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Three beers for Dorking

13 March 2026



Beer fans will be pumped to know that Dorking Halls will be able to offer customers a greater variety of booze after planning permission was secured to convert storage units into cellars. Antique hunters may be less than thrilled however. Mole Valley District Council has given itself the green light to convert the units at the northwest of the halls so they can be used by the town's flagship theatre. The block had been in long-term use by Dorking auctioneers P F Windibank to keep its wares and will force the company, which been based there for over half a century, to move elsewhere. Officers, who recommended the conversion be approved, said it would support the "popular leisure and cultural facility", Dorking Halls, and help its long-term viability.

They told the March development management committee: "They consider they need more (space), to provide a greater variety of drinks and they need more storage for beer kegs. The proposed change of use would support Dorking Halls and the wider town centre economy. Dorking Halls is an important venue for Mole Valley, it provides opportunities for leisure and recreation both for those living within and outside the district."

John Collins, speaking on behalf of the application, said the increased storage was needed due to the scale of activities and that revenues generated through bar sales underpinned the venue's viability. He said the Dorking Halls was cherished by the community and added: "The current cellarage was simply not adequate and more space needed to improve back of house operations and comfort within the facility. Being able to have a comfortable welcoming place with a decent bar is all part of that experience."

Councillors at the meeting expressed concern over how it would impact the town's antique scene – although that lies outside the committee's remit. Cllr Claire Malcomson (Liberal Democrat: Holmwoods and Beare Green) said: "I know Dorking Halls is an extremely precious asset that we have but I do also think this is going to (impact) some of the trade in Dorking. So I am not going to pass judgement or anything but I wanted to make that comment because I think this could be quite a loss for us." Cllr Kirstie Havard (Liberal Democrat: Capel, Leigh, Newdigate and Charlwood) added: "This application is causing great harm to that business they have been there for 80 years. It's arisen after the first phase of Dorking Halls (refurbishment) was completed and it was decided that space was needed, and I understand the reasons, but I'm very worried about Windibank and what they are losing, and it is very harmful to their business."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Dorking Halls (image Google)

Some Surrey care services at a crossroads?

13 March 2026



A Surrey charity has warned that unpaid carers could be pushed "beyond breaking point" after Surrey County Council ended contracts for two carer support services.

Crossroads Care Surrey said the county council has withdrawn support for its Emergency Care Provision and Carer Emergency Planning services, decisions it claims were made with little notice and without consultation with carers who rely on them.

The charity said the changes follow earlier reductions in respite support for carers and could leave many families struggling at the most critical moments, particularly when dealing with medical emergencies or caring for loved ones at the end of their lives.

Crossroads said it received notification only days ago that Surrey County Council (SCC) would no longer support its end-

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of-life respite service, which enables unpaid carers to take short breaks while supporting terminally ill relatives at home.

The Carer Emergency Planning service will also end at the close of March, giving what the charity says is only three weeks' notice. Crossroads says almost 1,500 carers who already have emergency plans in place will lose the safety net those plans were designed to provide.

The charity warned the changes could have "serious and far-reaching consequences" for vulnerable residents and already stretched health and care services.

It suggested that without emergency support, more carers could reach exhaustion and be unable to continue caring at home, potentially leading to avoidable hospital admissions or crisis interventions from social services.

Terry Hawkins, chief executive of Crossroads Care Surrey, said unpaid carers provide care worth an estimated £162 billion a year across the UK, a contribution broadly equivalent to the NHS budget.

He said: "Over the past year we have already seen vital support reduced following the removal of respite services. Now, further contracts are being ended early, leaving carers with fewer and fewer places to turn.

"Unpaid carers are the invisible backbone of our health and care system. Without them, the NHS and social care services would simply not cope.

"These services provide the basic safeguards that allow carers to keep going, knowing that if something happens to them, or when families face the end of life, support is there.

"Removing them risks pushing already exhausted carers beyond breaking point."

Crossroads also questioned why the decision had not been considered by Surrey County Council's Cabinet, arguing that services affecting thousands of vulnerable residents should be subject to public scrutiny.

The charity has said it will attempt to launch its own emergency support service to help carers who may now find themselves without practical respite assistance.

Surrey County Council has defended the decision, saying the contracts had not delivered the impact expected and that a new approach to supporting carers will replace them.

Sinead Mooney, Deputy Leader of the council and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said the authority had carried out a review before deciding not to renew the agreements with Crossroads.

She said: "After careful review, we've decided to end – or not renew – contracts with Crossroads Care Surrey for carer support services because the contracts have failed to achieve the impact we expected.

"Take-up has been lower than we intended and we can't justify continuing to fund the arrangements."

Cllr Mooney said the council would introduce a new model of support, including a flexible £300 wellbeing break payment for carers.

She said the council would also work with NHS partners and other care providers to ensure carers can access help through the wider health and social care system.

"Surrey's carers do an extraordinary job, often in challenging circumstances," she said. "We're absolutely committed to making sure the transition from these contracts for carers is smooth, responsive and supportive."

The council also rejected suggestions that emergency support would disappear, saying replacement care in crisis situations would continue to be provided by the county council.

Cllr Mooney added that carers currently receiving support through the end-of-life contract would see no reduction in services until that agreement ends in September, after which support could be delivered by a different provider.

She said carers concerned about support should contact the council's information and advice service.

The dispute highlights the continuing pressure on social care services across Surrey, where unpaid carers play a central role in supporting vulnerable residents at home.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

Carers respite at the Crossroads in Surrey?

Green light for MRI scanner at Leatherhead Leisure Centre

13 March 2026

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Surrey will get a new MRI machine at Leatherhead Leisure Centre after councillors were “all in favour” of building the musculoskeletal scanner. The new machine will be housed in a temporary building, with the aim of bringing accessible, community-based imaging technology to the area.

The idea has been in motion for the past 18 months after it emerged there was a significant shortfall in MRI access and missed waiting time targets. Leatherhead Leisure Centre, in Guildford Road, Fetcham, was identified as the ideal location to help cut travel distances and relieve pressure on NHS hospitals, papers presented to Mole Valley’s March development management committee said.

The application was not without obstacles as the centre sits on green belt land where new buildings are normally considered inappropriate unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated. In this case, the pressing need for new medical facilities available to all patients, together with the temporary five-year nature of the development, proved compelling enough.

Officers told the meeting: “The centre lies within the green belt but in this case the very special circumstances – the need for this type of medical facility and the proximity to the centre, with its car parking space – are strong.” Originally the building was to be navy blue but a change of provider means it will now be white. Two staff members will occupy the site at any one time, with space for a waiting room and a separate scanning area.

Councillor Roger Adams (Liberal Democrat: Bookham West) said: “I am all in favour of additional health facilities in this area.” The plans were approved by nine votes in favour, with no objections and two abstentions.

Questions were raised about whether the land might be reclassified as previously developed green belt land after the temporary building is removed, amid concerns this could open the site to future development. Officers said the five-year nature of the scheme, together with its valued community use, would see the site revert to its original protected status.

Members also pushed for the building to be finished in a colour less likely to show wear and tear, but were told the appearance was determined by the materials available rather than a simple paint choice

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Leatherhead Leisure Centre (Image Google) – the padel centre will be built behind the facility

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

13 March 2026



A meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC) on 10th March exposed growing tensions over the borough’s Local Plan after councillors attempted to debate how revised evidence is being submitted to the Government’s Planning Inspector.

The committee ultimately voted seven in favour with two abstentions simply to “note” the Local Plan update report, with the chair not voting.

But the discussion revealed frustration among some councillors over the level of member oversight of changes being made during the examination process.

Inspector requires further work on Local Plan

The meeting began with a detailed briefing from the council’s Head of Planning Policy explaining that the Local Plan, submitted for examination in March 2025, had been judged “unsound” by the Planning Inspector and required further work before it could proceed.

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He told councillors that the Inspector had requested additional technical work to determine whether modifications could make the plan sound.

Two pieces of revised evidence had already been submitted earlier this year:

• a revised section of the Green Belt Topic Paper
• an updated Land Availability Assessment

Further work has now been requested, including the preparation of potential additional site allocations and updates to the housing trajectory, sustainability appraisal, habitats regulations assessment, transport assessment and infrastructure delivery plan.

All of this work must be submitted to the Inspector by 10th April 2026.

Officers warned councillors that national policy now discourages long pauses in Local Plan examinations and that delays could risk the plan being withdrawn.

Debate centres on councillor oversight

Much of the discussion that followed focused not on housing sites themselves but on whether councillors had sufficient opportunity to scrutinise documents being submitted to the Inspector.

Independent councillor **Alex Coley**, who had requested the agenda item, raised concerns about the process and argued that wider oversight of the evidence base was necessary.

He told the committee that effective decision-making required proper evaluation of alternatives and meaningful access for councillors and the public to the decision-making process.

Coley also suggested that some of the conclusions contained in recently submitted evidence appeared contradictory and said this demonstrated the need for greater scrutiny.

“I believe that sets out just one example of why wider public oversight is so important,” he said.

Chair maintains procedural limits

However, councillors were advised that the committee could not introduce procedural motions or amendments relating to the Local Plan submissions.

Coley told the meeting that members had received advice from the council’s Monitoring Officer stating that motions from the floor were not permitted under the committee’s procedures.

He questioned that interpretation, suggesting it relied on provisions from an older model constitution that the council had replaced in 2023.

Despite this, the chair, Councillor **Peter O’Donovan** (RA, Ewell Court), maintained the procedural position and the meeting proceeded without amendments to the report or further debate on altering the process.

The committee therefore confined itself to noting the update report.

Questions raised about future scrutiny

Councillors also asked whether the committee would have further opportunities to review documents before they are submitted to the Inspector.

Officers said the timetable made that unlikely for the next stage of work.

“With the deadline for the evidence base being the 10th of April… there isn’t time for a committee to do that,” councillors were told.

Instead, public consultation on the new material will take place later in the examination process once the evidence has been submitted.

Campaign concerns continue

Outside the council chamber, the Local Plan debate continues to attract strong public interest, particularly over potential Green Belt development.

Campaign group Epsom Green Belt circulated a message to councillors following the meeting expressing concern that revised Local Plan documents could be progressing without full scrutiny by elected members.

The group urged councillors to ensure that any material changes affecting Green Belt land are properly reviewed and debated.

Next steps for the Local Plan

The Local Plan examination will now move into its next stage.

Key steps expected include submission of new evidence to the Inspector by **10 April 2026**, followed by consultation on the new documents and potentially further examination hearings.

If the Inspector concludes that the plan can be made sound with modifications, the final decision will return to Full Council, where councillors will vote on whether to adopt the revised Local Plan.

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Sam Jones – Reporter



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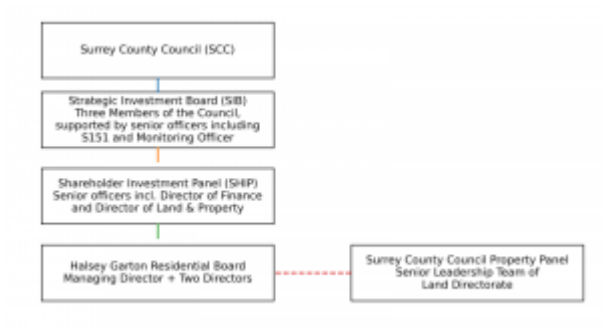
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Surrey Council reviews property sales as it signs off business plans for own firms

13 March 2026



Surrey County Council has signed off the latest business plans for two companies it owns as it tries to strengthen its finances during a difficult period for local government.

The council’s Strategic Investment Board approved the 2026/27 plans for property company Halsey Garton Residential and recruitment firm Connect2Surrey on March 9. In a meeting mostly held in private (part 2) for commercial sensitivity reasons, the board also heard an update from the property data organisation TRICS Consortium Ltd, in which the council holds a smaller share.

What it means

Essentially, the council is reviewing how companies it owns or part-owns will operate over the next year and whether they can continue to bring in money.

Like many local authorities, Surrey County Council is under growing financial pressure, with rising costs and less support from central government. These companies are meant to help generate income and support council services.

Officials say the plans should help improve transparency and ensure the council keeps a close eye on how its investments perform.

Possible property sales

One of the biggest issues discussed was what to do with homes owned by Halsey Garton Residential. The council is considering the pace at which it sells off properties in the company’s housing portfolio, and board members were asked to give direction on how quickly those homes should be sold.

That decision is partly being driven by changes to housing legislation coming into force in May 2026, which could affect how easily properties can be sold if they are currently occupied by tenants.

Selling homes more quickly could help the council bring in money sooner, but it also carries risks, including market uncertainty, reputational concerns and the challenge of completing sales before major local government changes take effect.

Financial pressures behind the move

Council officers warned the authority is operating in a “very challenging financial environment”. Future funding reforms mean the council is expected to receive less support from central government, leaving it increasingly reliant on council tax and other income streams.

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Investment companies like Halsey Garton Residential and Connect2Surrey are intended to help support the council's long-term finances, even if profits do not come immediately.

What happens next

The council will keep monitoring the performance of the companies over the coming year, with a half-year review planned later in 2026.

In the meantime, councillors are expected to continue weighing up how quickly to sell properties owned by Halsey Garton Residential. This decision could affect the council's finances and its property portfolio going forward.

Emily Dalton LDRS

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Dorking housing plan rejected again over affordable homes shortfall

13 March 2026



Plans to build even more homes on the former Aviva site in Dorking have been thrown out after developers failed to include enough affordable housing. It is the second time the application has been before councillors after the original plans, which included no affordable homes, were deferred in November.

Then, Mole Valley District Council's planning officers had recommended the application for 69 homes at the Pixham Lane site be approved – despite there being no affordable housing included. The updated plan, which included 15 affordable units, was later recommended for refusal because it again fell short of the council's 40 per cent target, and independent assessors believed a higher proportion could feasibly be delivered.

Developers Stonegate Homes (Pixham) maintained it was economically unviable to include any more affordable homes and warned that rejecting the proposal could result in no homes being built. They told councillors: "We genuinely understand this is a very important topic. However, critically no two sites are ever the same and while the overarching policy targets are in place the amount of affordable housing each individual site can deliver will be different."

They said three different affordability consultants had reached different conclusions about what the site could support, arguing this showed there would inevitably be disagreement. "Within four months we've gone from the council's own retained affordability consultants supporting zero affordable housing to the most recent ones concluding that 40 per cent is achievable. With respect this must not be the case of asking the same question until you get the answer you want," they said.

The developer added that their proposal would still make a significant contribution locally. "Our offer is above what would be required at appeal and would provide 23 per cent of the council's annual affordable housing in one go. Refusal would not help address shortfalls in affordability."

There have already been a series of planning applications approved on the site, which was originally earmarked to be a new stadium for Dorking Wanderers FC. Around 300 new homes across the Pixham Lane development have already been granted planning permission.

Residents speaking against the latest proposal said developers were prioritising profit over community needs. "The developers are clearly trying to maximise the amount of space that is income generating while minimising the amount that isn't," they said. They also warned about the cumulative impact of development in the area, adding: "Residents are really concerned about the serious cumulative impacts that all these applications for the Aviva site, plus the developments close by at Station Approach and Lincoln Road, will have on the local environment. The overall total of around 300 new residential units on this site that have already been agreed is more than sufficient."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Former Aviva site in Pixham Lane, near Dorking (image Google)

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Will sale of Dorking offices compromise housing plans?

Cycle hub in Dorking development

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Council response to Epsom and Ewell Green Belt concerns

13 March 2026





In response to the report in the Epsom and Ewell Times, Fresh Local Plan row as councillor questions Green Belt revisions and governance at Epsom and Ewell, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has responded as follows:

“The Council submitted the Local Plan on the 10th March 2025 for independent Examination.

The Examination process is led by the Planning Inspector who is tasked with examining the Local Plan on behalf of the Secretary of State to determine whether the local plan is sound and legally compliant.

During the Local Plan Examination Hearings, the Inspector requested that the council undertake two discrete pieces of work that required revisiting and updating specific sections of two documents that form part of the Submission Library.

One of these pieces of work was updating Section 4 of the Green Belt Topic Paper in accordance with a revised methodology agreed with the Inspector during the examination hearings. This work was completed and submitted to the Inspector by the agreed deadline under delegated authority.

The Council’s letter to the Inspector dated 11th February 2026 makes it clear that the updated Section of the Green Belt Topic Paper does not consider other constraints to development or conclude whether the sites are suitable for allocation. However, we state that if this information is required to progress the Examination, then the Council can undertake this work.

The Inspector’s letter dated 12th February 2026 confirms that the above work is necessary for the examination to proceed, and has asked the Council to undertake this work along with updates to specific pieces of evidence, notably:

- Housing Trajectory / 5 Year Supply
- The Sustainability Appraisal
- The Habitats Regulations Assessment
- The Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- The Transport Assessment

The Council is now undertaking this work.

The Local Plan Programme Officer confirmed on the 3 March 2026 that the evidence detailed above in addition to the two pieces of additional work submitted in January 2026, will be subject to public consultation.

There are no timescales for the public consultation at present and it is anticipated that the Inspector will require an additional Examination Hearing(s) to be held following this public consultation.

It is the Local Plan inspector who makes the final decision on the main modifications to be made to the Local Plan. Prior to the Inspector issuing her binding report, there will be a six week statutory public consultation on the main modifications

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which the inspector considers necessary to make the Regulation 19 version of the plan sound.

Once that process ends, if the Inspector is happy to confirm that the Plan is indeed ‘sound’ subject to main modifications, all Members will be invited to offer a view and make a decision at Full Council, where they will then be asked to vote on whether to approve the modified Local Plan or not.”

The Council’s explanation makes clear that revisions to the Green Belt Topic Paper were carried out following requests from the Planning Inspector and submitted under delegated authority as part of the examination process. It also emphasises that the updated section does not itself determine whether sites should ultimately be allocated for development.

However, the statement does not directly address the central issue raised by Horton ward Conservative Councillor Kieran Persand — namely whether revised evidence, including document COUD_021 and related material, was submitted without prior scrutiny by the Local Plan Policy Committee or Full Council. The Council’s response focuses on the examination process and future public consultation, but does not explicitly confirm whether councillors were given an opportunity to review the revised evidence before it was sent to the Inspector.

As the Local Plan examination moves forward — with further evidence updates, public consultation and potentially additional hearings expected — the question of how and when elected members are involved in reviewing changes to the evidence base may remain a point of political debate within the borough.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Affordable housing scheme approved on Leatherhead green belt

13 March 2026



Greenbelt land in north Leatherhead will be built on after a 100 per cent affordable housing estate was granted planning permission.

Mole Valley District Council’s development committee approved the proposals despite fears it could open the door to others looking to pick off valued sites. The 47 homes by developer Carmen Corp will be built in Oxshott Road, Leatherhead, next to the Tesco store after officers said the need for affordable housing outweighed damage done to green belt.

The site lies on rundown land near the M25 and its condition raised concerns with those opposed to development who argued it could encourage others to let greenbelt land fall into disuse to ease planning. Those in favour suggested the 47 affordable homes was too good to pass up – particularly as it was surrounded on three sides by development and currently looked like “no-man’s land”.

The plans were passed by seven votes in favour to four against.

Claire Malcomson (Liberal Democrat: Holmwoods and Beare Green) said: “Just because it’s degraded land is not a reason. We welcome affordable houses, we really don’t want people to think we don’t.

“This piece of land has been used badly for flytipping, and yes it would be wonderful if it hadn’t been. But I am concerned about this and I do feel that developers might be sort of almost trying to twist our arms just because it’s affordable.”

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Others argued the site, derelict and surrounded on three sides, was exactly what was meant as grey belt. Its location next to a large Tesco store, as well as the affordable housing offer, meant the majority backed the plans.

The developer told the March 4 meeting the site suffered from historic misuse, flytipping and ecological decline – and highlighted the housing shortage in the borough. He also addressed questions on affordable housing, saying extra houses could only be occupied if they were made available at below market rates – such was the basis of Homes England funding.

Cllr Monica Weller (Liberal Democrats: Bookham West) said: “We need to be honest about what this site actually is now. Is this pristine, untouchable countryside or is it more, I hate to say, a wasteland?

“I felt that I was going into no-man’s land. Let’s not joke or kid ourselves that this is special, this is rough. And affordable housing is one of the biggest issues facing families.”

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Plans for Oxshott Road near Leatherhead (image MVDC)

Guide to the upcoming East Surrey Council elections

13 March 2026



When voters head to the polls on Thursday, May 7, the local election in Surrey will look very different from previous years. This local election will mark the first step in the biggest shake-up of local government in Surrey for decades.

Instead of voting for councillors to the current county council structure, residents will be electing members to two completely new councils: East Surrey Council and West Surrey Council. A whopping total of 162 seats are for the taking.

What is actually changing?

The elections are happening as part of a major reorganisation of councils across Surrey.

Currently, local services are split between Surrey County Council and 11 borough and district councils. The county council looks after highways, education services, adult social care etc, while the borough councils take care of issues like planning applications, bin collections and managing parks. But that system is set to disappear.

The government has decided to replace it with two ‘unitary authorities’: single councils responsible for everything from planning and roads to social care and education. The aim is to make councils simpler, more efficient and quicker to make decisions, according to the government.

Why are the boundaries changing?

As part of the overhaul, the boundary lines have also been redrawn. The county will be divided into 81 new wards, with two councillors representing each ward.

That means:

•East Surrey Council will have 72 councillors across 36 wards

•West Surrey Council will have 90 councillors across 45 wards

Currently Surrey County Council is made up of 81 seats, including: 38 Conservative, 19 Liberal Democrat, 16 Residents’ Association/Independent, 2 Labour, 2 Green, 2 Reform UK,1 non-aligned independent and 1 vacancy.

Why were elections cancelled last year?

The vote also comes after the planned Surrey County Council elections were cancelled in 2025. The decision sparked criticism from some politicians, who argued residents had effectively lost their chance to vote while the government decided how the new council structure would work. Ministers said the delay was necessary to avoid electing councillors to a system that was about to be abolished.

What issues could shape the election?

Campaigning is only just getting under way, but some local issues are frequently raised by residents.

Among the biggest are:

- potholes and road repairs

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- support for children with special educational needs (SEND)
- large housing developments and planning decisions
- council debt
- cost-of-living

Several parties are expected to field candidates, including the Conservative Party, Liberal Democrats, Labour Party and the Green Party, as well as independent councillors and residents' associations. The Reform UK party is also expected to stand candidates as it looks to expand its presence in local government.

Will the new councils take power straight away?

Not immediately. Even after the elections, the new councils will initially operate as shadow authorities' for almost a year. That means councillors will spend the next 10 months preparing for the handover, rather than immediately running services.

The current councils will continue delivering services until 1 April 2027. This is when the new East Surrey and West Surrey councils will officially take over and replace the 12 existing councils.

How and when people can vote

Polling stations will be open from 7am to 10pm on Thursday, May 7. Residents can vote in person, by post or by proxy vote (someone voting on their behalf). Ballot papers will be counted the following day, with results expected throughout Friday, May 8.

For Surrey voters, the elections will decide who runs the brand-new councils that will eventually take charge of all local services, making this one of the most significant local ballots the county has seen in years.

Emily Dalton LDRS

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Surrey elections: Democracy delayed, democracy denied?

Horsham hold a win against Sutton & Epsom RFC

13 March 2026



Horsham 26 Sutton and Epsom 20. 7th March.

In November Horsham travelled to Rugby Lane and were victorious. The Black & Whites scored a late Kyren Ghumra try to add to a Sam Lennie hat-trick and were indebted to a Freddy Bunting conversion to earn two bonus points in a 36-29 defeat.

On Saturday the Sussex club maintained their promotion push but were taken to the limit by a spirited Sutton and Epsom side. After a game of intense commitment from all parties, Horsham secured a 26-20 win that included a vital four-try bonus point.

Tom Lennard kicked off for Sutton and Epsom on a chilly afternoon at the splendid Coolhurst Ground as Ben Tame celebrated his 50th league appearance for the Black & Whites.

Horsham looked to spread the ball wide from the outset. However, Declan Nwachukwu spilled the ball under pressure from Jordan Huie to provide Sutton and Epsom with the first scrum in a most advantageous position near the 22.

Firstly Finlay Scott went close, then Josh Glanville was denied by a superb tackle from Archie Fox and, under intense pressure, Horsham number eight George Howard was issued a yellow card. From the ensuing penalty hooker Sam Lennie forced his way over for the opening try. Freddy Bunting split the uprights for a 7-0 lead for Sutton and Epsom.

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Five minutes later Horsham were level. The hosts went on the attack and only determined defence prevented an instant reply. Sutton and Epsom survived a line-out in the corner when the Sussex pack were penalised for crossing.

The next Horsham attack proved more constructive. Taking advantage of defensive miscommunication near halfway, Tom Johnson made the decisive break and passed to supporting scrum-half Aaron Linfield, who scored. Caleb Raubenheimer added the extras to make it 7-7 after a thrilling opening ten minutes.

Despite the best intentions of both teams, it took another twenty minutes before the next score. Sutton and Epsom tackled relentlessly against opponents determined to move the ball wide, while Horsham thwarted the visitors' best efforts with excellent jackling.

Sterling Sutton and Epsom defence had already seen the hosts held up over the line. Eventually, similar to Sutton and Epsom's opening score, Horsham crossed from close range following a penalty when their pack would not be denied. Raubenheimer converted to give the hosts a 14-7 lead.

There was an anxious moment for Sutton and Epsom when Horsham threatened to extend their lead but a promising attack ended in the 22 with poor execution. Sutton and Epsom countered when Gareth O'Brien burst into the 22 and passed to Joe Lovatt, who was wrapped up by the cover defence.

Sutton and Epsom were brought back for a penalty as the tackle on O'Brien was judged too high. Freddy Bunting calmly took the three points to reduce the deficit to 14-10.

However, the intensity of the contest claimed its first Sutton and Epsom casualty as Finlay Scott was forced off with a hamstring injury. Sutton and Epsom reshuffled their lineup, with Josh Rea moving into the backs as Josh Glanville returned after earlier being replaced by Ben Tame.

The half ended with no further scoring but Sutton and Epsom's revamped XV were pressing hard to regain the lead. It had been a highly entertaining opening period played at a frenetic pace, with both defences showing a strong appetite for the physical contest.

In such a demanding encounter, fatigue on the fast surface looked likely to become a factor in the second half. Sutton and Epsom suffered another setback at the interval when hooker Dan Jones was forced off after aggravating a shoulder injury. Tom Boaden came on to start the second half.

Sutton and Epsom fight back

Sutton and Epsom began the second half with real purpose. Sam Lennie went agonisingly close to a second try but the referee, unsighted, awarded Horsham a drop-out after ruling the hooker had been held up over the line.

Undeterred, Sutton and Epsom stormed back through a weaving run from Jordan Huie. Their pressure resulted in a penalty directly in front of the posts, and captain Freddy Bunting reduced the deficit to a single point at 13-14.

Perhaps stung by their shrinking lead, Horsham increased the pressure but squandered an excellent opportunity with an uncharacteristically poor pass.

A solid Sutton and Epsom scrum then provided the platform for a familiar Rob Hegarty surge from number eight to relieve pressure. However, Horsham earned a turnover penalty through another excellent jackal.

Declining the shot at goal, Horsham kicked to the corner and were rewarded when Caleb Raubenheimer scored their third try. The fly-half showed both composure and strength to cross despite defenders hanging off him. The conversion from the touchline missed but Horsham led 19-13 with half an hour remaining.

Sutton and Epsom responded with determination. Another Sam Lennie run earned a scrum deep in Horsham territory and a penalty forced the hosts back to their line.

Horsham produced their best defensive set of the afternoon. The Sutton and Epsom forwards were initially repelled and when the backs joined the attack they too were stopped, with Sutton and Epsom again held up over the line.

The Sussex side countered immediately but Sutton and Epsom's pack won a relieving penalty after wheeling a scrum five metres from their own line.

The relentless nature of the contest was beginning to show as medical teams were increasingly required and several players on both sides carried knocks.

Late drama

The heroic defensive efforts were finally broken in the closing five minutes. Sutton and Epsom had repelled another Horsham attack before the hosts mistakenly kicked a penalty dead rather than securing a five-metre line-out.

From the restart the dangerous Declan Nwachukwu gathered the ball with space and ran it back superbly. The winger reached the 22 before passing to Tom Sanders, who ran in under the posts. Raubenheimer converted to give Horsham a 26-13 lead and secure their bonus point.

If anyone thought that try had finished Sutton and Epsom, they were quickly proven wrong.

With time added on and several Horsham players struggling with injuries, Sutton and Epsom launched a final assault. From a five-metre line-out they earned a penalty and this time powered over, with Rob Hegarty emerging as the scorer.

Freddy Bunting produced a superb touchline conversion to secure a bonus point for Sutton and Epsom, closing the gap to 26-20.

Sutton and Epsom were not finished and launched one last attack, with Adam Bibby running dangerously through the

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Horsham defence. The Black & Whites earned a line-out inside the Horsham 22 with the final play of the game.

Seconds later the Sussex side forced a knock-on and the referee's whistle ended a compelling contest.

Promotion race tightens

Round 19 confirmed Regional 2 South East as effectively a two-horse race between Sidcup and Brighton, although Horsham are now just one win away from the play-offs and a chance to return to Level 5 at the first attempt.

The hosts combined attacking flair with thunderous tackling and crucial turnovers. It was a credit to Sutton and Epsom that the final whistle was greeted by the home side with both joy and relief.

The physical nature of the match took a heavy toll on both squads, who will welcome a rest weekend before the league resumes on 21 March.

Sutton and Epsom will host Canterbury Pilgrims while Horsham travel to Balmoral Avenue to face Beckenham.

Sutton and Epsom

O'Brien, Scott, Bibby, Bunting (capt), Huie, Lennard, Lovatt, Lennie, Jones, Howes, McTaggart, Glanville, Pulvirenti, Rea and Hegarty.
Replacements: Boaden, Tame, Gerhard.

Horsham

Fox, Grogan, Sanders (capt), Johnson, Nwachukwu, Raubenheimer, Linfield, Osgood, Tredgett, Kilfeather, Denhart, Endacott, Smith, McLoughlin and Howard.
Replacements: Powell, Thompson and Knowles.

John Croysdill

Photo credit Robin Kennedy

Next fixture: Saturday 21st March: Sutton & Epsom v Canterbury II

Remarkable Ukrainian who lived his final decades in Epsom

13 March 2026



MICHAEL BIALOGUSKI (1917-84) Ukrainian born Doctor, musician, conductor and spy who spent the last 20 years of his life in Epsom

Mykolo Bialoguski was born in Kiev (then in Russia, now in Ukraine) on 19 March 1917. His parents, Gregorii and Paulina, were Polish professionals, being a veterinary surgeon and dentist respectively. Gregorii was a non-practising Jew and Paulina a Christian.

Apparently, the family fled Kiev in about 1920, having nearly been shot by Bolsheviks, and from 1927 to 1935 Mykolo attended a secondary school in Wilno, Poland – which is now Vilnius, Lithuania, a graphic illustration of the ever-shifting political sands of Eastern Europe. He studied the viola and began to study medicine.

The Nazis invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, thus triggering World War 2. The political goings-on in relation to Poland at that time were hideously complicated and we shan't dwell on them here, but we do need to know where Mykolo was at the time and why he probably decided to leave. The following map will assist matters – Wilno is in the top right-hand portion and occupied by the Soviets.

In present-day terms Wilno/Vilnius is quite close to the Belarusian border, just over 200 km as the crow flies, and during WW2 Belarus (then the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) was initially under the control of the Soviets: however, in 1941 the Germans invaded and if, like Mykolo, you were both anti-communist and had a Jewish parent, then Wilno was not a place to be under either regime. (If you want to know more about Wilno during WW2 there is ample material on Wikipedia in the articles on Vilna Ghetto and Ponary Massacre.)

Mykolo had married an Irena Vandos in Poland at some point, but they were divorced in 1941. He had already been jailed briefly for protesting against some actions of the occupying Red Army and so, spinning a yarn about going to Cura?ao, he

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travelled across Russia to Japan, the latter not yet having joined in WW2, although it did so in December 1941. Fortunately, Mykolo had arrived in Sydney, Australia by then and became Michael.

So, we are now in Sydney and in 1942 Michael enlisted in the Australian Army Medical Corps as an orderly; he was then discharged with Government approval and assistance to study medicine at the University of Sydney, which he did successfully. In 1943 he married divorcee Agnes Patricia Humphry (known as Patricia – they were ultimately divorced in 1954). After a year in general practice at Thirroul, a seaside suburb south of Sydney, he set up on Macquarie Street, in central Sydney itself.

Spying

One would think perhaps that building up a practice as a doctor in a thriving city district would be more than enough for any young man, but there were other facets to Michael. He was certainly anti-communism but that in itself doesn't turn you into a spy, especially if you're safely ensconced in Australia. It looks more as if he wanted to 'play spies' because he was fascinated with it all. He offered his services to the Commonwealth Investigation Service (CIS) in 1945 and was engaged as an agent: the CIS was apparently as secure as a chocolate padlock in terms of leaks and had been infiltrated by Soviet spies, which led to the creation of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). In 1949 Michael was engaged as an ASIO agent.

As is usually the case with that era of peculiar 'peace', spies, agents and double agents were everywhere and it was hard for them to know which side anyone was on, let alone any amateur researcher trying to make some sense of it 70 years or so later. Still, it must be done, as it was the man's main claim to 'fame'.

The Petrov Affair

Petrov had started out as Afanasy Shorokhov, born in 1907 to peasant parents in a Central Siberian village. In 1923 he joined an organisation for young communists and then the Soviet Navy, by which time his name had become Vladimir Proletarsky and later Vladimir Petrov. Having worked his way up, slowly, from cipher clerk in the Navy to the MGB (a predecessor of the KGB which dealt with myriad security and intelligence issues) he became third secretary at the Soviet Embassy in Canberra – or, to put it another way, a senior KGB officer and spy control in Australia. It was quite surprising that Petrov had survived Stalin's vicious purges and executions of officials over the years, but he had mainly worked under a very nasty piece of work named Lavrentiy Beria and nobody had managed to get rid of this vile man to date. Beria will become significant in a moment, but, returning to Australia, Petrov met Bialoguski and, against a background of mutual friendship, copious alcohol and prostitutes, Petrov thought he had recruited Bialoguski as a Soviet spy, whereas the latter continued to work for ASIO and was spying on Petrov.

Matters came to a head in 1953 when Stalin died and a power struggle ensued. Beria was confident of working his way to the very top, but certain people, Nikita Khrushchev in particular, had other ideas, and Beria was executed. Bialoguski and his colleague, Ron Richards, used this as part of the argument that Petrov should defect, saying that when he was recalled to the Soviet Union under the new regime, he would be in mortal danger. Another part of the persuasion was a large sum of money.

Petrov did defect in 1954, but had neglected to forewarn his wife, Evdokia (also a spy), who, when recalled by the Soviets, was torn between her sister back home and her husband.

Evdokia decided to cooperate with the Australian authorities. Next came a ghastly episode: she was kidnapped by Soviet agents and dragged kicking and screaming to an aircraft.

A high-ranking Australian official witnessed this and fired off an urgent telegram requesting Prime Ministerial intervention, as it was certain that Evdokia would come to a horrible end if she was taken to Moscow. When the plane landed for refuelling at Darwin, Australian police boarded, extricated her from the kidnappers and asked whether she wanted to go to Moscow or stay in Australia. You can guess what her answer was.

There was subsequently a Royal Commission investigating Soviet espionage in Australia, but there is no need to go into that here, save to say that it generated enormous press coverage and political wrangling. The Petrovs remained in Australia as Australian citizens.

As mentioned earlier, Michael and Patricia were divorced in 1954 and it wasn't an amicable parting. He wrote a book about the Petrov Affair, which was serialised in various newspapers and Patricia went to the papers with her own story. She said that he had a strange, almost weird, personality and that he was a clever, self-absorbed, manipulative and ambitious man who could also be charming and entertaining. This seemed to accord with others' views of him.

Michael was apparently a minor press celebrity for the rest of the 1950s but didn't seem to make significant headway with either his career or finances. In 1957 he applied for a reduction in Patricia's alimony, claiming that he hadn't made much money from the book and that his medical practice had suffered as a result of all the publicity. He got the reduction in alimony and in 1961 he won a libel case over Patricia's published allegations and was awarded £1,000 in damages.

Meanwhile, in 1957 he had married Nonnie Frieda Peifer, then a secretary; she had had a brief career as a film actress in minor roles under the name of Nonnie Piper in the late 1940s/early 1950s. He was still determined to pursue a musical career of some kind, preferably as a conductor, and had actually played the violin in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, but he wasn't getting anywhere on that front.

In about 1964 the family moved to England, where Michael continued to work in medicine but pursued his musical ambitions too. They lived at 24 Shawley Way, Epsom, which by a boundary quirk came under Tattenhams Ward, Banstead for election purposes and is now designated as 'Reigate and Banstead'.

Finally, Michael was able to study conducting and conducted the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1969 he conducted at the Royal Albert Hall, then he formed the Commonwealth Philharmonic Orchestra and also wielded the baton in Westminster Abbey. Perhaps at last he had found his true vocation.

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Michael died of cancer on 29 July 1984 at Kingswood, Surrey. Nonnie remained in England and lived until 14 February 2020, aged 89. She was survived by three of her children and several grandchildren.

Linda Jackson 2023

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A surprise glimpse into 1883: Christ Church Epsom Common's Parish Magazine

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Dorking gnome fails in bid to win property rights

13 March 2026



A Surrey couple have won a legal battle over a tiny strip of lawn outside their home after a neighbour tried to reclaim it by placing a garden gnome on the grass.

Expert gardener Elizabeth Dobson and her partner Andrew Pleming had spent years tending the eight-by-three foot patch outside their home on Pointers Hill in Westcott, near Dorking. They mowed it, raked it, planted herbs and wildflowers and even allowed their children to run across it as part of the garden, a tribunal heard. But the peaceful routine was disrupted when new neighbours Alison Unsted and Darren Unsted moved into the house next door in 2022 and decided the land actually belonged to them.

Nine months later the couple removed plants the gardeners had grown on the small patch and installed a garden gnome in their place, sparking a full-blown legal dispute over the tiny triangle of grass between the two properties. The disagreement eventually reached the Upper Tribunal in London and centred on the legal principle of adverse possession, sometimes referred to as "squatters' rights", which allows someone to claim land if they have used it as their own for a sufficient period of time.

Ms Dobson and Mr Pleming argued that they, and the previous owners before them, had treated the disputed patch as part of their garden for many years. They told the tribunal they had mowed and maintained the grass just like the rest of their lawn, scarified the soil, replaced topsoil and introduced herbs and wildflowers. Their children had played on it freely and the couple used the strip as a route to push a mower and wheelbarrow between different levels of their garden. At one point they even embedded a sign displaying their house number in the soil.

Several former tenants of the neighbouring property supported their claim, telling the tribunal they had always assumed the patch belonged to number 29 and had never maintained it themselves. The case was first heard by the First-tier Tribunal, which ruled the couple had only clearly taken possession of the land from around 2018 when they turned it into a flower bed, leaving them short of the ten years required.

However, the gardeners appealed the decision. This week Judge Elizabeth Cooke overturned the earlier ruling at the Upper Tribunal, which sits at the Royal Courts of Justice, concluding that the couple had demonstrated clear possession of the land for many years. "The full picture is that, since the appellants bought the property, they have mowed, raked and scarified the lawn, replaced topsoil and turf, let their children play on the grass, used it to take the mower and barrow to the lower terrace, put a sign on it, and introduced herbs into the grass," the judge said.

Looking at the nature of the small open-plan lawn, she said there was little more an owner could realistically do to demonstrate control of the land. "People do not generally mow their neighbour's grass without their agreement," she added. "Nor do they let their children play on it. Nor do they replace topsoil on it or plant herbs in it. Taken together it seems to me perfectly obvious that the appellants were in possession of the disputed land."

The judge concluded that the couple and their predecessors had been in possession of the strip since at least 2002, long before the Unsteds arrived and attempted to reclaim it with the garden gnome. She ordered that the couple's application to register the land should now proceed as if the neighbour's objection had never been made, bringing the dispute over a patch of grass barely larger than a door to an end.

Emily Dalton LDRS

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Could you put Surrey Council’s empty buildings or land to good use?

13 March 2026



Surrey residents could soon have the chance to take over unused council buildings and land under a new policy designed to put more local assets into community hands.

Surrey County Council is drawing up a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy, which would set out how community groups can lease council-owned buildings or land if they can prove it will benefit local people. The draft policy was backed by councillors this week and will be sent to the county’s cabinet for approval in April 2026. Officers told councillors: “The community asset transfer policy has been intentionally designed to enable community participation in its simplicity.”

Essentially, the policy would allow local organisations – such as charities, sports clubs or community groups – to take on council properties that are underused or no longer needed for services. Instead of selling them off or leaving them empty, the council could lease the assets to community groups, sometimes at below market value, if the social benefit outweighs the financial return. Council officers said the policy would give communities the opportunity to “reimagine, repurpose and reinvigorate” local spaces, meaning disused buildings could become youth centres, community hubs, sports facilities or spaces for local projects.

Under the proposed system, groups interested in taking over a building would first submit an expression of interest and, if the idea appears viable, they would then be asked to produce a business case showing they can run and maintain the asset long-term. Applications would be assessed against several criteria including the level of community benefit, the financial stability of the organisation and how the plans fit with the council’s wider priorities. If approved, transfers would generally happen through leases rather than outright sales, with community groups responsible for maintaining the building.

Council officers stressed the policy is intended to make the process clearer and fairer because, although transfers can already take place, there is currently no single framework guiding decisions. During the meeting councillors broadly welcomed the proposal but raised concerns about volunteer-run organisations taking on complex legal responsibilities and the potential financial risks of maintaining buildings or signing long leases.

Cllr Edward Hawkins said: “I still feel that we are exposing residents to a liability which some will understand, but some will not.” Another councillor suggested community groups should seek legal advice before committing to such arrangements. Officers responded that the council already provides hands-on support during the application process, including meetings and guidance, and would continue to help groups develop proposals. They added that every application would be carefully assessed to ensure organisations are capable of managing the asset before any transfer is agreed.

The CAT policy follows the approval of a motion by Cllr **Eber Kington** (RA Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington) to council on March 18, 2025.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Related reports:

Grafton Stables to Remain Green Space

Shock as Surrey Council Puts Protected Woodland Up for Auction

Image: Grafton “Stables”

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Epsom author shares personal epilepsy journey amid town’s historic link to the condition

13 March 2026



An Epsom author has published a deeply personal account of living with epilepsy, adding a modern voice to a local story that stretches back more than a century.

Madeline Bolton-Smith, who lives in Epsom and works as a probate assistant at a family-run accountancy firm in nearby Fetcham, has written *Diary of an Epileptic*, a book describing her experience of diagnosis, treatment and life with the neurological condition.

Epilepsy affects around one in every hundred people in the UK, yet many newly diagnosed patients still feel isolated when confronting the condition for the first time. Bolton-Smith says her motivation for writing the book was to provide reassurance and solidarity to others navigating similar uncertainty.

“When I was diagnosed with epilepsy, I often felt very alone,” she explains. “Writing the book was my way of saying to others in that position that their feelings are valid and that they are not facing it on their own.”

Her account follows the realities of living with epilepsy from the moment of diagnosis through investigative medical procedures, struggles to secure treatment funding and undergoing Laser Interstitial Thermal Therapy (LITT) surgery. When the surgery did not bring the hoped-for outcome, she had to confront the challenge of adapting to life with epilepsy once again.

The book reflects openly on the emotional impact of the condition – fear, frustration and isolation – but also the resilience required to continue forward. Bolton-Smith hopes the honesty of her story will help readers and families dealing with epilepsy feel less alone.

Epsom’s historical link to epilepsy

Bolton-Smith’s story also resonates with a significant but little-known chapter of local history.

In the early twentieth century Epsom was home to the **Ewell Epileptic Colony**, later known as St Ebba’s Hospital. Established during a period when epilepsy was poorly understood and widely feared, the colony reflected the prevailing belief that people with the condition should live apart from mainstream society.

Opened in 1903, the colony formed part of the wider Horton Estate of hospitals built by the London County Council to treat mental illness and neurological disorders. Hundreds of patients with epilepsy lived and worked there in what was intended to be a self-contained rural community.

Residents grew food, maintained workshops and followed strict daily routines designed to create stability for those prone to seizures. While some patients experienced relative independence compared with traditional asylum conditions, the colony nevertheless represented an era when epilepsy carried heavy stigma and separation from ordinary life was seen as necessary.

The institution eventually became St Ebba’s Hospital and continued operating for decades before closing in the late twentieth century as attitudes and treatments changed.

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Remembering the patients buried in Horton Cemetery

The lives of many former residents of the Horton hospitals, including St Ebba's, are remembered today through the work of the **Friends of Horton Cemetery**. The charity seeks to restore this historic Epsom cemetery, the largest asylum cemetery in Europe, to community ownership and researches the lives of those buried there.

More than 9,000 patients from the surrounding hospitals were laid to rest in the cemetery, many with little recognition during their lifetimes. The charity's website, **hortoncemetery.org**, shares their stories.

The contrast between that earlier era and the present day illustrates how far attitudes toward epilepsy have progressed. Modern medicine emphasises treatment, independence and inclusion rather than segregation.

CLICK here for the story of Matilda DUNKINSON

Changing understanding of epilepsy

Medical knowledge of epilepsy has advanced dramatically over the past century. Once widely misunderstood and surrounded by superstition, epilepsy is now recognised as a neurological condition caused by abnormal electrical activity in the brain.

Treatments today range from anti-seizure medications to specialised surgical procedures such as the LITT therapy Bolton-Smith underwent. Support networks, advocacy groups and greater public awareness have also helped reduce stigma.

Yet challenges remain, particularly for those newly diagnosed. Bolton-Smith believes that sharing lived experiences can play a vital role in helping others understand the realities of the condition.

Through *Diary of an Epileptic*, she hopes to contribute to that wider conversation while offering practical reassurance to readers facing similar circumstances.

Diary of an Epileptic: The Hidden Reality is available online.

Sam Jones – Reporter



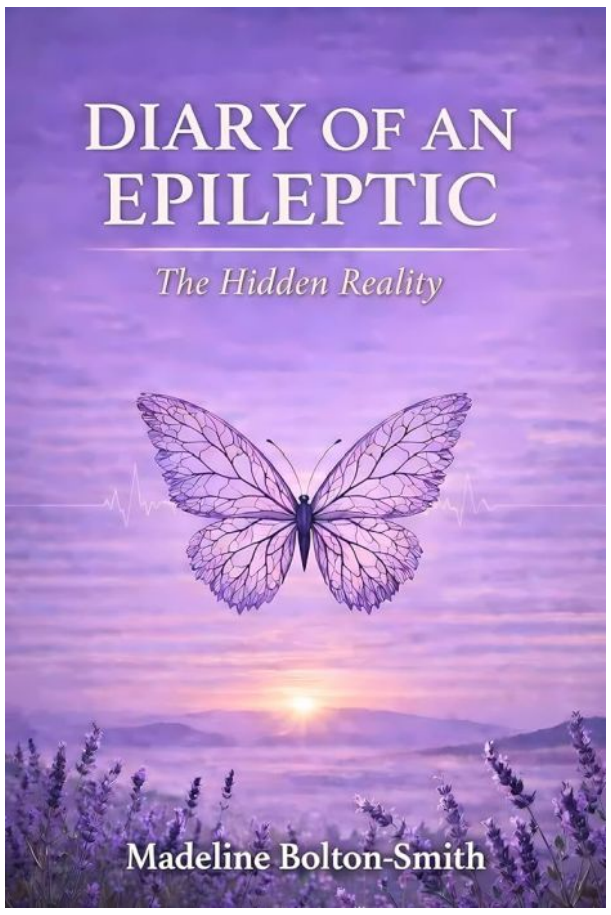
Photo: The author on Epsom Common

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Last round of developers’ funds in Epsom and Ewell to be spent

13 March 2026



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is inviting local community groups and organisations to apply for funds, raised by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), to deliver projects that benefit residents and support new development across the borough.

Bid applications will open on Monday 9 March 2026 and close on Sunday 17 May 2026.

This will be the final time that Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will run this funding process. From April 2027, the council will be dissolved and replaced by the new East Surrey Council, which will be responsible for delivering local infrastructure projects across the geographic areas of Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge.

When new development takes place, it can place extra pressure on local services and facilities. The Community Infrastructure Levy enables councils to raise funds from development to be spent on the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of local infrastructure—the levy is intended to give councils more choice and flexibility in how they fund the infrastructure required to support local growth.

Last year, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council allocated over ?230,000 from the 2024/2025 Neighbourhood CIL Fund for community infrastructure projects, including:

- a permanent secure storage shed for The Library of Things enabling residents to borrow useful household items
- energy-efficient lighting installed in a pedestrian tunnel for the Cattle Arch/Under-Rail Tunnel project
- a Road Safety Outside School Scheme implemented at Linden Bridge School improving pedestrian accessibility, a safety crossing for children on Grafton Road and traffic flow aids.

Councillor **Neil Dallen** (RA Town) , Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee said: “This Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy funding is a real opportunity to make a meaningful and lasting difference in our community. As this will be the last chance to apply through Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, we strongly encourage local community groups and organisations to put forward ideas that could benefit their neighbourhoods.

“We’re proud that the Neighbourhood CIL funding has already helped deliver a wide range of successful local projects – from the recently installed 3G football pitch at Glynn School, to secure specialist bike storage for Wheels for Epsom, the

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regeneration of disused grounds at the Horton Arts Centre, and the water fountains installed at various locations across the borough. These achievements show just how powerful this funding can be when community ambition and local investment come together.

“As the council launches its final tranche of Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy funding, we want to ensure that money raised from new development continues to support projects that strengthen our community and improve the quality of life for residents across the borough for years to come.”

Application process

The bidding process is designed to be a clear as possible and the application form — available to download from the council’s website, with hard copies at Epsom Town Hall, Bourne Hall and Epsom Playhouse — aims to help make the process simpler. Neighbourhood CIL Funding | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Bids will be shortlisted using the criteria set out in section C of the CIL Spending Protocol (adopted March 2025). More information on the process and prioritisation criteria can be found in section 5 of the CIL Spending Protocol.

To receive funding, all CIL spending applications must be for infrastructure. All bids that pass stage 1 of the assessment process will be examined by the CIL Member Working Group, who will make recommendations to the Strategy and Resources Committee for approval.

It is important for each application to be completed in full. The CIL Spending Protocol **(adopted March 2025) needs to be read alongside the application form.**

Any questions about the application form or process can be emailed to: CIL@Epsom-Ewell.gov.uk.

About the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allows councils to raise funds from new developments for infrastructure projects which help to mitigate the impacts of new development. Of the total collected:
    - 80% goes towards strategic borough-wide infrastructure – examples include highway schemes, permanent school expansions, hospitals, and other health and social care facilities
    - 15% is allocated for local projects (neighbourhood CIL) a portion of the CIL is to be spent on local projects in accordance with the CIL regulations and aligns with the Corporate Plan – examples include sport pitches, courts upgrades, public realm improvements and community gardens
    - 5% for the day-to-day costs of administering CIL.
- The Epsom & Ewell Borough Council CIL Spending Protocol was approved by the Licencing and Planning Policy Committee on 11 March 2025.
- The CIL Spending Protocol sets out the Epsom and Ewell Borough specific protocol governing the process and criteria for selecting infrastructure projects for funding through CIL. When completing a CIL bid form please read the CIL Spending Protocol alongside, as this sets out the guidance and criteria required for your Neighbourhood CIL bid application.
- More information about the Neighbourhood CIL Fund can be found here: https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/Neighbourhood-CIL

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Epsom and Ewell February crime and safety round-up

13 March 2026



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Epsom and Ewell Times does not normally report individual crime incidents. However, as part of a trial we are publishing a monthly round-up of crime and community safety developments affecting the borough, drawing on information released by Surrey Police and local authorities.

Police operation in West Ewell results in three arrests

A police operation targeting antisocial behaviour and suspected drug activity in **West Ewell** led to **three arrests** during February.

Officers from the **Epsom & Ewell Safer Neighbourhood Team**, supported by the East Surrey Neighbourhood Enforcement Team and Special Constabulary, carried out patrols around the **Watersedge estate**. During the evening operation officers conducted **11 stop-searches and two vehicle stops**, while gathering intelligence relating to drug use, drug dealing and antisocial behaviour in the area.

Police said the activity formed part of ongoing efforts to disrupt criminal activity in neighbourhood “hotspot” locations.

(Source: Surrey Police neighbourhood updates)

Missing Epsom man located safe and well

Surrey Police issued an appeal during February to help locate **Lee, a 63-year-old man reported missing from Epsom**. Police later confirmed that he had been **found safe**, allowing the appeal to be cancelled.

(Source: Surrey Police)

Prolific thief targeting local businesses identified

Surrey Police also reported action against a **prolific offender who targeted businesses across Epsom and neighbouring areas**, including Sutton, Wallington, Cheam and Burgh Heath.

Police said the offender entered several premises and stole items including mobile phones during incidents affecting local traders.

(Source: Surrey Police neighbourhood update)

Safer Epsom & Ewell programme continues

The **Safer Epsom & Ewell** programme — a joint initiative between Surrey Police, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and partner agencies — continued to develop during February.

The scheme focuses on areas including **Epsom town centre, Watersedge and Longmead**, using the Home Office **“Clear, Hold, Build”** approach to tackle organised crime, drug supply, acquisitive crime and antisocial behaviour. (democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk)

The programme combines targeted police enforcement with longer-term work involving the council and community partners to address underlying causes of crime.

(Source: Epsom & Ewell Borough Council / Surrey Police)

Crime trends in the borough

Police data for the area indicates that the **most commonly reported offences locally include violence and sexual offences, shoplifting, criminal damage and vehicle crime**. (surrey.police.uk)

Retail crime and antisocial vehicle use remain key policing priorities, with neighbourhood teams carrying out targeted patrols and working with businesses and community groups to address concerns.

(Source: Surrey Police neighbourhood statistics)

Community engagement and policing events

Neighbourhood officers continued their **“Meet the Beat”** programme during February, providing opportunities for residents to speak directly with police about local issues.

Sessions were held at locations including **Epsom Library at the Ebbisham Centre**, where residents were invited to raise concerns about crime, antisocial behaviour and community safety.

(Source: Surrey Police)

How to contact Surrey Police

- **Emergency (crime in progress or immediate danger): call 999**
- **Non-emergency police matters: call 101**
- **Online reporting and advice:** https://www.surrey.police.uk/contact/

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- **Crimestoppers (anonymous information): 0800 555 111**

Residents are encouraged to report suspicious activity or information that may assist police investigations.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

January crime and safety round-up

Epsom and Ewell to ditch Parish Councils plan

13 March 2026



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has all but confirmed it will **not proceed with plans to create community councils** in the borough after consultation responses indicated a lack of public support.

The announcement follows an expensive Residents' Association led nine-month **Community Governance Review (CGR)** exploring whether the borough should introduce parish-style local councils – sometimes referred to as community councils – ahead of the planned reorganisation of local government in Surrey.

In a media statement issued on 4th March, the council said responses to the second phase of consultation showed residents did not support the proposals.

Consultation result halts proposal

Councillor **John Beckett** (RA Auriol) chair of the council's Standards and Constitution Committee, said the engagement process had asked residents both whether they wanted parish councils and, later, for views on a model dividing the borough into two areas.

The proposal would have created two bodies: **Epsom Community Council and Ewell Community Council**.

Beckett said: "Responses to the phase two consultation indicate that, at this time, residents do not support the proposals that were consulted upon. The recommendation that will be discussed at full Council is that the Community Governance Review is now concluded and will not be progressed further."

Councillors are expected to formally confirm the decision at a full council meeting scheduled for 12th March.

Threat of legal challenge

The decision comes after a **formal pre-action legal letter** warned the council it could face judicial review if it proceeded to create the councils.

Local resident and former senior local government chief executive **Nathan Elvery** wrote to EEBC chief executive Jackie King on 4th March raising concerns about the consultation process.

In the letter, sent under the judicial review pre-action protocol, Elvery argued the review process was procedurally flawed and warned that if the council made a reorganisation order creating the councils he would seek to have it quashed by the courts.

His challenge raised a number of potential grounds including:

• alleged flaws in the design of the first consultation survey
• reliance on a response rate of around **352 replies from roughly 57,000 electors**
• concerns that residents may not have been given full financial information about possible council tax precepts
• failure to present alternative governance models
• and consultation timing spanning the Christmas period.

He also submitted a series of **Freedom of Information requests** seeking internal documents, financial modelling and details of the consultation design.

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Elvery requested the Council defer any decision until the issues were addressed and warned that proceeding regardless could lead to legal proceedings.

Experienced public sector leader

Elvery is a long-standing public sector leader with more than three decades of experience in local government transformation and finance.

He has served in senior roles including chief executive, chief operating officer and executive director across a range of councils and national public sector bodies, and now runs a consultancy advising councils and senior leaders.

Long-running debate

The CGR began in 2025 following Surrey's **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)** plans, which will abolish the borough council and replace it with a new East Surrey unitary authority expected to take over services in 2027.

Supporters of community councils argued they could preserve a layer of local representation after the borough council disappears.

Critics, however, warned they would create a new tax-raising tier of government funded through an additional council tax precept.

Early council estimates suggested a precept of around **£43–£46 per Band D household**, though opponents argued the real cost could rise significantly depending on staffing and responsibilities.

Readers sceptical in Epsom and Ewell Times survey

An Epsom & Ewell Times reader survey on local government reorganisation gathered 112 opinions. The survey showed a big majority against the idea of new parish-style councils. The survey offered an opportunity for residents to express an opinion about alternative neighbourhood area committees. An option the Council had not provided in its consultation.

The survey results suggested readers were more concerned with maintaining effective local representation and protecting services during the transition to the new unitary authority.

Readers also expressed caution about adding an additional tier of governance funded by council tax.

And readers by a clear majority are against maintaining even a ceremonial mayoralty for the Borough.

The full survey results can be read here:

https://epsomandewelltimes.com/epsom-and-ewell-times-lgr-reader-survey-results

Elections in Epsom and Ewell to the new East Surrey Council are due to take place in May.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

Epsom and Ewell Times LGR reader survey results

Epsom and Ewell Parish councils decision looms amid questions over cost, timing and scrutiny

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