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Surrey Council leader urges an elected Mayoral office for the County

13 October 2026



The outgoing leader of Surrey County Council has warned Surrey risks being “left behind” if the county does not adopt an elected mayor in the near future.

Councillor Tim Oliver (Conservative: Weybridge) urged the incoming East and West Surrey councils to lean into Prime Minister Andy Burnham’s devolution agenda that could see the creation of an overarching mayor for the county.

The two new unitary councils will assume all local government responsibilities from April 2027, and are aiming to pool their resources on key issues through a framework called a foundation strategic authority (FSA).

An FSA can also serve as a stepping stone towards the creation of a mayoral combined authority – such as those seen in Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and the Tees Valley.

Speaking at a Surrey County Council meeting, Councillor Oliver said: “[The FSA] will enable the two councils to work together over a strategic footprint, capitalising on the government’s devolution agenda and take Surrey’s local economy from strength to strength.”

He added: “Surrey needs to grab this opportunity with both hands, and I hope the leadership of East and West Surrey go full throttle in working with government to deliver it – including backing a mayor for Surrey in 2028.”

Andy Burnham, who served as Greater Manchester mayor for nearly a decade before becoming Prime Minister, has vowed to make devolution of power to England’s regions a defining mission of his government.

Shortly after entering Downing Street, Mr Burnham pledged to give regional mayors a share of income tax receipts, as well as granting strategic authorities more control over business rates revenue.

Councillor Oliver said: “No one can be oblivious to the Prime Minister’s mission to create mayors across the country with wide ranging strategic powers and access to funding that simply won’t be available to non-mayoral areas.”

He further warned: “Without a mayor, there is a very real risk that Surrey will be left behind.”

It comes as East and West Surrey shadow authorities prepare the groundwork for the handover of local government power from the county council next spring.

These shadow councils were elected in May, and are tasked with setting up the new authorities in time for vesting day – including setting the new councils’ budgets for the coming year.

But Councillor Oliver cautioned that the financial picture for the new councils remains tricky amid changes to government funding and increased demand for services.

He said: “There will be huge challenges ahead as a result of the government’s Fair Funding Review, which will cost Surrey dearly as money is diverted to other areas of the country instead.”

The government’s Fair Funding Review is designed to recalibrate the money each council receives based on factors including population and deprivation, but Surrey is estimated to lose out as a result.

Last year, Councillor Oliver said Surrey could lose as much as £50m a year over the next three years through the reforms.

A ministerial foreword to the Fair Funding Review says: “This government is prepared to take the tough choices to improve services for the working people of Britain – with a balanced approach that protects all local authorities but ensures funding is truly based on need.”

The next round of council budgets will be set by the West and East Surrey shadow authorities ahead of the handover in April.

But speaking at today’s meeting, Councillor Oliver warned: “We know a council tax increase will be necessary, but it won’t be enough to make up for the shortfall in funding imposed by this government.

“Tough decisions and innovative transformation will be needed.”

However, he praised the legacy that Surrey County Council is leaving for the new authorities, saying: “We can be proud that we are handing over an organisation that has been managed well – with robust reserves and perfectly manageable levels of debt.”

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

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Limits on AI use? County Council confronts the challenge

13 October 2026



Surrey councillors and officers could soon be barred from using online AI tools such as Gemini and ChatGPT under new rules around the burgeoning tech’s use.

A Surrey County Council AI policy has been put forward, which aims to set out when it is appropriate and inappropriate to use artificial intelligence for council business.

The draft document, which was reviewed by a council committee ahead of final approval, demands that AI users must only utilise approved tools and softwares for council business.

Gemini and ChatGPT are explicitly listed as examples of tools accessed directly via the internet – which would not be permitted under the new regulations.

The new policy comes following a motion from October 2025 that called on Surrey County Council to present an AI policy in response to the technology’s rapidly growing use.

While guidance on its use already existed for the council’s members and officers, this is the authority’s first formal policy on the matter.

Other inappropriate uses of AI listed include using it to make decisions that affect people “without human oversight” and generating false or misleading information.

It also prohibits the use of AI that results in discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics, breaching data protection or unlawfully accessing sensitive information.

The policy says: “Where AI is used for general business purposes, users must use Microsoft Copilot Chat or Copilot 365 (or other SCC-authorised tools) rather than consumer tools such as Gemini or ChatGPT, due to data-security concerns.

“Approved tools have been risk-assessed and have existing SCC guardrails and oversight.”

The council instead says assistance with “routine administrative tasks” is an example of where AI can be used within the rules – such as summarising reports and scheduling meetings.

It also says the tech can be used to generate meeting minutes so long as they are clearly labelled as AI-assisted.

Summarising public consultation responses and improving workflow efficiency are also on the list of approved uses.

Breaches of the rules set out in this policy would be treated as misconduct, according to the document, which could result in disciplinary action for employees or other contractual consequences for agency workers and contractors.

Surrey County Council’s resources and performance select committee put forward recommendations around the policy – including that it be shared with the future West and East Surrey council, which will take over responsibility in April 2027.

The recommendations also called for strengthening the policy around training for the tech’s use and considering AI’s environmental impact.

If adopted, the policy would be reviewed on an annual basis – or sooner if required, such as if it needed to be brought in line with any prospective national laws or regulations.

Last October’s motion, proposed by Councillor Jonathan Essex (Green Party: Redhill East) called for transparency about where AI is used and for awareness as to the energy and environmental impact of the technology.

“The energy use and wider environmental footprint associated with server farm capacity used by AI is significant,” the

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motion reads.

The policy is expected to be discussed and finalised by Surrey County Council's cabinet following the committee's recommendations.

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

Surrey shows true grit

13 October 2026



Surrey's gritter drivers are now available 24/7 to help keep residents moving during the colder months.

38 state-of-the-art gritting vehicles typically travel over 1,775 miles of the county's busiest routes before and during severe weather, using the 10,000 tonnes of salt stored at four Surrey depots.

Two mini gritters are also on standby to grit roads that are harder to access with larger vehicles. 1,700 grit bins have also been filled across the county at locations that are not on the priority gritting routes but may have:

- difficult road junctions
- slopes
- acute bends
- a large numbers of pedestrians.

Winter arrangements typically begin in October and run until the end of March although this period can be extended depending on weather conditions.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said, "We're committed to keeping drivers and our local communities safe and connected here in Surrey and investing in our roads.

"When temperatures plummet, our gritter drivers across the county are ready and prepared to work around the clock to keep traffic moving on our busiest routes.

"Our Immediate Response Centre will also continue to support communities 24/7 and we will work closely with the Met Office to monitor weather conditions throughout the season."

Residents can report highways issues at tellus.surreycc.gov.uk. More information about gritting is available here.

Surrey County Council

SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

Cards and casualties consign Sutton & Epsom to defeat

13 October 2026



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Medway 24 Sutton & Epsom 7 Saturday 10th October

Sutton & Epsom have only had three league visits to Priestfields. The first encounter in 2016 saw an Andy Matthews hat-trick secure promotion for the Black & Whites from the old London One South. On their last trip, Sutton & Epsom had an abundant advantage of 26 points overhauled by a marauding Medway team.

Last season the hosts were most unfortunate to be relegated on points difference from Level 5 and are naturally looking for a return to Regional 1 at the earliest possible opportunity.

With both clubs enjoying a perfect start to the new campaign, garnering maximum points, it was all set to be a fair measure of both sides' credentials for the season to come. Medway's 24-7 triumph maintained their perfect record.

Sutton & Epsom played with the slope in the first period and opened their account in the third minute. A dazzling break, synonymous with Adam Bibby's play, jinked through the defence and hooker Sam Lennie was in support to cross the whitewash. Freddy Bunting slotted over the conversion for a most encouraging 7-0 score for the visitors.

Unfortunately for Sutton & Epsom it became a case of one step forward and two or three back as they accumulated penalties for multiple offences.

On the quarter-hour Medway equalised. After sustained pressure, powerful lock Peter Cole, stationed on the touchline, received the ball a few metres out and forced his way over before running around to improve the angle for the conversion. A grateful Owen Church-Mills obliged and made it 7-7.

Soon after the restart Sutton & Epsom lost Angus Findlay to a yellow card as the weight of penalties became too much for the referee to bear. Reduced to 14 men, Medway took advantage with a sweeping attack.

Then, to the dismay of the travelling Rugby Lane supporters, Freddy Bunting was given a yellow card for a no-arms tackle in the corner. Sutton & Epsom were now very much unlucky 13.

The Priestfields crowd were soon applauding the lead. The Men of Kent – or Kentish Men, depending on their geographical disposition – scored through a driving maul as lock Peter Cole collected his second try of the afternoon. Owen Church-Mills added another conversion for 14-7.

Rather than meekly folding in adversity, Sutton & Epsom stiffened their resolve and took the attack to Medway. There was to be no fairytale ending as they were halted on the line. It was to the visitors' considerable credit that they did not concede another point while suffering their numerical deficiencies.

Then, just when the Black & Whites thought they could return to normal, they lost full-back Michael Bennion to an ankle injury. Joe Lovatt came off the bench to play at scrum-half as Sutton & Epsom amended the back division, with Euan Findlay switching to 15.

The remainder of the half continued as powerful tackling subdued attacking intent. For Sutton & Epsom, Tipene Maxwell made his first start in his familiar position at 12 and reminded supporters of yesteryear of James Faaatuatu, whose bone-shaking tackling enlivened Rugby Lane ten years ago.

The first period ended with Medway leading 14-7 and all the players grateful for a breather after a very physical half.

The crowd at Priestfields were witnessing the type of match one would anticipate from two unbeaten teams. With the home team having the advantage of the slope for the second half they were marginal favourites, but Sutton & Epsom had shown enough attacking intent to keep the match in the balance.

The start of the second half reflected the closeness of the contest and was patchy as both sides battled for supremacy. Sutton & Epsom were perhaps guilty of trying to force plays, but that was the result of the parsimonious Medway defence, which robustly stood its ground.

The third quarter proved to be a stop-start affair that ended with more misfortune for the visitors. Joe Lovatt was forced from the field having suffered a broken nose. This was most untimely for the scrum-half as he is about to get married.

Once more the coaches scratched their heads to reorganise their backs. It was not quite shuffling deckchairs on the Titanic, as Josh Rea has often slipped into the backs, but the situation was far from ideal. Pete Gordon came off the bench to play in the back row.

With 15 minutes left on the clock, the Kent club got some breathing space with their third try of the afternoon. Gaining possession from a loose ball near halfway after a Sutton & Epsom scrum, they progressed to the Black & White 22.

Following several phases, the ball came to John Sipawa and the prolific wing scored in his trademark style. Though the conversion failed, the hosts had a two-score advantage, leading 19-7.

If onlookers thought that might have knocked the stuffing out of the visitors they were very much mistaken, as Sutton & Epsom took the game to their opponents.

The Black & Whites threw themselves into attack mode as they went in search of points. They could not translate possession, territory and phases into points. Each half-break urged on by their supporters was met by scrambling cover. Greater risks were being taken in order to find a solution.

It was met with a cruel final nail in the coffin in added time. Pressing in the Medway 22, winger Perry Macauley picked off a pass and set off for glory. As the cover came and, 35 metres out, he weaved to avoid the tacklers and spotted support to his right.

Impressively, it was the mountainous figure of Peter Cole who set off after the kick ahead. He was rewarded for his heroic support run as he reached the ball first to complete his hat-trick – a rare accomplishment for a lock forward – as Medway led 24-7.

It is always a pleasure to see one of the engine room of the pack, the perennial unsung heroes, have their moment in the

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spotlight.

Shortly afterwards the final whistle concluded this hard-fought encounter. The Black & Whites were rather more black and blue, but in defeat they should find a great deal of solace in their spirit, unity to the cause and resilience in adversity.

Medway remain unbeaten with maximum points, with only Beckenham ahead of them in the table. The hosts' defence was tireless while Peter Cole gained the plaudits.

Finally, a special note of thanks to Gareth O'Brien who, despite being a late injury withdrawal, demonstrated the qualities of the "good club man". He not only travelled to the game but also took on the commentary duties as "Junior JC".

Next Saturday the Black & Whites' charabanc heads to the Warman Sports Club. Without the pitch priority given over to the cricketers, as was the case last season, they will play Bromley on their main pitch.

The Kent club have started the campaign with wins over the Ironsides, Dartfordians and Hammersmith & Fulham to sit fourth in the table, compared with Sutton & Epsom's fifth position.

Sutton & Epsom: Bennion, Scott, Bibby, Maxwell, Findlay A, Bunting, Findlay E, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, McTaggart, Glanville, Rea, Jones & Hegarty (c). Reps: Duey, Gordon & Lovatt.

Medway: McNamara, Macauley, Bullock, Clement, Sipawa, Church-Mills, Hyde, Nickalls, Knight, Miles, Cole, Kenny, Cauldwell, Wilson & Wickham. Reps: Fuller, Ross & Hearn.

Image from previous fixture. Credit Robin Kennedy

Homelessness pressures remain a costly challenge for Epsom and Ewell

13 October 2026



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is expecting its spending on temporary accommodation to significantly exceed its 2026/27 budget as councillors heard that homelessness remains one of the authority's biggest financial pressures.

The Council's Community and Wellbeing Committee, meeting on 6th October, unanimously noted measures being taken to contain the costs and agreed that government homelessness funding, newly announced rough-sleeping funding and a 4% inflationary increase in the nightly-paid accommodation budget would be used to meet the additional expenditure.

The Council's report says it continues to incur "significant financial outlay" in meeting its duties under the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, with expenditure expected significantly to exceed the budget set for the current financial year.

Introducing the discussion, committee chairman Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (Residents' Association, Ewell Village) described homelessness as "one of the biggest problems facing the council at the present time".

Strategic Housing Manager Arjan de Jong told councillors that high living costs, rising rents and limited access to affordable housing continued to create "significant headwinds".

He said the Council was placing increasing emphasis on preventing homelessness before temporary accommodation became necessary, helping households into the private rented sector and moving people out of temporary accommodation more quickly.

The authority is also expanding its private-sector leasing arrangements and has delivered accommodation through the Government-backed Local Authority Housing Fund.

Mr de Jong said work was already under way with neighbouring councils on a joint homelessness action plan for the new East Surrey authority which takes over from Epsom and Ewell Borough Council next April.

Homeless approaches up sharply

Cllr Woodbridge told the meeting that approaches to the housing service had increased by around 80% over the previous two years, but argued that the increase had not translated into anything approaching the same rise in placements or expenditure because of the work undertaken by housing officers.

He said the financial pressure would have been "a lot worse" without the team's efforts.

That reflects figures reported earlier this summer showing that homelessness applications rose by 82.6% during 2025/26 to 623. Epsom & Ewell Times reported in July that the Council had recorded a £410,000 adverse budget variance for that

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year, driven principally by temporary accommodation costs.

The underlying difficulty is not new. In 2023/24 the Council spent £1.665 million on nightly-paid accommodation. At that time more than 90 households were being accommodated in expensive nightly-paid properties outside the borough because there was insufficient temporary housing locally.

Section 21 evictions falling

Cllr **Rob Geleit** (Labour, Court) asked whether the Renters' Rights Act was already affecting homelessness.

Mr de Jong said there had been an increase in approaches before the legislation took effect, which officers believed was partly caused by landlords leaving the market.

Since then, however, there had been "a significant, significant drop off" in approaches resulting from private landlords ending tenancies through no-fault or Section 21 evictions.

At this early stage, he said, "the intention of the Act looks like it's having the intended consequences".

The other main pressures were households being asked to leave accommodation provided by family or friends and people fleeing violence.

Preventing homelessness before placement

Cllr **Christine Howells** (Independent, Nonsuch) questioned what happened when somebody presented as homeless and whether accommodation was provided immediately.

Mr de Jong explained that an emergency out-of-hours placement could be made for one night, after which the person would undergo a full assessment.

During office hours, officers would first seek to prevent homelessness — potentially by talking to landlords or relatives, looking at whether short-term accommodation could be maintained, or helping the applicant secure somewhere in the private rented sector through schemes such as the Council's rent deposit programme.

Only where those avenues failed would the case move towards a formal homelessness application and assessment of the statutory tests.

People placed while their case was investigated could remain accommodated while exercising rights of review against an adverse decision.

The Council also works with the East Surrey Outreach Service on rough sleeping, while members of the public concerned about somebody sleeping rough can report the case through StreetLink.

Extra staff seek cheaper alternatives

The Council has bolstered its relatively small housing team.

A rent-deposit role has been refocused as a rent-deposit and move-on post, tasked particularly with finding private landlords willing to house households currently in temporary accommodation.

Another officer is concentrating on hospital discharges, where relatively small numbers of cases can nevertheless consume significant resources because of the need to coordinate physical health, mental health, care and housing services.

An additional move-on post is specifically concentrating on households in nightly-paid accommodation — the most expensive form used by the Council.

Mr de Jong said affordable housing was so scarce that households could otherwise remain in temporary accommodation for "a considerable amount of time".

Prison releases and violence

Cllr **Phil Neale** (Residents' Association, Cuddington) asked whether the early release of prisoners was likely to add to homelessness pressures.

Mr de Jong said no effect had been identified at that stage. He added that probation and other statutory agencies have a "Duty to Refer" someone threatened with homelessness to the relevant council rather than simply leaving an individual to seek help after release.

Cllr **Rachel King** (Residents' Association, Town) also asked about people fleeing violence.

Mr de Jong stressed that this was not limited to violence against women and girls or domestic abuse and could include gang-related violence.

People fleeing violence may apply to a council outside the area in which they normally live. He said Epsom's proximity to London might consequently result in people approaching the borough from elsewhere.

Officers would take account of the location of alleged perpetrators or their associates when deciding where it was safe to accommodate someone.

East Surrey changes the map

The discussion also provided a glimpse of how homelessness administration could change when Epsom and Ewell Borough Council disappears next April.

Cllr Woodbridge asked what would happen to the concept of a local connection once East Surrey became the housing authority.

Mr de Jong said housing-allocation policies could continue separately for up to two years while the predecessor councils'

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systems were aligned.

Homelessness law would operate differently: from vesting day, the authority to which somebody applied would be East Surrey rather than Epsom and Ewell.

That could also produce savings. The larger authority might have temporary accommodation available elsewhere within East Surrey which Epsom and Ewell does not currently use and which could be cheaper than nightly-paid placements sourced outside the borough.

Mr de Jong cautioned that the details remained “a work in progress”.

Government support

The financial pressures are not being met by council taxpayers alone.

For 2026/27 the Government has consolidated several previous funding streams into its Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant. Nationally, almost **£885 million** is being distributed under the scheme, with **£529,219 allocated specifically to Epsom and Ewell**.

The grant combines former homelessness prevention, rough sleeping and domestic abuse funding and also contains money associated with the homelessness consequences of the Renters’ Rights Act.

Its purpose includes helping councils discharge their statutory homelessness duties, fund prevention work and staffing, and reduce rough sleeping. Government rules generally restrict its use for the direct ongoing cost of temporary accommodation, although transitional exceptions apply during 2026/27 to certain accommodation already being provided.

The Government says the consolidated grant across England has been increased substantially as part of its multi-year local government settlement, with a wider package of approximately £2.4 billion planned over the spending-review period for homelessness, rough sleeping and domestic abuse activity.

At Epsom and Ewell, councillors unanimously noted the proposed use of the grant alongside recently announced Rough Sleeper Programme funding and the 4% uplift in the nightly-paid accommodation budget to address the current-year pressure.

Urgent housing decision

The committee also formally noted an urgent decision taken earlier in the year to appoint Turning Point to provide independent reviews of adverse homelessness decisions.

Cllr Woodbridge explained that applicants rejected for housing assistance have a statutory right to seek a review. Without a review service in place, the Council risked being unable properly to determine such challenges, with potentially costly consequences.

The appointment had therefore been made urgently rather than waiting several months for the next committee meeting.

Cllr Geleit welcomed the documentation, saying it was “nice to see a well-presented urgent decision in paperwork”.

The committee unanimously noted the decision.

Closing the meeting, Cllr Woodbridge observed that it was possible — although not certain — that this might prove to be the final meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Community and Wellbeing Committee before local government reorganisation.

With East Surrey taking responsibility for housing from 1st April 2027, he said it was difficult to predict how much meaningful business would remain for the committee in its final months.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Related Reports

- Epsom and Ewell Council admits homelessness pressure is “getting worse” despite action: 17 July 2026
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- Epsom and Ewell appeal to owners of empty homes: 4 March 2025
- Epsom and Ewell Press Release on Homelessness: detailed background on temporary accommodation, housing shortages and Council costs

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Epsom and Ewell FC finally chalk up a win

13 October 2026



Epsom & Ewell 3–1 Yateley United. Combined Counties Premier League South. Saturday 10th October – Chalky Lane, Chessington. Attendance: 81

Epsom & Ewell secured their first home victory of the season with an impressive 3–1 win over Yateley United at Chalky Lane.

With club captain Brendan sidelined through injury, the armband was handed to Toby Young, who led the line superbly and set the tone with a tireless performance.

The Salts started brightly and were almost ahead inside three minutes when Oba broke clear and delivered an inviting cross, but nobody was able to apply the finishing touch.

The hosts continued to press, with Blessing Hombessa beating two defenders before sending another dangerous ball into the area.

Epsom suffered a setback after 33 minutes when Harry Murphy was forced off through injury. New signing Angel Montes came on for his debut following his arrival from Corinthian-Casuals and quickly settled into the contest with a composed performance.

Despite creating the better chances, the sides went into the interval level at 0–0, with the Salts unfortunate not to be ahead.

The breakthrough finally arrived in the 55th minute when Oba was rewarded for an energetic display by finding the net to give Epsom a deserved lead.

Just four minutes later, the hosts doubled their advantage. Leading scorer Hombessa surged past his defender before confidently finishing to make it 2–0. His celebrations earned him a booking, but the Salts were firmly in control.

Oba’s afternoon ended through injury after 68 minutes, with Jason Vincent replacing him. Luis Oliveira was then forced off four minutes later, with Daniel Conteh introduced.

There was a warm reception in the 78th minute for defender Anthonios Nazareth, who returned after a lengthy spell out with a shoulder injury. He replaced Harry Grant to a round of applause from the home support.

Luke Miller later replaced Charlie Miller as Epsom looked to see out the game.

Yateley pulled a goal back in the second minute of stoppage time with a breakaway finish to make it 2–1 and briefly raise hopes of a comeback.

The Salts responded emphatically.

Deep into added time, Hombessa broke clear and calmly drilled a low finish into the corner for his second goal of the afternoon, sealing a deserved 3–1 victory.

It was an encouraging performance from Epsom & Ewell, who combined attacking threat with resilience to record their first home win of the season and collect all three points.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media

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Tree planting in Surrey overshoots

13 October 2026



More than 800,000 new trees have been planted across Surrey over the past five years – overshooting the council's own target, according to a report.

Surrey County Council's climate change progress report analysed the authority's progress for the first five years of its climate change delivery programme between 2021 and 2026.

The findings note that 116,359 trees have been planted in the 2025/26 financial year alone, bringing the total planted over the past half decade 885,000.

It means the council has exceeded its initial target of 600,000 in the first phase of the programme. Surrey has committed to planting 1.2 million trees by 2030, representing one for every resident.

Tree planting was one of 74 action points reviewed in the report, which is due to be considered by councillors next week.

A total of 45 of these actions were delivered, according to the summary, with 18 partially completed and 11 either seeing limited progress or not delivered at all.

But the council claims it is "broadly on track" to meet its 2030 net zero targets, with the report saying that the authority's carbon emissions have been reduced by around 60 percent.

"Maintaining progress towards the net zero will require continued investment, clear prioritisation and a focus on the most carbon-intensive assets, alongside planning around offsetting remaining emissions in 2030," the report says.

It adds: "A major success of the programme has been supporting residents to reduce energy bills and improve their homes.

"More than 1,438 low-income households received energy efficiency improvements, including insulation, solar and low-carbon heating measures, supported by over 3,000 HEAT home visits providing advice and access to funding."

However, it also noted the challenges ahead in continuing to pursue decarbonisation policies, saying the programme was "significantly affected by external market conditions, supply chain constraints and wider economic pressures".

Elmbridge Borough Council recently passed a motion calling for the future East Surrey council to update its tree strategy to consider the survival rate of trees, not just how many are planted.

The text said that many trees planted in the borough are dying within the year as a result of not receiving the right aftercare.

In that meeting, Councillor Katerina Lusk (Conservative: Cobham and Downside) told councillors: "There is little point celebrating the number of trees we plant if a significant number of them are dead a year later."

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

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Trees Surrey (Credit: Google Maps)

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Jim Al-Khalili to delve into the mysteries of time at Guildford Book Festival

13 October 2026



Acclaimed physicist and broadcaster, Professor Jim Al-Khalili, will join fellow University of Surrey astrophysicist, Dr Noelia Noël, at the Guildford Book Festival for a conversation exploring one of science's greatest mysteries: the nature of time.

Taking place on Tuesday evening, 13 October, at Guildford Baptist Church, the event will centre on Professor Al-Khalili's new book, On Time: The Physics That Makes the Universe Tick.

The book explores questions that have puzzled philosophers and scientists for thousands of years, including whether time had a beginning and if it will have an end, why it appears to flow towards the future rather than the past, whether it can be stretched, squeezed or even reversed – and, at the deepest level, whether time itself is real.

In a conversation with host Dr Noël, Professor Al-Khalili will take audiences on a journey through physics, philosophy and cosmology, unpacking what modern science can tell us about something that governs every moment of our lives yet remains mysterious.

Professor Al-Khalili said:

"Time is something we all experience, but the deeper you look, the stranger it becomes. Quantum mechanics, relativity and thermodynamics all give us different ways of understanding what time is and how it works. That's what makes it such a fascinating mystery – we live our whole lives by it, yet there is still so much we don't understand."

Professor Al-Khalili is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Physics at Surrey, a Fellow of the Royal Society and one of the UK's best-known science communicators. He has written numerous popular science books, presented television documentaries and is best known for his long-running BBC Radio 4 programme The Life Scientific.

Dr Noelia Noël is a Senior Lecturer in Astrophysics at the University of Surrey's School of Mathematics and Physics. She has received multiple awards and recognition for her work, including a prestigious 2026 Leadership Fellowship in Public Engagement from the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), recognising her contributions to astrophysics and sustainable space research, as well as her commitment to creating more inclusive pathways into science.

Dr Noël said:

"Jim has a wonderful ability to make some of the biggest questions in physics accessible, exciting and relevant to everyone. Time is something we all think we understand because we experience it every day, yet in physics it quickly becomes wonderfully strange. I'm really looking forward to exploring those ideas with Jim and sharing the conversation with audiences here in Guildford."

The ticketed event, Jim Al-Khalili in conversation with Dr Noelia Noel – On Time, is dedicated to the memory of Patricia Grayburn, in recognition of her strong and lasting connection with the University of Surrey.

Surrey University

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

19th November 2026

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Epsom Hospital added to app helping visually impaired bus users

13 October 2026



Epsom Hospital has been added to a Surrey scheme using smartphone technology to help blind and partially sighted people travel more independently by public transport.

Surrey County Council has expanded free access to the Aira Explorer app to 13 hospitals and healthcare sites across the county, including Epsom Hospital.

The move follows earlier stages of the scheme reported by the Epsom & Ewell Times. Surrey became the first UK local authority to introduce the service at bus stations in June 2025, before it was subsequently extended to Epsom Station and other rail and bus interchanges later that year.

A helping eye on the journey

Aira Explorer allows a visually impaired traveller to make a video call from their smartphone to a trained visual interpreter.

The interpreter can see through the phone's camera and give spoken guidance to the user. At the newly included healthcare locations, the service is intended to help people navigate between nearby bus stops and hospital entrances.

Use of the app at the designated Surrey locations is free, with the scheme funded by Surrey County Council from its allocation under the Government's Bus Service Improvement Fund.

Alongside Epsom Hospital, the healthcare locations covered are Royal Surrey County Hospital, Frimley Park Hospital, Ashford Hospital, St Peter's Hospital, East Surrey Hospital, Farnham Hospital, Woking Community Hospital, Molesey Hospital, Walton Community Hospital, Sunbury Health Centre, Leatherhead Community Hospital and Cranleigh Village Hospital.

The app also remains available at major bus stations and interchanges in Guildford, Redhill, Staines and Woking and at bus stops serving railway stations including Epsom, Caterham, Dorking, Oxted, Leatherhead, Reigate and Horley.

From Epsom Station to Epsom Hospital

EET reported in June 2025 on the introduction of Aira at Guildford, Redhill, Staines and Woking bus stations.

The scheme was expanded later in the year, with Epsom Station among the locations added. The latest development therefore extends the same type of assistance to another important destination for local residents.

Cllr Matt Furniss, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said the council was aware that using buses and navigating transport facilities could be difficult for people with visual impairments.

He said the hospital expansion was designed to assist passengers travelling by bus for important appointments and added: "We're keen to make bus travel accessible for everyone and hope this expansion will support people to travel confidently and independently."

The council says the initiative forms part of wider spending on bus services, including £6.3 million for additional ultra-low and zero-emission community transport minibuses, £9 million for bus priority measures and £1.4 million for improved passenger information at bus stops.

Disability groups welcome expansion

Nikki Roberts, chief executive of Surrey Coalition of Disabled People, welcomed the extension, saying free access to the service at key locations would be "hugely beneficial" to members with sight loss travelling around Surrey.

Dave Smith, Engagement Manager for South East England at sight-loss charity Thomas Pocklington Trust, said the app was particularly useful if a traveller became disorientated or encountered unexpected roadworks or obstructions.

Clare Burgess, chief executive of Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey, also welcomed the expansion, describing Aira as a useful tool for blind and partially sighted people travelling around the county.

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Related reports

- Epsom Station joins app helping visually impaired bus users – 8 November 2025. Epsom & Ewell Times
- Bus station app for visually impaired a first in Surrey – 20 June 2025. Epsom & Ewell Times
- Support for independent travel – 14 May 2026. Epsom & Ewell Times

Image: Idealised representation of app user at a bus stop near Epsom Hospital

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Is Chantilly better governed than its twin Epsom?

13 October 2026



Dear Editor,

Thank you for reporting the visit of an Epsom municipal delegation, led by the Mayor, to Chantilly. Their programme sounded interesting and enjoyable.

That Chantilly holds 55 days of racing over 11 months makes racing at Epsom — our major claim to fame — seem rather puny. The Epsom visitors' other entertainments will make the Chantilly visitors' return visit here a bit lacking in local colour and character.

This disappointing comparison leads to three questions, all familiar bones of contention over many years:

1. Is France more or less centralised than the UK? Which country seems to be better governed?
2. Would Epsom do better under a French mayoral system? Our borough built 37 houses, I believe, last year, which suggests a lack of purpose or belief in the future of our borough.
3. How does France maintain its vigorous regional diversity and local character while ours is about to be squeezed to death by local government reform?

Would you be willing to let the Mayor illuminate these issues, drawing on her delegation's experience at Chantilly? It might spark an interesting correspondence.

Yours faithfully,

Edward Clay

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Related reports:

- Epsom and Ewell Mayor leads delegation to Chantilly to celebrate 30th anniversary of twinning Epsom & Ewell Times
- Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association presents Cyril Frazer Awards for 2026 Epsom & Ewell Times
- Epsom and Ewell to have three tiers of government when promised one? Epsom & Ewell Times
- Epsom & Ewell Borough Council publishes final Annual Report Epsom & Ewell Times

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Latest news from Surrey County Council

13 October 2026

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Surrey County Council has issued a flurry of announcements covering school environmental projects, a major Government-backed reform of special educational needs provision and the future of Council Tax support when Surrey's new unitary authorities take over next April.

For Epsom and Ewell residents, the most immediately relevant development may be a consultation on how Council Tax Reduction will operate under the new East Surrey Council from 1 April 2027.

Council Tax support under the new East Surrey Council

Residents are being invited to comment on proposals for the Council Tax Reduction scheme which will apply when Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and the other existing councils in eastern Surrey disappear next year.

At present Surrey's 11 district and borough councils each operate their own Council Tax Reduction scheme. Eligibility and the amount of help available can therefore vary depending on where somebody lives.

From 1 April 2027 those councils, together with Surrey County Council, will be replaced by East Surrey Council and West Surrey Council. Each of the two new authorities will consequently require a single Council Tax Reduction scheme for its entire area.

Council Tax Reduction is intended to help people on low incomes or receiving certain benefits by reducing the amount of Council Tax they have to pay.

Draft schemes for both new authorities have now gone out to consultation. Surrey County Council says no final decisions have been made and existing support will continue while consultation takes place.

The East Surrey consultation runs from 7 October until 3 December 2026, with current recipients of Council Tax Reduction and organisations supporting them particularly encouraged to respond.

East Surrey Shadow Councillor Andy Burton, portfolio holder for finance and resources, said residents' responses would help decision-makers assess the effects of the proposals before a final scheme is agreed.

The exercise is one of the many pieces of administrative plumbing required before Surrey County Council and the borough and district councils cease to exist next April. Services which are currently administered differently across council boundaries will have to be combined into common systems for each of Surrey's two new authorities.

Government approves Surrey SEND reform plan

Meanwhile, the Department for Education has approved Surrey's three-year Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Reform Plan.

The Government told Surrey that its plan had met the required threshold and provided a basis for moving into implementation.

Of substantial financial significance is the Council's eligibility for an indicative £205.2 million High Needs Stability Grant. SCC says this represents 90 per cent of the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit accumulated up to the end of the 2025/26 financial year.

The scale of the problem is considerable. Surrey County Council's more recent budget monitoring has referred to a cumulative Dedicated Schools Grant deficit of around £238 million, against which approximately £205 million of Government stability funding was anticipated.

The reform programme is intended to place greater emphasis on earlier intervention and supporting more children with additional needs within mainstream education.

One element, called "Experts at Hand", is intended to bring specialists including educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and specialist teachers closer to mainstream schools and colleges. Surrey's Cabinet was told in July that £8.3 million would be available in 2026/27 for this part of the programme.

The wider plan includes increasing the SEND workforce, expanding provision, improving governance and seeking better transitions for young people entering adulthood.

Government approval was not, however, an unqualified endorsement. The Department for Education said further work was required on delivery capacity, partnership working and governance, together with clearer measures of success, post-16 pathways, co-production with families and assessment of future early-years and specialist provision requirements.

SCC Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning Cllr Helyn Clack said the Council would now move from planning into delivery.

The success of that delivery will matter more to families than approval of the plan itself, particularly against a

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longstanding background of pressure on specialist places, Education Health and Care Plans and Surrey's high-needs education budget.

Surrey tops Eco-Schools table

On a rather different educational front, Surrey says it has retained the highest number of Eco-Schools Green Flag awards of any English local authority area for the fourth year running.

More than 200 Surrey schools are taking part in the Eco-Schools programme, with 105 achieving Green Flag status, its highest accreditation.

SCC says about 55,500 pupils are involved, including around 1,900 pupil eco-leaders. Projects range from wildlife-friendly areas and plastic-free lunches to sustainable food, monitoring energy use and encouraging active travel.

According to figures supplied by the Council, participating schools over the past year diverted 362,452kg of waste from landfill and saved 61,107kWh of electricity and 152,223kWh of gas.

The County Council has supported the Eco-Schools programme for 13 years and says it has also provided more than £120,000 in grants during the past 12 months to help schools become more resilient to the effects of climate change.

Marisa Heath, SCC Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, described the Green Flag results as evidence of the work being undertaken by Surrey school communities, while Cllr Clack said environmental projects also allowed children to develop knowledge and skills which could benefit their schools and wider communities.

Taken together, the three announcements illustrate the unusually broad range of responsibilities still resting with Surrey County Council during its final months – from children with complex educational needs and environmental education to preparations for the entirely new local government structure that will replace it on 1 April 2027.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Image credit SCC

From bikes to bytes: eeCAN puts climate action into practice

13 October 2026



An aubergine and tomatoes in Deirdre's Wisley allotment

Epsom and Ewell's local climate action network is stepping up a mixture of practical recycling, sustainable transport, food, gardening and community projects as the latest national figures underline both the progress made in cutting Britain's carbon emissions and the distance still to travel.

The Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Network – eeCAN – says its trustees applied to the Charity Commission for charitable status on 10 September, a move which, if successful, could help the volunteer organisation develop and fund its growing portfolio of local projects.

Founded in 2024, eeCAN describes its purpose as delivering practical community-led projects addressing climate change, restoring nature and strengthening local resilience. Its activities now range from a Library of Things at Bourne Hall and home energy surveys to community growing, environmental exhibitions, repair projects and the reuse of bicycles and electronic equipment.

Bikes and unwanted technology get a second life

A centrepiece of eeCAN's October programme is a combined **Bike and Tech Amnesty at Epsom Methodist Church Scout Hall, Ashley Road, on Saturday 24 October from 9am to 5pm**.

Residents are being invited to bring unwanted bicycles, mobile phones, tablets, laptops and other suitable small electronic devices for reuse or recycling.

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The scheme follows eeCAN's first Bike Amnesty in November 2025, when more than 65 bicycles were donated. The bikes were refurbished through Active Surrey and redistributed within the Surrey community. This year Active Surrey will again handle bikes, while Relove Technology is to deal with electronic devices, including secure removal of personal data before suitable equipment is refurbished and reused.

The emphasis on reuse rather than simply disposal comes against a stubborn national waste picture.

The latest Defra figures, published last month, show that England generated **21.9 million tonnes of household waste in 2024**, of which 9.6 million tonnes was recycled. England's household recycling rate stood at **43.8%**, compared with 44% the previous year. Across the UK the rate was 44.5%.

Electronic waste is separately regulated. Environment Agency statistics record electrical and electronic equipment placed on the market and waste electrical equipment collected, with the national dataset most recently updated in September with figures through the second quarter of 2026.

Schemes such as eeCAN's therefore sit at the smaller, local end of a much larger national attempt to keep usable products in circulation rather than turning them prematurely into waste.

Transport moves up the climate agenda

Transport is also the subject of eeCAN's next Climate Conversation, run in partnership with Epsom and Ewell U3A. A session on **"Transport and Integrated and Sustainable Travel"** is scheduled for Monday 12 October at Birchgrove Lower Mill Apartments.

The topic is particularly relevant because transport remains the largest single source of UK territorial greenhouse gas emissions.

Government provisional figures for 2025 put total UK net greenhouse gas emissions at **366.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent**, around 54% below their 1990 level. But domestic transport moved in the opposite direction during the year: its emissions rose by 2.3% to 112.9 million tonnes and represented approximately **31% of the UK total**.

Cars and vans also continue to dominate personal travel. The Department for Transport's newly published National Travel Survey for 2025 found that they accounted for **58% of all trips and 76% of the distance travelled** in England.

Walking accounted for 29% of journeys and cycling for 2%. Taken together with other active modes, active travel represented 31% of trips. The survey recorded an average 15 cycling trips and 57 cycling miles per person during the year.

The Department has cautioned against reading too much into some year-on-year changes, particularly walking figures, because the introduction of a digital travel diary appears to have affected the recording of shorter journeys.

A summer which broke the record

The unusually hot summer referred to by eeCAN's October newsletter was not simply a local impression.

The Met Office says **summer 2026 was provisionally the hottest UK summer since records began in 1884**, with a mean temperature of 16.5C. It estimated that human-induced climate change had made a summer mean temperature of that level around **130 times more likely**.

That gives a broader context to another strand of eeCAN's work.

Trustee and volunteer Deirdre has been taking part in allotment masterclasses at RHS Wisley, with lessons intended to contribute towards eeCAN's longer-term ambition for a community growing space in Epsom and Ewell.

The group's newsletter describes the practical effects of this summer's prolonged heat on the plots: seedlings wilting, greenhouse plants overheating and volunteers establishing watering rotas, while some heat-loving crops, including tomatoes and aubergines, flourished.

The project is as much about acquiring and sharing growing skills as producing food, with eeCAN hoping eventually to establish a community garden in the borough.

Food, students and the next generation

Food and its environmental impact were also prominent when eeCAN attended the Epsom Eco Fair at the Methodist Church on 26 September.

Chair Will and trustee Kristine gave talks on diets intended to be sustainable both for people and the planet. Among those attending the fair were Epsom and Ewell Mayor Cllr Lucie McIntyre and Epsom and Ewell MP Helen Maguire, according to eeCAN.

Earlier in September volunteers attended the University for the Creative Arts Freshers' Fair in Epsom, seeking student involvement, including contributions towards the group's planned **"Water is Life"** community art exhibition in 2027.

The exhibition will follow this year's "Living Rivers" project, which involved more than 500 exhibits from schools, colleges and community art groups.

Small projects against a very large target

Community projects cannot by themselves determine whether national carbon targets are achieved. The scale of the challenge is evident from the Government's figures: even after a 54% reduction since 1990, Britain emitted an estimated

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367 million tonnes of greenhouse gases in 2025.

But eeCAN's programme concentrates largely on areas where households can exercise some direct influence – how people travel, what they buy and discard, how much energy homes consume and whether rarely used goods can be borrowed, repaired or passed on rather than replaced.

Its Bourne Hall Library of Things, for example, allows residents to borrow equipment such as carpet cleaners, pressure washers, hedge trimmers, wallpaper strippers and gazebos without charge rather than each household buying its own. The organisation also supports home energy surveys; its partner scheme says more than 2,000 such surveys have so far been carried out across Surrey.

The network is now seeking volunteers for the Library of Things, its weekly repair service, Eco Schools liaison, nature and community gardening and the 2027 art exhibition.

For a group only established in 2024, the October newsletter suggests eeCAN is moving from climate campaigning in the abstract towards a collection of practical projects in which residents can participate directly.

Whether charitable status follows will be a matter for the Charity Commission. In the meantime, the success of initiatives such as the 24 October Bike and Tech Amnesty will provide a more immediate measure of how far Epsom and Ewell residents are prepared to turn environmental concern into discarded laptops, unwanted bicycles – and practical action.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Related reports:

- Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Network launches with community events and initiatives – 20 November 2025 Epsom and Ewell Times
- Epsom "Library of Things" Delayed by Council Stand-Off – 11 May 2026 Epsom and Ewell Times
- Ewell's Library of Things finally to become a thing? – 1 July 2026 Epsom and Ewell Times
- Surrey praises Libraries of Things as Ewell scheme offers test borrowing Epsom and Ewell Times
- Epsom and Ewell lags Surrey's recycling front-runners, new tracker shows – 7 May 2026 Epsom and Ewell Times
- EEBC reports air quality milestone and revised carbon emissions figures – 23 January 2026 Epsom and Ewell Times
- Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Green Guide – 14 November 2025 Epsom and Ewell Times

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Banstead "carbuncle" to give way to care home

13 October 2026



A nearby 'carbuncle' means a 64 bed care home that may only have seven visitor parking spaces has been approved for Banstead – despite widespread criticisms of the plans.

Councillors at Reigate and Banstead Borough Council's latest planning committee spoke out about the site's lack of spaces and the impact this would have on neighbouring roads, as well as the overall density of the project.

However, they felt their hands were tied because its height and depth was in keeping with the recently approved replacement building at Roseland, which was allowed at appeal in February 2026.

If a council loses an appeal against a planning refusal it is liable for significant costs.

The new 64 bed care home will replace the former adults-with-learning-disabilities site which had been disposed of by Surrey County Council.

Officers told the meeting: "There was no objection to the loss of the existing building and its use as a specialist facility.

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“The site was disposed of by Surrey County Council in 2024.

“Evidence has been proved by the applicant that demonstrates that the building is no longer fit for purpose.

“Particularly in view of Surrey County Council moving away from large institutionalised care for people with learning disabilities towards a more supported independent living approach, for which there are a number of facilities locally in Banstead.”

The two-storey Arundel House building in Garratts Lane will be demolished with its replacement set back to not detract from the area or nearby locally listed buildings.

Councillor Sam Walsh (Conservative: Banstead Village) was among those to criticise the plan’s lack of parking and the impact the development will have, but said it would be difficult to reject the application given the recently approved, on appeal of the Roseland site.

He said: “We know there is going to be a problem because on Garratts Lane there is no parking facility there, but we are constrained by these planning matters.

“It is dense, it is much greater than one would have hoped, but because it has been approved for the carbuncle on Garratts Lane, we have not any opportunity (to reject it).

“If I were to propose any reasons for refusals they would be easily challenged because we’ve got this big one coming up.

“This is going to hurt Banstead but it’s already been (decided), its water under the bridge.

“I don’t like it, its over intensification, the bulk scale of massing.”

Cllr Rich Michalowski (Conservative: Redhill West and Wray Common) added: “There are 18 spaces provided and by calculations in the report, it suggests that a maximum of 11 will be used by staff which leaves seven for visitors and deliveries.

“What is the adequacy of that car parking space for visitors, partially at weekends.

“Where will people park when those seven spots are taken? They will attempt to go to the neighbouring streets which are problematic.

“Surely this development is far too cramped.”

Chris Caulfield Local Democracy Reporter

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Arundel House, Garratts Lane, Banstead (image Google)

Epsom and Ewell’s casual defence gives game away

13 October 2026



Epsom & Ewell 0 Corinthian-Casuals 2. **Saturday 3 October 2026 – Combined Counties Premier League South**

Epsom & Ewell’s difficult home form continued as Corinthian-Casuals left Chalky Lane with all three points following a 2–0 victory in front of a healthy crowd of 322.

The first team news of the afternoon was that skipper Brendan Murphy-McVey had failed a fitness test and was therefore unavailable.

Before kick-off, a minute’s applause was impeccably observed in memory of former Salt Mick Stratford, who recently passed away. Mick made 325 appearances for the club, scoring 18 goals, and was warmly remembered before the action began.

The Salts made a bright start and thought they had taken the lead after just five minutes when the ball found the back of the net. However, the celebrations were cut short as the referee ruled the effort out for a foul.

On 17 minutes Blessing Hombessa broke forward, beat his defender and delivered a dangerous cross into the area, but nobody was able to get on the end of it.

Just a minute later the visitors struck. Lee Quincey found the net to give Corinthian-Casuals an 18th-minute lead.

There was further frustration for Epsom & Ewell shortly before the interval. On 42 minutes they again had the ball in the net, only for the referee to rule the effort out. The decision was that the goalkeeper had one hand on the ball while it was on the ground and had therefore been fouled.

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It ensured Corinthian-Casuals took their 1–0 advantage into the half-time break.

After Epsom & Ewell's improved second-half performance the previous week, there was hope that the Salts could once again raise their game after the interval. Unfortunately, that did not materialise.

One player who certainly continued to battle was Alex Foord, who worked tirelessly in midfield and covered seemingly every inch of the pitch.

Epsom & Ewell's task became even more difficult in the 52nd minute when Balde Dansoko doubled the visitors' advantage. Some poor defending gave Casuals the opportunity, while goalkeeper Ben Grummitt was unable to reach the ball before Dansoko made it 2–0.

A minute later Luis Oliveira picked up a yellow card.

Changes followed as Epsom & Ewell attempted to find a route back into the contest. On 73 minutes Jason Bloor replaced Charlie Miller and Toby Young came on for Courtney Levi.

Four minutes later Kionte Waul replaced Harry Murphy, while Luke Miller came on for Oba.

The final change arrived in the 82nd minute when skipper Callum O'Keeffe made way for joint-manager Craig Dundas.

There was to be no late recovery, however, and Corinthian-Casuals saw out the remaining minutes to secure a 2–0 victory.

It was another disappointing performance on home soil, leaving the Salts still searching for their first home points of the campaign despite another excellent attendance.

Epsom & Ewell are back at Chalky Lane next week when Yateley United are the visitors.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media

Sutton and Epsom Dig Deep for Thrilling Win

13 October 2026



Sutton and Epsom 34 Battersea Ironsides 31 Saturday 3rd October

One of the quirks of the various delays in the season's opening is that the Rugby Lane supporters will be severely undernourished in terms of their 1st XV league diet. The campaign was always intended to break with recent tradition and open on the second, rather than first, Saturday in September. Then the weather intervened to see the curtain raised belatedly last Saturday. In addition, there is a moment when clubs have back-to-back road trips in the fixture list. All of the above conspired to make Saturday's game against the Ironsides the only home fixture before Halloween. Fortuitously, for those who attended, the crowd revelled in a ten-try thriller of fluctuating fortunes with the hosts emerging triumphant in a tense conclusion by 34-31.

Sutton and Epsom made two changes from Week 1 with Eric Duey and debutant Tipene Maxwell appearing on the bench. Before the kick-off there was a minute's silence to commemorate one of the most respected men in Sutton and Epsom's rugby history. Bryan Chapple was a former player, President and committeeman par excellence who was also one of the instigators of the Seven Counties Merit Table. Ominous black clouds loomed over Rugby Lane as Alex Lambe's whistle and Cameron Baker's boot initiated proceedings. Both teams pressed hard for the opening score as attacking verve rather than caution was the order of the day. After a dozen minutes, much to the delight of the Boaden Fan Club, the new centurion Thomas scored following an impressive catch and drive from the lineout by the Sutton and Epsom pack. Freddy Bunting lost his footing attempting the conversion as Sutton and Epsom led 5-0.

The brevity of the lead was as heartening for Ironsides supporters as it was depressing for the Rugby Lane faithful. S&E fluffed their lines at the restart, Battersea regained the ball and centre Ben Lyons celebrated his 100th cap in style with a dazzling solo run. Cameron Baker added the extras to put Ironsides 7-5 up. Sutton and Epsom were marginally slower by a minute with their riposte with a sweeping move by the backs that was expertly concluded by winger Angus Findlay. The conversion drifted wide but the hosts had regained the initiative and led 10-7. The score was synonymous with a much-improved performance from the back division compared with the stuttering style of the opening Saturday. The passing was crisper as players ran onto the ball at pace. Equally, the Green & Whites threequarters had power and pace that promised this would be another high-scoring encounter.

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Approaching the half-hour the Black & Whites extended their lead as forwards and backs combined with devastating effect. Securing the lineout flanker Dan Jones made a break. Quick ball came to Freddy Bunting who delayed his pass to perfection to put fellow centre Adam Bibby into a gap. The fast-stepping New Zealander with instant acceleration and meandering menace was unstoppable as he scored near the posts. Freddy Bunting opened his account for 17-7. Five minutes later the lead was increased with a Bunting penalty as the scoreboard read 20-7.

Battersea's progress was being severely hindered by a lineout that was not functioning. However, the visitors finished the first period with some of their best play. Number 9 Ed Carr, alert to what was unfolding before him, took a quick penalty and headed for the uprights. Desperate defence finally hauled him down. The try soon followed as the ball was transferred wide and, with Ironsides in abundance, Ben Lyons dummied and strolled home for his second try. Cameron Baker converted to see his side trail 14-20. Despite the best endeavours of all concerned there was no further scoring as the whistle blew for the interval. Players and spectators took a breather from the entertainment. With a history of nail-biting finishes and two teams already demonstrating their attacking prowess there were great expectations for more tries to come.

There was nearly a quick Battersea encore at the start of the second half as Ed Carr took another quick tap penalty. Sutton and Epsom were saved by a splendid tackle on Amir Sultan in the corner by Gareth O'Brien. Five minutes later the Ironsides were celebrating another try. Turning over the ball at the breakdown they countered at pace and fullback Tom Maher scythed through the defence. The 15 was halted on the line but blindside Dan McCleary scored when the ball went wide. The conversion from the flank hit the upright to deny Cameron Baker as Battersea trailed by a solitary point at 19-20. S&E replaced winger Finlay Scott with the fourth member of their Kiwi commune as Tipene Maxwell made his debut.

The Green & Whites had gained the upper hand to such an extent in the third quarter that the Black & Whites barely had the ball in their hands. The Sutton and Epsom supporters were lifted by a thunderous Maxwell tackle as he introduced himself to the uninitiated. However, it was Ed Carr, who was proving to be a most uncomfortable thorn in the home side, with another quick tap and go that exposed the S&E defences. Dan McCleary was on hand to collect his second try. Baker bisected the uprights for the 26-20 lead and a bonus point for Battersea Ironsides. The transformation of the fixture was to become more profound within five minutes as the visitors crossed the whitewash again. It was a scrappy affair as the hosts struggled to gather a loose ball and in the ensuing confusion prop Evan Jones joyously scored in the corner. The conversion failed but Battersea Ironsides had turned the match around with 24 unanswered points to lead 31-20.

Feast and famine in terms of points scoring had been a rather frustrating theme of Sutton and Epsom's previous campaign. The XV had shown enough in the first period to offer their supporters hope that this match had not disappeared over the horizon. Their first priority was to get a fair share of possession as the game entered the final quarter. An invaluable 50/22 gave the Black & Whites an attacking lineout. The ball was secured and the forwards rumbled on before the ball was spread to the opposite touch. Lock Ewan McTaggart celebrated his birthday with an emphatic score to resuscitate the ailing Sutton and Epsom side. Freddy Bunting reduced the deficit further as S&E trailed 27-31.

For those who like the concept of the 'turning point' in a sporting context perhaps it came moments later. Sutton and Epsom were countering on the halfway when Battersea intercepted and set off for an inevitable try under the posts. But the shrill blast of Mr Lambe's whistle indicated a penalty for offside that was greeted with relief by all those favouring the men in Black & White. S&E kicked to the 22 where their forwards, now resembling an unstoppable force, urged on by the crowd squandered their chance with a knock-on. Amid growing tension and fluctuating fortunes the game entered the final minutes of normal time.

Powered with renewed self-belief the hosts chased down a kick to win a penalty. The ball was propelled to prime position in the corner. Possession was secured, the forwards rumbled forward and the crowd held their breath. Mr Lambe set off arm aloft to stand under the posts to indicate a penalty try. It was greeted with raucous acclaim and an ironic smile from Sam Lennie as he realised that it would not add to his considerable tally of tries. S&E were back ahead 34-31. There were echoes of the Hammersmith & Fulham game the previous Saturday as the hosts were required to survive for a few minutes.

Reduced to 14 the Ironsides rallied for one final assault. The restart went loose but Sutton and Epsom secured it only to see the clearance charged down. Then Battersea were awarded a penalty in front of the posts near the 22. After a lengthy pause in proceedings the visitors decided to go for glory and take a tap penalty. The consequences were disastrous. The ball carrier was isolated and the ball was turned over. Then Adam Bibby launched a tremendous clearance into the opposition 22 and the chasing players forced the lineout. The home team won the ball and were awarded a penalty that was prodded to touch to conclude a wonderful contest with Sutton and Epsom 34-31 victors.

As is normally the case in this fixture either side could have been triumphant. Building on their win in Week 1 S&E were far more threatening with ball in hand. Adam Bibby was outstanding in every facet of the game as the team demonstrated resilience and self-belief to turn the tide in the final quarter. Battersea Ironsides with their disruptive forwards at the breakdown, astute Ed Carr at 9 and a surplus of strong runners in their back division will not struggle to score tries this season and will be tough opponents for every team in the league. For Sutton and Epsom next Saturday is the start of three sojourns to the Garden of England with a visit to Priestfields to renew relations with Medway who have returned to the league after one season in Level 5.

Sutton and Epsom

O'Brien, Scott, Bibby, Bunting, Findlay A, Lennard, Findlay E, Johnson, Lennie, Beck, McTaggart, Glanville, Rea, Jones & Hegarty (captain).

Replacements: Boaden, Tame & Lovatt.

Battersea Ironsides

Maher, Sultan, Bell, Lyons, Craig, Baker, Carr, Jones, Lewis, Chetwynd, Kemp, Coleman, McCleary, Chitan (captain) &

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Bishop.

Replacements: Batterbury, Mason & Ford.

John Croysdill

Photo credit: Robin Kennedy

Epsom students launch Nescot Music Radio

13 October 2026



Music students at Nescot college in Epsom have just launched a brand-new radio station, Nescot Music Radio, allowing them to get practical experience of working in radio and broadcasting.

Students take on real industry roles, including presenters, DJs, producers, researchers and music curators, developing skills and building professional portfolios as they go. They are involved in every stage of production, from developing the station's branding and jingles to writing scripts, planning transitions, creating adverts and curating music.

As well as offering music, the station provides a platform for the whole Nescot community, with content including student and staff interviews, artist spotlights, campus news and events, and themed shows. The project also creates opportunities for collaboration between students on different courses.

The first episode, 'Your campus, Your Sound', was recorded over the summer as a pilot. Presenters will change from episode to episode, and around 20 students are expected to be involved across the series, with learners from all levels invited to help shape future shows.

Harry Fairclough, Music Lecturer at Nescot said: "This project is all about giving students the opportunity to step into real broadcasting roles and gain practical, hands-on industry experience. There are many different career paths within the music industry, and the radio station is a great way for students to discover the range of creative, technical and production roles that come together to make a radio show.

"It's been fantastic to see students' creativity, confidence and skills develop through a project they are driving themselves. I'm incredibly proud of what they have achieved so far, and I'm excited for everyone to hear the first episode."

Julie Kapsalis MBE, Principal and CEO at Nescot said: "It's brilliant to hear that Nescot students are now on the airwaves, entertaining students and talking about the issues that matter to them. They've done a fantastic job pulling it all together. I'm hoping for a guest spot at some point, so I can have a look behind the scenes at how it all comes together."

Alongside the radio project, the Nescot music department has also introduced three other weekly industry skills sessions, giving students experience in events, marketing and promotion, running a record label, and studio management. Together, these sessions give students the opportunity to explore different areas of the industry and develop skills beyond their main specialism.

Nescot Music Radio launches with pre-recorded programmes, with ambitions to develop into internal broadcasting and potentially public online radio in the future. The project is built around student voice, creativity, collaboration and employability, and offers another platform to showcase the work happening across Nescot.

The first episode is available to listen to now on YouTube: https://youtu.be/agD8Tnnq9JY

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

NESCOT

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Ewell coach builds free tool to give young footballers a fair go

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An Ewell football coach has combined his experience on the touchline with his skills as a web developer to create a free tool designed to make matchdays easier for grassroots managers.

Davide Domenghini, who manages Ayat FC's under-15s in the Tandridge League, has developed Gafferboard to help coaches select their teams, manage substitutions and keep track of each player's time on the pitch.

He says the idea grew from the familiar weekend challenge of working out who is available, who is injured, who missed training and who has had the fewest minutes — before typing the team out for the parents' WhatsApp group, often in the rain.

Gafferboard allows a coach to select available players, choose a formation and manage substitutions during the game. According to its creator, it also records every player's minutes, helping coaches give younger players a fair share of the action.

"At the younger ages that matters, because the aim is that everyone gets a fair go," Davide told the Epsom & Ewell Times.

The tool is free, with no advertisements or sign-up required. It currently works through a web browser on a phone, tablet or laptop, with nothing to install. Davide says an installable app will follow.

"I've kept it free because the people running these teams are volunteers already giving up their weekends," he said.

Davide has coached grassroots football for more than seven years. He began when his son was playing for the under-nines at Cheam Sports FC. His son is now in the under-15 age group, and Davide currently coaches in the Mitcham and Croydon area.

A longstanding web developer, he describes Gafferboard as a practical response to needs he has experienced as both a parent and a coach.

"I'm a parent as well as a coach, so I know what a manager needs on matchday, what a parent wants to hear before kick-off, and what the players need on the pitch: clear feedback, a fair go, and a bit of discipline sometimes," he said.

"I'm a practical person, so I built the thing I wanted on the touchline."

Ayat Fútbol Club was founded about five years ago by two local coaches and took its name from a local restaurant. It has since grown from one team to seven. Davide stressed that Gafferboard is his own project, rather than a club initiative.

He has also contacted youth leagues across Surrey and Kent to offer the tool to their managers.

While other software focuses on running a club, Davide says his priority is the job facing the volunteer coach during a match.

"Most tools out there are built for running the club. This one is built for the 90 minutes on the touchline."

Gafferboard can be accessed at https://gafferboard.com.

Lionel Blackman

Davide Domenghini with his app. Credit Gafferboard

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