective strength and resilience. Reverend Hutton urged those present to see the community as something shaped by every individual, with unity and compassion at its core.

She concluded by quoting Dr Martin Luther King Jr: “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

The gathering comes in the immediate aftermath of a serious sexual assault investigation and subsequent protests in the town centre, which saw a significant police presence and disruption to local life.

As reported by Surrey Live, Epsom’s MP Helen Maguire said she supported peaceful protest but warned that “those who are turning to disruption and intimidation cannot be allowed to do so.” She added that individuals coming from outside the area “to spread division and cause disruption” should “take it elsewhere.”

Police have confirmed that the victim is being supported by specialist officers, while urging the public not to speculate as investigations continue. East Surrey Chief Superintendent Mark Chapman said the case is complex and that officers are working to gather evidence and bring those responsible to justice.

Despite the message of hope inside the church, a sense of unease remains more widely. With national media attention and visible policing in the town centre, many residents are looking for reassurance that the incident is isolated and that Epsom remains a safe community.

The church service captured both strands of the town’s current mood: a determination to stand together, and a quiet but pressing call for answers.

Sam Jones and Romy Sustar

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East Surrey Unitary lack of devolution detail

28 April 2026



Plans to overhaul local government in Surrey are moving forward but councillors have warned of rising costs, unclear communication and growing confusion among residents.

At a meeting of the East Surrey Joint Committee on April 15, officials confirmed that each new council will receive £900,000 in government transition funding, with strict rules on how the money can be spent.

The overhaul will see Surrey’s current councils replaced by new “unitary” authorities, with a shadow council set to take over preparations ahead of the official launch in April 2027.

Money is tight

While the extra funding has been welcomed, there are concerns the overall budget could be stretched. Of the £35.3m set aside for the overhaul, around £11.2m has already been committed to early work. This includes running the 2026 elections, hiring specialist staff and beginning the complex process of aligning IT systems across councils.

However, most of the expensive work is still to come. Officers explained they will still need to integrate or replace lotus of digital systems, as well as bring in additional legal, HR and technical expertise. They warned that while they are trying to keep within budget, forecasts suggest the full £35.3m could be needed as the project progresses, with IT costs alone expected to make up the largest share and remaining difficult to pin down at this stage.

Councillors repeatedly flagged IT systems as the biggest risk and cost pressure, warning delays in securing staff and resources could cause serious problems later. Cllr Steven McCormick said: “If we end up halfway down through the year and we recognize that we need extra resource it’s going to be too late. it’s going to be too costly.”

Officials admitted IT would be the most expensive and complex part of the transition, with many costs still uncertain. There were also warnings about staff burnout, with officers already under pressure to deliver the changes on time.

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Residents “in the dark” over key decisions

A major theme of the meeting was frustration over the lack of clear information for the public. Councillors said residents are asking basic questions like: Where will the new council be based? Will there be local offices? Who do they contact during the transition?

But officers struggled to give definitive answers. Officials confirmed decisions like the location of the new council headquarters and whether there will be satellite offices will be made later by the shadow authority.

Councillors warned that vague messaging is not really good enough. Cllr David Lewis said: “There’s a general awareness of change but there isn’t an awareness of the detail.”

Cllr Catherine Sayer added the current communications are “very high level”. She told the committee: “It’s all very well talking in generalities about what we want to do, how we want a safe transition […] But actually there’s no detail. And I think even if you can’t say what the detail is, it would be very useful to say: ‘At the moment we don’t know’.”

In response, officers agreed to improve FAQs and to take into consideration concerns about clear communication with residents in future.

Confusion over who’s in charge

There are also concerns about who will actually be responsible for what once new councillors are elected in May 2026. During the “shadow year”, existing councillors will still run services and newly elected shadow councillors will prepare the new councils

Cllr Mike Rollings warned this could create “a messy topic” for residents and even for council staff. Another pointed out residents could have multiple councillors covering different boundaries at the same time, making it unclear who to approach.

Officials said clearer guidance will be given through inductions and communications but acknowledged more work is needed to make roles “super clear”.

Emily Dalton LDRS

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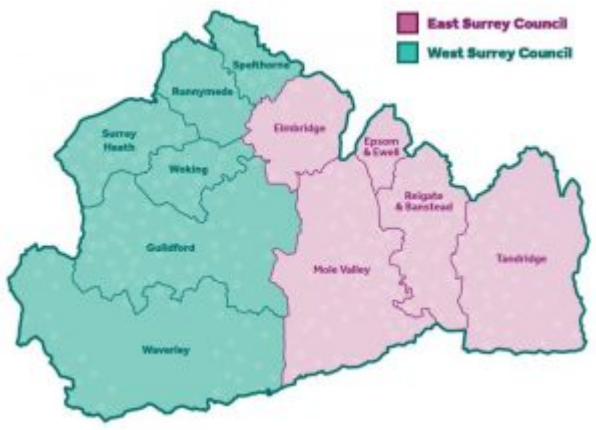
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West Surrey ‘much worse off’

28 April 2026



Surrey residents could face rising council tax bills and deep financial uncertainty under plans to overhaul local government and councillors say people are already “really angry” about it.

At a West Surrey joint committee meeting on April 14, politicians warned that changes to council tax under the new system could hit some households harder than others, at a time when many are already struggling with the cost of living.

Plans to “harmonise” council tax across the two new authorities (East and West Surrey) mean some areas could see increases above the usual 5 per cent cap. Cllr Joanne Sexton said the issue is coming up “all the time” on the doorstep and asked what protections would be in place for residents facing sharp rises.

Finance chief Andy Brown confirmed some households could pay more than 5 per cent increases to bring different council tax rates into line. “What you won’t see is an average increase across West Surrey that breaches the referendum principles,” he said. “But within that you may see areas… higher than the 5 per cent and some lower.”

Modelling has already been done and could be published, but the final call will be made by new “shadow councils” elected in May, ahead of the new system going live in 2027.

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West Surrey ‘worse off’

Behind the council tax fears is a bigger concern: that West Surrey is heading into the new system in a much weaker financial position.

Councillors repeatedly warned the west could end up the “poor relation”, inheriting higher debt, greater infrastructure needs and more financial risk.

Cllr Liz Townsend said the scale of the problem is not being taken seriously enough. She said: “I still feel we haven’t emphasised the disparity between East and West and how by virtue of an arbitrary line drawn on a map the people in West Surrey are far more disadvantaged.”.

The Liberal Democrat councillor added: “I’ve been knocking on doors recently and people are really angry about it. I don’t think we’re emphasising how critical the situation is.”

Cllr Catherine Powell echoed those concerns, warning West Surrey is set to inherit “a much worse financial situation” than the east, something she said was not clearly reflected in official papers. The Farnham Residents councillor also raised concerns about infrastructure, saying the west faces specific challenges that are not being properly accounted for.

Debt mountain and government bailout

A major factor is the huge debt linked to Woking Borough Council. The government has already stepped in, promising £500m to help reduce Woking’s borrowing. But even after that, the council is still expected to carry around £1.7bn in debt.

The government, through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, has said there is “no reasonable means” for Woking to manage this on its own. So, ongoing national support will be needed. This creates a major risk for the new West Surrey authority which will inherit the problem.

Inequality fears and vulnerable residents

Councillors also raised concerns about how the changes could hit the most vulnerable. Cllr Powell warned that people on lower incomes are likely to be hardest affected by financial pressures but said current equality impact assessments do not fully reflect that.

Cllr Powell also called for a clearer breakdown of how decisions could affect different areas, warning the divide between east and west must not be hidden in “generic statements”. Officials said more detailed equality assessments will be produced alongside future decisions, including budgets.

Confusion over what has been agreed

Adding to concerns, councillors warned official documents risk misleading residents about what has already been decided. Minutes from previous meetings appeared to suggest councillors had agreed to split assets geographically, something members insisted is not the case. They said they had only agreed that assets would need to be split, not how.

With local elections coming up on May 7, councillors called for clearer language to avoid confusion about who is making decisions and when. Officials agreed to tighten up the wording.

“Just a starting point”

Lead council officers stressed that nothing is final yet. Current proposals were described as a “starting point”, with work ongoing to figure out how services, staff and assets will be divided between the two new councils.

Final decisions will be taken by the shadow authorities after the elections, with the new system due to launch in 2027.

Emily Dalton LDRS

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Epsom and Ewell Times adds: Epsom and Ewell will come under the EAST Surrey Unitary Council. The promised £500 million debt repayment support from central Government falls far short of the overall debt accumulated in Woking, Spelthorne and other WEST Surrey districts.

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