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

19th November 2026

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You Are Not Alone, Epsom Stands Against Rape

16 April 2026



It’s a sunny Wednesday afternoon in Epsom, and it feels as though spring has finally arrived. People have gathered on the streets, perhaps 1,200 or more, women and men, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, friends, young and old, from all walks of life.

They are here because of what happened last Saturday. By now, everyone knows: a woman in her 20s was followed after leaving Labyrinth nightclub and attacked outside Epsom Methodist Church in the early hours of the morning. The story has reached national headlines, BBC, *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*: **Woman in Her 20s Gang-Raped in Front of a Church with CCTV Cameras**.

I ask one of the people in the crowd what’s going on: “We are here today because a young girl was raped on Saturday night, and the police are not telling us who was responsible. There is a perception that it could be immigrants, but the police need to tell us who has done it. Without that, speculation grows, and it could be one of our own. I don’t want to protest against people who haven’t done anything wrong, but we have to come together as a community because nobody is telling us what is going on. That’s why we are here.”

I speak to a mother and her daughter, I want to know what they feel about the assault: “Our feeling is that the police need to be transparent about who is responsible, so that women and girls can feel safer, so that we know who we are dealing with. We haven’t been told. We need descriptions. The police say that information available is limited. No arrests have been made. It is reported that four men attacked a young woman for two hours. If cameras are everywhere, why have there been no arrests? Why is there said to be no information, when people believe suspects may still be walking freely in Epsom?”

Some believe the police have accused the gathering of disorder in a public space. Many here ask: “What about the victim? Isn’t rape a disorder?”

More police officers arrive. Eggs are thrown. Emotions are high. People care. Voices rise: “Who raped her?” The crowd chants in support of the victim, while the young police woman responds to my questions with a single phrase: “no comment.”

Meanwhile a voice of authority repeats familiar words: *“My heart goes out to the young woman at the centre of this deeply distressing incident.”* It is a statement many here feel they have heard too many times to truly believe.

The Methodist Church will hold a service today, April 16th at 12.30pm. All are welcome. *Epsom and Ewell Times* will be there.

Epsom and Ewell Times is also launching a weekly series, **Epsom Safety Brief**. If you would like to be involved and share your concerns, please get in touch at: romana.epsomandewelltimes@gmail.com.

To the young woman at the centre of this: the whole town stands with you. You are not alone. Stay strong.

Coming soon:

Epsom Safety Brief is a community-driven series committed to clear, balanced reporting on crime, safety, and accountability. It seeks to highlight what is happening, ask necessary questions, and assess whether meaningful action is being taken to protect residents.

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Related report: Epsom shock as police probe serious assault

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Epsom and Ewell FC’s winning streak continues

16 April 2026



Epsom & Ewell signed off their league campaign in positive fashion with a narrow but well-earned 1–0 victory over Tadley Calleva at Chalky Lane on 14th April.

With several changes to the starting line-up, the Salts were forced to adapt. Goalkeeper Kit Fletcher was absent through injury, handing Faebian Witter a start, while Tom Collins dropped into central defence alongside stand-in captain Toby Young and Prince Aderogba. In midfield, Ore Allen partnered Ryley Merrett, and up front Ali Fofahan and Karl Bailey led the attack, with Brendan Murphy-McVey rested.

Epsom began on the front foot and looked the more purposeful side early on, but their rhythm was disrupted midway through the first half when Collins was forced off with a groin injury. Leo Cunningham replaced him, prompting a reshuffle in both personnel and shape. Despite the disruption, the hosts maintained the greater attacking intent, though the sides went in level at the break.

The second half followed a similar pattern, with Epsom pressing for a breakthrough. Their best chance fell to Courtney Swaby, whose powerful effort crashed back off the crossbar. The introduction of debutant Joshua Arthur in the 70th minute injected fresh energy into the attack and would prove decisive.

With the match seemingly heading for a stalemate, a late error from the Tadley goalkeeper in the 89th minute handed Arthur his moment. Reacting quickest, he calmly slotted into an empty net to seal victory and mark his debut in memorable fashion.

The win secured a third consecutive home clean sheet and ensured Epsom & Ewell finished the season in 13th place. Back-to-back victories against play-off-bound sides provided a strong finish and underlined clear progress compared to last season.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media

West Surrey debt mountain – teenage fears

16 April 2026

Surrey’s Districts	Total debt	Per person
Woking	£2,155,641,000	£20,601.33
Spelthorne	£1,065,761,000	£10,252.24
Runnymede	£597,712,000	£6,608.79
Guildford	£311,532,000	£2,088.35
Surrey Heath	£183,436,000	£1,990.24
Waverley	£140,286,000	£1,061.60
Tandridge	£92,816,000	£1,038.11
Mole Valley	£73,850,000	£836.68
Epsom & Ewell	£64,427,000	£785.80
Elmbridge	£48,624,000	£346.08
Reigate & Banstead	£5,000,000	£32.05

A 16-year-old from Ash has urged ministers not to “lumber” his generation with billions of pounds of debt. He said it is not fair that people have to pay off debts when they have never been to Woking.

Harley Davey-Harper, who lives just a short walk from Aldershot town centre, said plans to merge borough councils into a new ‘West Surrey’ authority would tie his community to around £4.5bn in legacy debt.

Harley said: “As someone who will be starting my adult life and paying council tax in just two years, it is terrifying to know that my money will be sucked into a black hole to pay for Woking’s failed skyscraper projects and Spelthorne’s commercial property debts.”

Woking Borough Council is battling with debts of about £2.6bn after the former administration borrowed heavily to fund

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commercial development. Spelthorne Borough Council is also facing financial distress with over £1bn in debt from risky commercial investment.

Harley has written to ex-Chancellor Jeremy Hunt and local MP Alex Baker warning the shake-up could leave young people footing the bill for historic borrowing elsewhere in Surrey. He said: “I think it is important for MPs to know how the people are feeling.”

In his letter to the MPs, Harley wrote: “Being dumped into this new West Surrey mega-council feels like the final betrayal; we are being used as a piggy bank to fix mistakes made in towns 20 miles away that have nothing to do with us.

“Where I live is a mere 10-minute walk from Aldershot town centre. I am physically part of the Aldershot community, yet I am being forced into a council that stretches as far as Staines-upon-Thames.”

The college student has branded the decision as a “massive mistake” for the people of Ash. He said: “I don’t see why we should be paying for roads all the way over in Thorpe Park.” Harley said it is not fair that a certain group of people have to pay off the debts when some of the people have probably not been to Woking.

Harley said it is “heartbreaking” to see his home “dragged into a bankrupt Surrey merger”. He wrote: “My life is already entirely in Hampshire: my housing provider, Vivid, is Hampshire based; my post is processed in Aldershot; and the most local police force is Hampshire, who when I have called the police in the past Aldershot police have come as they are the closest in an emergency.”

Harley said he believes Ash is often overlooked compared to wealthier or more central parts of the county. “All the focus seems to go into Guildford,” he said. “Ash is forgotten. They only remember us when we need to pay our council tax- not much goes on there.”

Harley said: “It will be better for everyone if we are in the Hampshire region because the council tax will be lower.” So far, he has yet to receive a full response from MPs, though acknowledgements have been sent.

A Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government spokesperson said: “Proposals for local government reorganisation in Surrey were locally led and all the proposals received included Ash within a new West Surrey council.

“We recognise that Woking Borough Council holds significant debt that cannot all be managed locally, which is why we have committed to unprecedented debt repayment support of £500m.

“We will continue to support councils to deliver reorganisation in a way that protects services and reflects the needs of communities.”

Emily Dalton LDRS

Related reports:

Strip Woking’s debt-man of his OBE MP says

Government bailout to ease Woking’s debt burden

Who will be saddled with Spelthorne’s and Woking’s £3 billion debts?

Could Woking’s debt be shared by you after reorganisation?

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.

Fleet of foot Epsom and Ewell FC speed to victory

16 April 2026



Epsom & Ewell made it back-to-back 3–0 home victories with an impressive and controlled performance against play-off chasing Fleet Town at Chalky Lane on Saturday 11th April.

Facing a side now managed by a former Epsom boss, this result carried added satisfaction for the hosts. The Salts named an unchanged squad but were forced into a late reshuffle when Kionte Gillfillian-Waul was delayed in arriving. Jason Vincent stepped into the starting XI, while Callum O’Keeffe again showed his versatility by filling in at left-back, allowing

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Tom Collins to move into midfield.

Epsom & Ewell started on the front foot, immediately putting Fleet under pressure and setting the tone for the match. Their bright opening was rewarded in the 12th minute when Callum Wilson rose highest to meet a Brendan Murphy-McVey corner, powering a header into the net at the back post to give the hosts a deserved lead. The Salts continued to dictate the play for the remainder of the first half, restricting Fleet's chances while posing the greater attacking threat.

The second half followed a similar pattern, with Epsom & Ewell remaining organised and patient in possession. Their control was eventually rewarded in the 74th minute when Jason Vincent doubled the advantage, producing a superb volley from another Murphy-McVey delivery to give the hosts breathing space.

There was still time to add further gloss to the scoreline. In the 88th minute, substitute Ore Allen applied the finishing touch, lifting a delicate low chip over the goalkeeper after a trademark mazy run from Courtney Swaby.

Three goals, three points and another clean sheet marked a superb home display and a statement victory against strong opposition.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media

Epsom shock as police probe serious assault

16 April 2026



Police have launched a major investigation following reports that a young woman was raped by multiple men in Epsom in the early hours of Saturday morning.

The incident is said to have taken place near Epsom Methodist Church on Ashley Road, close to the town centre, between approximately 2am and 4am. The woman, believed to be in her twenties, had reportedly left a nearby nightclub shortly before the attack and is understood to have been followed.

Surrey Police confirmed that the assault involved several suspects and that enquiries are ongoing to establish their identities. At this stage, no full descriptions have been released, and officers are appealing for information from the public.

A senior investigating officer described the incident as extremely distressing and confirmed that the victim is being supported by specially trained officers. Detectives are carrying out extensive enquiries in the area, including reviewing CCTV footage and conducting house-to-house inquiries.

Police are urging anyone who was in the Ashley Road area during the early hours of Saturday morning, or who may have seen anything suspicious, to come forward. Drivers with dashcam footage are also asked to check recordings that may assist the inquiry.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Surrey Police quoting reference **PR/45260041426**, either via the force's online reporting form or by contacting them directly. Information can also be provided anonymously via Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111** or through its website.

Support services are available for anyone affected by sexual violence, including Rape Crisis England & Wales, which operates a 24-hour helpline on **0808 500 2222**.

The seriousness of the allegation, coupled with its location close to the centre of Epsom, has led to heightened concern locally and significant national media attention. Officers have maintained a visible presence in the area while investigations continue.

Sam Jones – Reporter

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Devolution or dilution? And who decides?

16 April 2026



Surrey’s proposal to form a Foundation Strategic Authority is framed as a step forward — aligning transport, housing and economic planning across the county and bringing decision-making closer to local areas.

It may yet prove to be that. But the way in which such steps are taken matters just as much as the structures themselves.

The reorganisation of local government in Surrey is already one of the most significant changes in decades. Boroughs such as Epsom & Ewell are to be abolished and replaced by two large unitary councils. Now, alongside that, a new county-wide strategic authority is proposed. In some areas, parish councils may also emerge.

This is presented as simplification. To many residents, it may look more like substitution — one system replaced by another whose overall shape is no less complex.

A Foundation Strategic Authority would not initially be directly elected. It would operate through existing council leaders, taking decisions that could shape the county’s future for decades. That makes clarity of accountability all the more important.

Which is why process matters.

When asked to explain the basis on which Epsom & Ewell supported the Expression of Interest, the council leader **Hannah Dalton** (RA Stoneleigh) declined to comment, citing the pre-election period. Caution during such periods is understandable. But it is important not to overstate what the law requires.

The statutory rules in question are aimed at preventing local authorities from issuing politically sensitive publicity using public resources. They are not a shield against legitimate questions about how decisions have been made — still less where the very question is whether the authority itself took the decision at all.

If a council has formally acted, it should be able to say so, and explain how. If it has not, then that too is a matter of legitimate public interest.

Invoking restrictions designed for publicity to avoid answering questions about authority risks blurring a distinction that ought to remain clear.

The lack of democratic scrutiny over the FSA submission contrasts with the level of scrutiny to which and recently the same Council leadership is subjecting the popular proposal to twin Epsom and Ewell with Bucha in Ukraine: Full Council to Strategy and Resources Committee to a Working Group and then all the way back again.

Beyond this local issue lies a wider one. English devolution has long carried a tension between promise and practice. Powers are announced, structures created, and expectations raised. Yet control — particularly financial control — often remains at the centre.

The risk is not simply that new layers are added. It is that they exist without the clarity, authority or autonomy needed to justify them.

None of this is an argument against devolution. The case for decisions being taken closer to the communities they affect remains strong. But devolution requires more than new institutions. It requires transparency about who is making decisions, on what basis, and with what authority.

As Surrey moves through this period of change, those are not peripheral questions. They are central ones.

Related reports

Cllr Dalton seeks another layer of local government

Cllr Coley on an attempt to create another layer of local government

Epsom on road to twin with world-famous Ukraine town of Bucha

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Cllr Dalton seeks another layer of local government

16 April 2026



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has apparently joined Surrey leaders in backing a bid to Government for a new county-wide “Foundation Strategic Authority” (FSA), prompting questions about how such a significant step has been taken locally.

A letter dated 20 March 2026, signed by council leaders across Surrey including Epsom & Ewell’s leader Cllr **Hannah Dalton**, (RA Stoneleigh) confirms an Expression of Interest to form the authority by April 2027 .

The proposal forms part of the Government’s latest devolution programme, under which areas without existing mayoral structures are invited to establish FSAs to coordinate transport, housing, infrastructure, skills and economic development.

What is being proposed?

An FSA would sit above the new unitary councils planned for Surrey in 2027, providing strategic oversight across the county. The submission to Government describes it as offering “unified strategic leadership” and supporting long-term planning across a coherent economic area .

FSAs are also widely seen as a potential stepping stone to deeper devolution, including the possibility of a future elected mayor.

A changing local government landscape

The proposal comes as Surrey undergoes major reorganisation, with existing borough and district councils — including Epsom & Ewell — due to be replaced by two unitary authorities.

Alongside that, some areas are exploring the creation of parish or community councils.

The combined effect could see a structure emerging of:

- unitary councils delivering local services,
- a county-wide strategic authority shaping major policy,
- and more localised parish-level bodies in some areas.

Local concerns over authority and process

In a **letter to the Epsom and Ewell Times**, Cllr**Alex Coley** (Independent) raises concerns about how the decision to support the Expression of Interest was taken .

He questions whether the Leader of the Council had authority to sign on behalf of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, or whether the action was taken without formal approval through committee or full Council.

That distinction is not merely procedural. If the Expression of Interest was submitted on behalf of the Council, it would ordinarily be expected to rest on some identifiable constitutional or delegated authority. If not, it raises a different question as to the capacity in which the letter was signed.

Council leader declines comment

The Epsom and Ewell Times invited Cllr Hannah Dalton to clarify the position. She responded: *“As we are in the pre-election period it is my understanding that elected members should not be making any comments on council matters and so I will not be providing a comment.”*

Cllr Dalton is closely associated with the failed attempt to create parish councils for Epsom and Ewell.

Are pre-election publicity rules engaged?

The pre-election period places restrictions on **local authority publicity**, under the Code issued pursuant to the Local Government Act 1986.

However, those provisions are directed at preventing **the authority itself** from using public resources to publish material that could influence an election. They do not impose a general prohibition on elected members explaining decisions or

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clarifying the basis on which actions have been taken.

More importantly in this context, the issue raised is whether the Expression of Interest was in fact an authorised act of the Council at all.

If it was, the question of authority is plainly a legitimate matter for public explanation. If it was not, it is difficult to see how statutory restrictions on "local authority publicity" could apply to a request for clarification of an individual member's actions.

Either way, the question goes to **accountability, not publicity**.

What happens next?

The Government will now consider Surrey's Expression of Interest. If progressed, further detail will be required on governance, powers and accountability.

For residents, the immediate issue may be more straightforward: understanding how decisions of this scale are made locally, and on whose authority they are taken.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Cllr Coley's letter to Epsom and Ewell Times



Cllr Coley on an attempt to create another layer of local government

16 April 2026



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Dear Editor,

I read the 29th March letter to the editor “Local Councillors react to hospital merger idea” with great interest. The letter mentions a decision ‘taken behind closed doors three weeks ago, without public comment and clearly no intention to engage with residents.’

I agree, this does not augur well. The central theme of the letter is reminiscent of parallel activity at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.

Last week I discovered, by accident, that our borough council has supported an Expression of Interest to form a Foundation Strategic Authority as part of the Government’s next wave of devolution. This is a significant move with substantial implications for planning, housing, transport, skills, economic development, net-zero initiatives, police and fire services and perhaps most crucially – mayoral powers.

Cllr Hannah Dalton, the Leader of the Council in Epsom & Ewell has joined some, but not all, councils in Surrey to sign the Expression of Interest. There has been no announcement.

To obtain the proper authority in signing this Expression of Interest some Surrey councils have called an Extraordinary Council Meeting, some used a committee meeting and some brought a report to their Cabinet delegating authority to their Leader. There are also some councils which expressly give the constitutional authority to act, to their Leader.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has done none of these.

I have subsequently written to the Council’s Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer seeking clarity.

Do residents wish for their thoughts and concerns for the future to be guessed and assumed, perhaps ignored? Is a precedent being set, where a lone councillor can make strategic decisions on behalf of our borough without any of us knowing? Where is the public debate?

It feels that we have leadership-in-hiding and decisions made in secret. Like they say in Thelma and Louise “You get what you settle for.”

I don’t think we should settle for this.

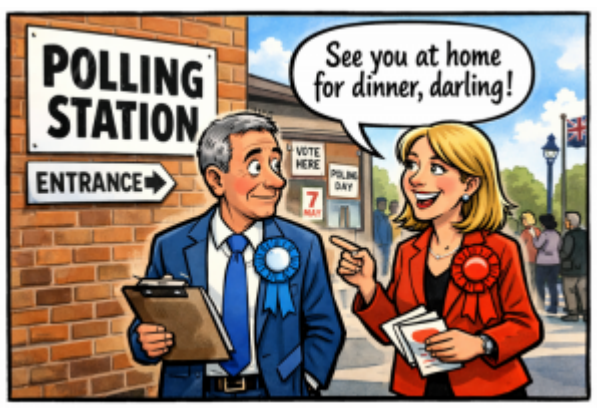
Yours faithfully,

Cllr Alex Coley (Ruxley), Leader of the Independents – Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

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Epsom and Ewell unitary election, a family affair?

16 April 2026



The forthcoming East Surrey Council elections in Epsom and Ewell are shaping up to be something of a **family affair**, with a number of candidates sharing surnames – and, it appears, households.

The official Statement of Persons Nominated reveals several instances where voters may find familiar names appearing more than once on the ballot paper.

In the **West Ewell ward**, two candidates named **Chambers** – Sarah Jane and Simon – are both standing for Reform UK, while the Conservative slate includes **Christopher Charles Muller** and **Tracy Margaret Muller**.

Meanwhile, the surname **Persand** appears no fewer than **three times across different wards**: Aaron in Epsom Town & Downs, Kieran in Epsom West, and Meera in Ewell Village, Stoneleigh & Nonsuch – suggesting a family presence spanning multiple parts of the borough.

The pattern continues elsewhere. Labour candidates **Kate Chinn** and **Richard Chinn** appear in different wards, and the **Ng** surname also features twice, with Keew and Jeanne standing for Labour and the Liberal Democrats respectively.

Perhaps most notably, in **West Ewell**, Residents’ Association borough councillor **Neil Dallen** is joined on the ballot in the same ward by borough councillor **Lucie McIntyre**. While the surnames differ she is his daughter – underlining the extent to which family ties intersect with local political life.

None of this is improper. Local elections have long attracted candidates from the same families, particularly in areas with strong traditions of civic involvement such as Epsom and Ewell. Political engagement often runs in families, with experience, networks and commitment passed from one generation to the next.

But for voters, it does add an extra layer of intrigue. With **multiple shared surnames across party lines and wards**, the ballot paper will require careful reading to distinguish between candidates – and perhaps a sharper awareness of the personal connections behind the names.

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In an election already notable for ushering in a new era of local government under the Surrey reorganisation, Epsom and Ewell's contribution may also be remembered for something more personal: a contest where politics, quite literally, runs in the family.

Click here for : Details of all candidates for East Surrey Unitary Council standing in Epsom and Ewell

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

Unitary Council candidates standing in Epsom and Ewell

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Unitary Council candidates standing in Epsom and Ewell

16 April 2026



Click here for : Details of all candidates for East Surrey Unitary Council standing in Epsom and Ewell

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In the weeks ahead Epsom and Ewell Times will publish the personal statements of all candidates that wish to provide them to us.

Residents across Surrey – including Epsom and Ewell – will go to the polls on **Thursday 7 May 2026** in elections that will reshape local government for a generation.

The vote is part of the Government's programme of **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**, which will replace Surrey's current two-tier system with **two new unitary authorities** from April 2027.

For Epsom and Ewell residents, this means voting not for the existing Borough Council, but for councillors who will form the new **East Surrey Council**.

What voters are being asked to decide

The 2026 elections will choose councillors for the **"shadow" East Surrey Council**, a body that will operate alongside existing councils during a one-year transition period.

These councillors will:

- Set the first budgets and council tax levels for the new authority
- Establish governance structures and staffing
- Oversee the transfer of services ahead of April 2027

Once the new system comes into force, they will continue as full councillors of the new authority until at least 2031.

How the new system will work

Under the reorganisation:

- Surrey's **12 existing councils** (county plus districts/boroughs) will be abolished

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- Two unitary councils – **East Surrey** and **West Surrey** – will take over all services
- East Surrey will cover areas including **Epsom & Ewell, Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge**

Each new authority will deliver everything from bin collections and planning to education and social care – functions currently split between borough and county councils.

Voting system and representation

Voters will be able to choose **up to two councillors per ward**, with the top two candidates elected under a first-past-the-post system.

Across East Surrey:

- 72 councillors will represent 36 wards
- Elections are based broadly on current county council divisions

What it means locally

Importantly, **no elections are taking place in 2026 for Epsom & Ewell Borough Council itself**. Existing borough and county councillors will remain in post until March 2027, creating a period of overlap.

For residents, day-to-day services are expected to continue unchanged during the transition.

Registering and voting

To take part:

- You must be registered to vote by **midnight on 20 April 2026**
- Photo ID is required at polling stations
- Postal and proxy voting options are available

A pivotal local moment

The Surrey LGR Hub describes these elections as a key step in creating a simpler system of local government, with councillors elected in May playing a “key role in setting up and then running the new councils.”

For Epsom and Ewell, the vote represents a significant shift away from long-standing borough governance towards a much larger strategic authority – with consequences that will shape local services, taxation and representation for years to come.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports

Last day to Stand for Surrey’s Unitary Councils

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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Kirby Fans Pack the Kerb in Epsom

16 April 2026

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Children’s author Katie Kirby drew crowds to Waterstones Epsom today Friday 10th, as families queued more than 100 metres along the High Street for a book signing on the final day of the Easter school holidays.

In bright spring sunshine, parents and excited children waited patiently for their chance to meet the bestselling writer, whose hugely popular *Lottie Brooks* series has become a staple for young readers across the UK. Staff at the store reported a steady flow throughout the day, with the queue stretching well beyond the shop frontage at its peak.

Kirby, a former primary school teacher turned full-time author and illustrator, has built a devoted following with her humorous and relatable books aimed at middle-grade readers. Her breakout success, *The Extremely Embarrassing Life of Lottie Brooks*, was shortlisted for major children’s book awards and has sold in significant numbers, with subsequent titles cementing her reputation as one of the UK’s leading voices in children’s fiction.



Epsom school student Ellie with her mother and the author

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Epsom school student Rosie Gordon with the author

Her stories, told in diary format, capture the awkwardness and comedy of growing up, striking a chord particularly with readers aged 8 to 12. The blend of cartoon-style illustrations and accessible writing has helped drive strong sales both in bookshops and through school reading programmes.

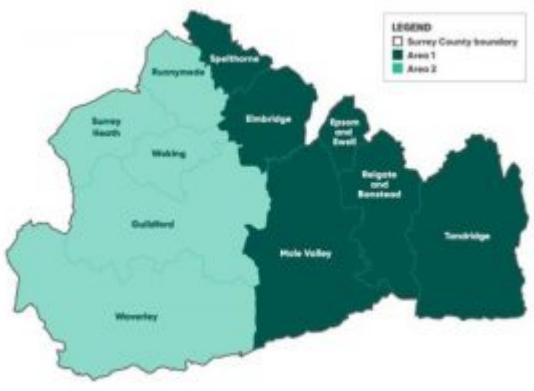
Today's event reflected that popularity. Children clutching copies of Kirby's books chatted animatedly in the queue, while parents described the visit as a highlight of the holidays. Inside, Kirby signed books and spoke briefly with readers, creating what one attendee described as "a really special moment" for young fans.

Booksellers say such events have become increasingly important in encouraging children to read for pleasure. The turnout in Epsom suggests that, despite digital distractions, the appeal of meeting a favourite author—and taking home a signed copy—remains as strong as ever.

Lionel Blackman

Last day to Stand for Surrey's Unitary Councils

16 April 2026



Today is the final day to get your name on a Surrey ballot ahead of this year's once in a generation election.

Surrey County Council was created in 1889 with the 11 boroughs and districts forming in 1974.

This year, they will be dissolved and replaced with two new mega authorities covering the east and west of the old county as local government moves from the old two-tier system, into two single councils.

This election, set for May 7, will be the first time people get to vote under the new system and today, Thursday April 9, is the final day for any would-be politicians to get their names on the ballot sheets.

The new councils, East and West Surrey, will be responsible for things that make everyday work, such as waste collection and recycling, planning and building control, as well as adult social care and children's services.

The idea is to move to two councils that are effectively responsible for everything, rather than 12 each with their own

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agendas. This, the hope is, will simplify local government and improve service delivery – and ideally make accountability clearer to residents.

Other big ticket items the councils cover include highways and transport, housing and homelessness support, environmental health, leisure and community services.

Basically it's where your council tax goes.

To stand for election you must be at least 18, be a British, EU, or a Commonwealth citizen, and be registered to vote or have lived or worked in the area for at least a year.

Those looking to stand as a member of a political party should contact their preferred groups while independents can reach out to the Local Government Association Independent Group for any tips.

Valid nomination papers must be submitted with at least two people, a proposer and a seconder, who have agreed you are a suitable candidate – these people need to be on the electoral register in the relevant ward.

Councillors elected in May 2026 will sit on shadow authorities for their new councils for the first year.

This will allow them time to develop budgets and service plans, agree staffing and governance arrangements, and prepare for the transfer of responsibilities from the existing councils.

The new East and West Surrey Councils will then formally begin operating in April 2027, when Surrey's 12 legacy councils will be dissolved.

To stand for election you must email or call the relevant existing council for the area you wish to stand.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council
Email: electoralservices@epsom-ewell.gov.uk
Telephone: 01372 732000

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Map 2.2 Surrey East West. (Credit: Elmbridge Borough Council)

Related reports

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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Alton altercation gives Epsom and Ewell FC 3 -0 win

16 April 2026



Epsom & Ewell FC secured their Step 5 status with a composed and disciplined 3–0 victory over Alton FC at Chalky Lane on 7 April in the Combined Counties Premier Division South.

There were two changes from the side that faced Sutton Common Rovers. Tom Collins returned in place of Jason Vincent, who dropped to the bench, while Ali Fofahan came into the starting line-up after missing the previous fixture due to travel issues.

The first half produced few clear-cut chances, although the Salts controlled much of the play and looked the more assured side in possession. Their best moments came through sustained pressure rather than individual openings. Alton's only real threat came just before the interval, forcing a scrambling clearance off the line and a save from Kit Fletcher. The sides went in level at the break.

The second half belonged to the hosts. Their intent was clear from the restart, and the breakthrough came on 54 minutes. Stefan Aiwone made a powerful run through midfield before being brought down just outside the area. Tom Collins' free-kick was blocked by the wall but fell kindly to Callum Wilson, who guided the ball home to give Epsom the lead.

From there, the Salts managed the game with maturity, restricting Alton to half-chances while steadily increasing the pressure. The reward came late on. Courtney Swaby struck on 89 minutes to double the advantage before adding a second moments later, finishing confidently from a Kionte Gillfillian-Waul through ball to seal the result.

A clean sheet, three goals and — most importantly — the points that mathematically guarantee survival. The victory lifts Epsom & Ewell several places up the table, adding extra gloss to a night that felt like a turning point for the club.

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Epsom and Ewell FC Media

Friends of Horton Cemetery influence law reform

16 April 2026



A local Epsom charity's campaign to protect a forgotten cemetery appears to have helped shape national thinking on burial law reform.

The Friends of Horton Cemetery (FoHC), based in Epsom, made a detailed submission to the Law Commission in January 2025 calling for stronger legal protections for neglected burial grounds—particularly those in private ownership.

Now, with the publication of the Law Commission's report on Burial and Cremation in March 2026, several of the group's core concerns appear to have been recognised at the highest level of policy.

Horton Cemetery, the resting place of around 9000 former psychiatric patients from the Epsom hospital cluster, has long been at the centre of FoHC's work. Since its sale into private ownership in 1983, the site has suffered decades of neglect, with no public access and minimal maintenance.

In its **submission**, FoHC argued that the law currently leaves such sites in a regulatory vacuum, with no enforceable duty on owners to maintain them and limited powers for authorities to intervene.

That argument now appears to have gained traction.

The Law Commission's report identifies private burial grounds as an area of "real gaps in protection" and, for the first time, proposes a legal duty requiring all burial grounds—including privately owned ones—to be kept in "good order". The report also envisages inspection and enforcement powers at national level.

These proposals closely mirror FoHC's central recommendation that cemetery owners should be subject to a clear, enforceable maintenance obligation reflecting the historical and emotional significance of such sites.

However, other proposals put forward by the Epsom group have not yet been taken up in full.

FoHC had called for a statutory right of access for relatives, stronger powers for local authorities to intervene, and safeguards against speculative ownership and redevelopment. While the Commission acknowledges many of these issues—particularly the importance of access to graves—it stops short of recommending firm legal rights or stronger local enforcement mechanisms.

Speaking after the report's publication, Lionel Blackman, solicitor and secretary of the Friends of Horton Cemetery and author of the legal submission said "The recognition of the problem is an important step, even if the solutions remain incomplete."

The charity's work has also fed into ongoing discussions with the Ministry of Justice. At a recent meeting, organised by Patron of the Charity and local MP Helen Maguire with trustees of the charity, Theresa Keneflick and Kevin McDonnell and junior Minister Alex Davies-Jones MP, Horton Cemetery was cited as a real-world example of the kind of site falling through gaps in the current legal framework.

The Law Commission's reforms are expected to take several years to translate into legislation, with an initial Government response anticipated within six months.

For campaigners in Epsom, the message is clear: what began as a local effort to restore dignity to a neglected burial ground is now influencing the national conversation.

And while the law may not yet have caught up fully, Horton Cemetery is no longer being overlooked.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Image: Horton Cemetery 1971

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Portraits of pauper patients in Epsom’s Horton Cemetery, inspires artist

Petition to reclaim Horton Cemetery from property speculator

Local community gathered at Horton Cemetery

Stable Visit Opens Doors on Epsom Downs

16 April 2026



Residents were given a rare glimpse behind the scenes of one of Epsom’s most picturesque racing yards as a community visit brought locals face-to-face with the daily life of a professional training stable.

Around 30 racing enthusiasts gathered on Epsom Downs for an exclusive morning at the yard of trainer George Baker, with the early mist still hanging over the gallops as the visit began. The event was organised by Councillor Steven McCormick, Chair of the Epsom Downs Conservators, with support from fellow Conservator Councillor Kim Spickett.

Guests were welcomed inside the stable gates for a guided tour led by Candida Baker, who offered an engaging insight into the routines, challenges and traditions of the yard. The visit revealed not only the meticulous care given to each horse but also the individual personalities that make up a working stable.

The highlight of the morning came as the group moved out to the fibre sand gallop, where they watched horses thunder past at full speed. Standing trackside, visitors experienced first-hand the power and elegance that define training on the Downs.

The visit also served as a reminder of the deep historical roots of horse racing in Epsom. Councillor Kim Spickett said the morning demonstrated how local traditions continue to be preserved in active use, describing the stables as “living museums” connecting the present to centuries of heritage.

Councillor McCormick added that events like this are about bringing the community closer to what makes Epsom unique, highlighting the importance of maintaining a connection between residents and the Downs.

Further visits are already planned, with the next taking place at Michael Attwater’s yard on April 11th. Spaces are limited and expected to fill quickly, with booking available via Eventbrite. A subsequent visit to Craig Benton’s yard is scheduled for April 18th

Attwater Racing

.

● Date: April 11th

● Location: Attwater Racing, Epsom

● Host: Organised by Cllr Steven McCormick & Cllr Kim Spickett

How to Book:

Spaces are strictly limited and fill up fast. To secure your place for the April 11th visit

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1986793626219?aff=oddtdtcreator

Craig Benton – April 18th

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1986793958212?aff=oddtdtcreator

Contact: Councillor Steven McCormick stevenjmccormick@yahoo.co.uk

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Epsom man runs marathons in memory of sister who died from epilepsy

16 April 2026



Barry Ahearn, 45, is running one of the world's most famous marathons in memory of his younger sister, Abbie, who passed away just three months before her 30th birthday in 2023. Barry is a long-term supporter of Epilepsy Action and has raised almost £23,000 for the charity so far.

Abbie passed away following an epileptic seizure that was so severe, it sent her into cardiac arrest. Last year, Barry completed a total of 27 half-marathons in memory of his sister. "The reason I chose to do 27 half-marathons is because this represents the amount of time Abbie's brain was without oxygen, whilst paramedics tried to revive her.

"According to Epilepsy Action, around 1000 people die from epilepsy-related causes, which is about three people every day. I want to make sure Abbie is not just 'one of the three'."

Since his first big challenge, Barry has completed an ultra-marathon, been a finalist at the BBC Make a Difference awards, and has planned many future challenges, including the London Marathon. His efforts have been recognised by local MP Helen Maguire and the pair completed a Parkrun together last November. Helen has since been working with the charity.

Helen said: "I'm so inspired to see Barry taking on the London marathon to honour his sister Abbie and support Epilepsy Action. Having joined Barry for a recent park tun in support of Epilepsy Action, I know how powerful these efforts can be in bringing people together and raising awareness. I wish him the very best of luck and commend his incredible commitment to this cause."

Barry is determined to continue spreading awareness of epilepsy, and highlighting how serious the condition can be. "Losing my sister has been the worst experience of my life. Abbie was kind compassionate, attentive and loyal. She was so much fun to be around, always making jokes and playing pranks. She brightened any room she walked into with her smile and is sorely missed by everyone who knew and loved her.

"Many people think epilepsy is just about 'seizures', when in reality there's so much more that goes along with the condition. Epilepsy takes away people's independence, stops them driving, can be very socially isolating and some of the medications have really bad side effects, including extreme fatigue and mood swings. Abbie had only been diagnosed with epilepsy six weeks before passing away, but this is the reality she could've been living with if she was still here, and I know she'd want me to do something about that.

"I want her passing to mean something, to help make a difference, not only by raising money to go towards research, but also to raise awareness of how serious this condition is."

"After the London Marathon, I'm already planning my next big challenge. I'm not quite set on what I want to do, but I think it might involve something like doubling the 27 halves…."

Philippa Cartwright, director of fundraising at Epilepsy Action, said: "We're honoured to have Barry as one of our 2026 London Marathon runners. The challenges he has taken on over these past couple of years have been incredible, and we're so grateful for his ongoing support.

"Barry has shown extraordinary resilience and determination since losing his sister, choosing to turn the hardest experience of his life, into something that will help so many others. The money he has raised will go directly towards helping Epilepsy Action to continually campaign for better care for people with epilepsy across the country, and funding the frontline services the charity provides including its helpline, support groups and one-to-to one support.

"Epilepsy Action would like to say a big thank you to Barry and we are wishing him and all of our runners the best of luck – we are sure his sister Abbie would be so proud."

Epilepsy affects around one in every 100 people in the UK and around 80 are diagnosed every day. Epilepsy Action is committed to improving the lives of people with epilepsy, by campaigning for better services and raising awareness of the condition. The charity provides a national network of support groups, with expert advice available on its freephone

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helpline 0808 800 5050 and online at www.epilepsy.org.uk.

Epilepsy Action

Related reports

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Epsom Runner’s Tribute to Sister Raises Over £22,000 for Epilepsy Charity

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Information on Epsom and Ewell Council’s perished parishes plan blocked on cost

16 April 2026



A dispute between a resident and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council over the conduct of its Community Governance Review (CGR) has escalated, despite the Council’s decision to abandon plans for new parish-style community councils.

In March, the Council dropped proposals to create Epsom and Ewell Community Councils after its second-stage consultation produced a decisive result, with around 82% of over 2200 respondents opposing the plans.

However, correspondence seen by the Epsom & Ewell Times shows that concerns about how the consultation was conducted — and how the Council has responded to those concerns — remain unresolved.

Resident raises formal concerns over consultation process

Local government elector Nathan Elvery and a former Council CEO submitted a detailed pre-action protocol letter in early March raising potential legal concerns about the CGR process, including:

• the design of the initial consultation survey and whether a clear “No” option was available
• the adequacy and transparency of financial information
• whether alternative governance models were considered
• compliance with consultation law principles
• whether equality duties had been properly addressed

He also submitted a series of Freedom of Information requests seeking disclosure of internal documents and analysis.

In a follow-up email to the Council’s Chief Executive dated 3rd April, Mr Elvery expressed concern that his correspondence had not been substantively addressed, stating that the Council had treated his pre-action protocol letter as “a routine information request” rather than engaging with the legal issues raised.

He wrote that more than four weeks had passed without acknowledgement from senior officers and that “none of this has happened” in terms of the Council’s own commitments to timely responses.

FOI request refused on cost grounds

On 1 April, the Council responded to Mr Elvery’s FOI requests by confirming that it holds the information sought but declining to provide it on the basis that complying would exceed the statutory cost limit under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Council stated that responding would take more than 18 hours of officer time and was therefore not required under Section 12 of the Act.

In his 3rd April email, Mr Elvery challenges this position, arguing that the Council has improperly aggregated multiple requests to exceed the cost threshold and has failed to meet its duty to provide advice and assistance to narrow the request.

He also argues that some elements of the request — such as whether an Equality Impact Assessment exists or whether legal advice was obtained — could be answered quickly and should not have been refused.

Internal review and possible ICO referral

Mr Elvery has now requested a formal internal review of the Council’s FOI decision and indicated that he will refer the matter to the Information Commissioner’s Office if the refusal is upheld.

He has also renewed his request for a substantive response to the issues raised in his original pre-action letter, including

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confirmation of what steps the Council intends to take to ensure that future consultations comply with legal requirements.

Although he confirms that he will not pursue judicial review following the Council's decision to abandon the CGR proposals, he states that the procedural issues identified remain relevant to how the Council conducts future consultations under local government reorganisation.

Consultation outcome settles policy but not process

The Council's decision not to proceed with creating community councils has resolved the immediate policy question. However, the issues raised in the FOI correspondence highlight continuing debate about the consultation process itself.

One recurring point is that the CGR consultation did not include Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs) — currently being piloted elsewhere in Surrey — as an option for residents to consider.

Epsom and Ewell Tines (EET) survey suggests alternative preference

Alongside the Council's consultation, the Epsom & Ewell Times conducted an independent reader survey.

Although based on a smaller sample of only 112 respondents, the survey found:

• around 75% support for NAC-style local engagement structures
• a similarly high level of opposition to community councils as reflected in the Council's consultation

Unlike the official consultation, the EET survey invited respondents to compare different models of local representation.

Transparency and future implications

The Council's use of the cost exemption under the Freedom of Information Act is a lawful mechanism where a request requires disproportionate time and expense. However, the refusal has left a number of substantive questions unanswered in the public domain.

These include how consultation options were framed, what alternatives were considered, and how financial information was developed and presented to residents.

With Surrey's local government reorganisation continuing, and new governance structures still to be defined, the issues raised in this case may have implications beyond the now-abandoned community council proposals.

The outcome of the internal review — and any subsequent decision by the Information Commissioner — may determine whether further information is disclosed.

For now, while the policy proposal has been withdrawn, the debate about process, transparency and future local representation in Epsom and Ewell remains ongoing.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

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