

Corporate Peer Challenge

Position Statement

March 2024



Figure 1: Epsom Town Centres most famous landmark, home to two local businesses and a registered war memorial – the Epsom Clocktower.

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Forward by Councillor Hannah Dalton and Chief Executive, Jackie King

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**Forward by Councillor
Hannah Dalton,
Chair of the Residents
Association (Majority
Group)**

This is our first Corporate Peer Challenge, and I am pleased on behalf of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to welcome the LGA Peer Team.

As a council, we have a long history of political stability and are unique in that the council has been independently led by the Residents' Association since 1937.

Our Members are ambitious and committed to our residents. As an administration we have a clear vision and plan of our priorities as well as what we want to deliver in the coming year and years.

We have an excellent team of officers, led by Jackie King, who work hard to deliver services for our residents and contribute daily to the success of the council.

We continue to respond to the challenging local government environment whilst developing our new Local Plan, preparing for our move to a new Town Hall and looking at new opportunities to create income so we remain financially sustainable.

We look forward to sharing with the Peer Team the work we are already doing and receiving your thoughts and insights.



**Forward by Jackie King,
Chief Executive**

We welcome the LGA Peer Review as an excellent opportunity for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to showcase some of the outstanding work underway and to receive fresh ideas around some of the challenges we currently face.

We are committed to our borough vision for 2040 to be 'a great place in which to live and work, both now and in the future' and with a strong leadership team in place to lead our loyal and committed workforce, the council is working to be fit for the future challenges ahead alongside our elected members.

We may be small but Epsom and Ewell is a borough rich in history and heritage with strong royal connections. We are ambitious and are driven to achieve the best possible outcomes to support all of our communities in the best way that we can.

The priorities outlined in our Council Plan demonstrate our ambitions to make Epsom and Ewell a destination of choice, whether for residents, students, businesses, or visitors as we create opportunities for all to thrive in a safe and healthy borough.

1. Introduction

Chief Executive, Jackie King, joined Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) in 2021 and together with the Chair of the Residents Association Majority Group of the Council since May 2021, Cllr Hannah Dalton, invited the LGA to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) which will place between the 5th and 7th of March 2024.

The peer review will be conducted by a team of elected members and senior officers from other local authorities together with LGA advisors. The main areas of focus of a corporate peer challenge are:

1. **Local priorities and outcomes:** Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities and achieving improved outcomes for all its communities?
2. **Organisational and place leadership:** Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
3. **Governance and culture:** Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of respect, challenge, and scrutiny?
4. **Financial planning and management:** Does the council have a clear understanding of its current
5. **Financial position?** Does the council have a strategy and a clear plan to address its financial challenges?
6. **Capacity for improvement:** Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

The Peer Challenge team have also been asked to give their views on:

- a) The council's organisational approach to risk management
- b) The council's approach to the provision of housing and housing services considering the continued high cost of supporting residents at risk of homelessness and in need of temporary accommodation.

EEBC is commissioning a Corporate Peer Challenge to take advantage of sector led feedback, at this, a key point in time for the borough council. With a recently appointed Chief Executive, a significant number of new Members, an imminent office move, being at the end of the current Four-Year Corporate Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy and development of the new Local Plan, the insights to be gained from a Corporate Peer Challenge at this time will be invaluable as we look to address the challenges facing the council, and our residents.

The council has also prepared two case studies to demonstrate and share some of the innovative work the council has been undertaking. These case studies are included at Appendix 18.

Welcome to Epsom & Ewell

The Place & the People

Sitting just beyond south-west London, Epsom & Ewell is the smallest of the 11 district and borough councils that make up Surrey. The neighbouring districts are [Reigate and Banstead](#), [Mole Valley](#), and the London Boroughs of [Kingston upon Thames](#) and [Sutton](#).

A [video](#), produced as a collaboration between students at the University for the Creative Arts, studying in Epsom, and the council, gives a flavour of what the borough has to offer.



Figure 2: Promotional video for Epsom and Ewell, developed by the University for the Creative Arts in partnership with Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and narrated by famous borough resident – Warwick Davis.

Settlement began in the area during the Saxon age, significant Roman remains found in Ewell suggest a sizeable settlement and that the borough played an important role in Roman Britain.

Comprised of three principal urban centres, Epsom, Ewell and Stoneleigh, with Epsom Town Centre as the principal retail centre, the areas of Horton to the west of Epsom, Langley Vale - adjacent to the Downs and part of Worcester Park which falls into Cuddington Ward – combined make up the borough of Epsom and Ewell.

Ewell was founded as a spring line settlement, where the permeable chalk of the North Downs meets the impermeable London Clay. The Hogsmill River is a tributary of the River Thames which still rises at a spring close to Bourne Hall near the village centre. Ewell has a small high street with a range of shops, restaurants and pubs. A number

of schools are located in and around the village. It is served by 4 bus routes and Ewell West train station with services from London Waterloo to Dorking and Guildford.

Stoneleigh is a 1930s built estate and is amongst the most affluent wards in the borough, and in the County of Surrey. It is served by a Zone 5 station which is currently receiving significant investment as part of government's *Access for All* scheme to make it a step free access station. It has a vibrant Broadway with a range of independent shops, 2 supermarkets and as well as a handful of restaurants. The pub, The Station, is located in a grade 2 listed building.

The borough is extremely well connected in transport terms, and a significant proportion of the local population travel outside the borough to work, pulled by the proximity to London, but the borough is by no means a dormitory town.

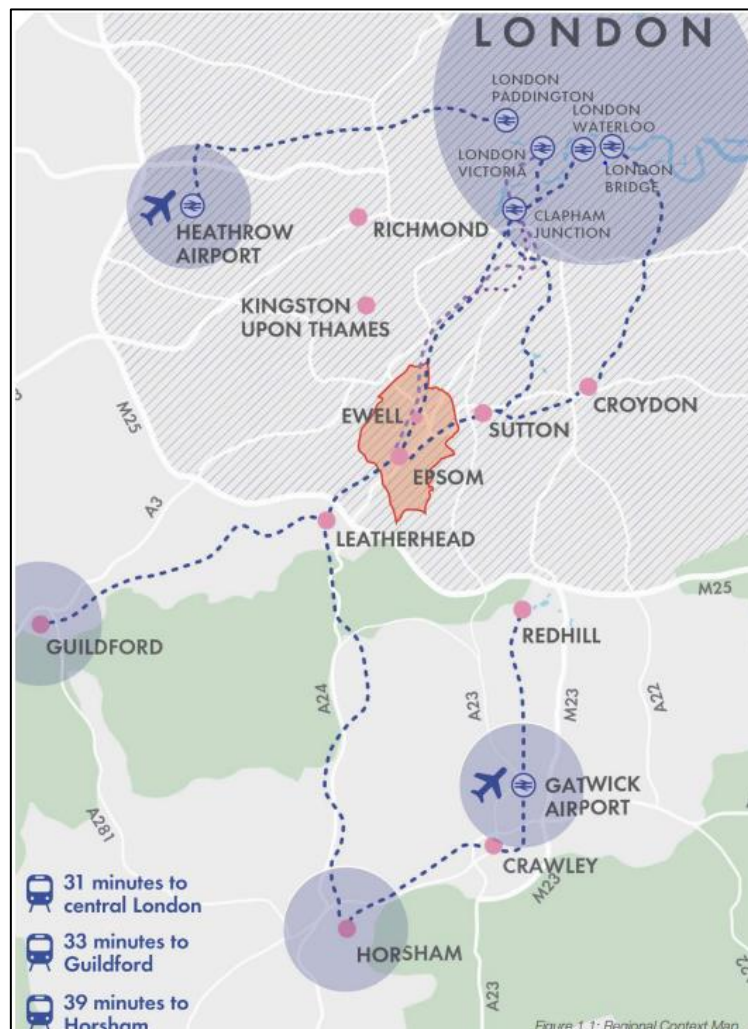


Figure 3: Borough of Epsom & Ewell, shown in context of the Southeast with travel distances to main urban centres.

Epsom & Ewell is the smallest and most densely populated borough in the County of Surrey. In land mass terms, it occupies just 13 square miles, 42% of which is categorised as greenbelt. This offers both advantages in protection of the natural environment, and challenges in the limited housing development opportunities.

Whilst it is the smallest borough in size terms, the population is relatively high and has increased by 7.7%, from around 75,100 in 2011 to 80,900 in 2021. This is higher than the overall population increase for England (6.6%). The infographic below, provides a summary of the borough's key population demographics.

Understanding our population

Population 80,938
(2021)



Number of people aged **65 and over** is **14,613**.

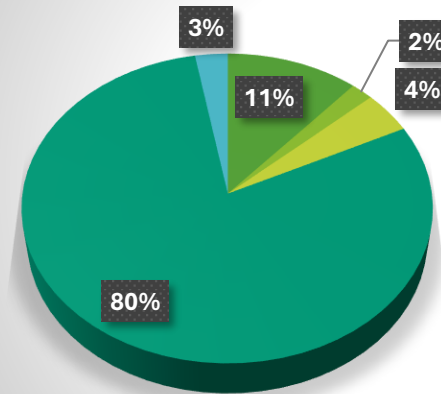
Number of **young people** aged under 15 is **16,333**.

Population density

In England, there are **3** people for every football pitch-sized piece of land.

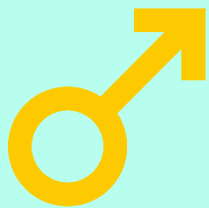
In Epsom & Ewell there are **17**

Ethnicity



- Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh
- Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups
- White
- Other ethnic group

Sex

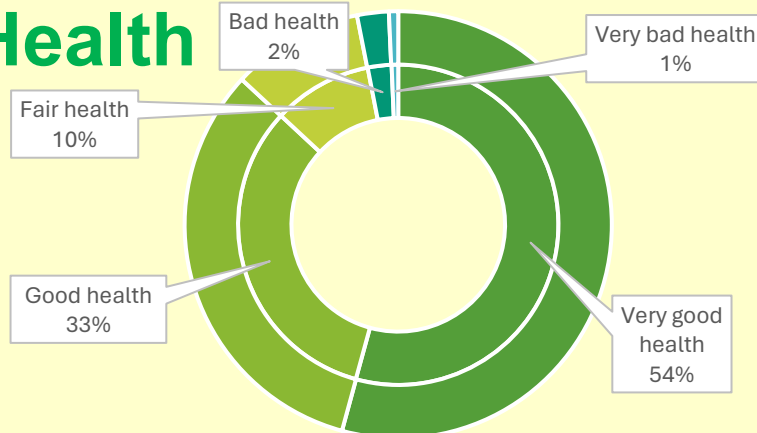


48.4%
Male



56.4%
Female

Health



Deprivation

30.6% of all households in Epsom & Ewell are deprived (in one dimension of deprivation)

Economy, skills, and education

The local economy is dominated by SME's and start-ups and is increasingly becoming known for its agglomeration of cultural and creative based industries. The top three growing sectors in the borough are: Accommodation and Food Service Activities; Information and Communication; and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation.

Atkins, an engineering consultancy who have been operating in the area since 1938 are a major local employer. Nuffield Health is also headquartered in Epsom town centre, and the global headquarters of Toyota, are close by, and the location of the council's forthcoming Business Leaders Breakfast.



Figure 4: Epsom racecourse on a race day.

The borough benefits from its long associations with the racing industry which makes a significant contribution to the local economy each year through just the Derby weekend alone. Employees of the horse racing and training industry are local 'key workers'.

The dominant occupation types of borough residents include: 'Managers, directors, and senior officials; (17.6% of the local workforce); 'Professional occupations' (26.7% of the local workforce); and 'Associate professional and technical occupations' (which accounts for 14.9% of the local workforce).

A highly skilled resident population is accompanied by high educational attainment levels in the borough, 55% of the borough's population of 16-64s hold the highest qualifications levels (NVQ4+). This is well above the England level of 43%. There are several Ofsted rated 'outstanding' state schools in the borough.

Unemployment in the borough is very low but whilst the economically inactive rate is much lower than the national and county level, a higher proportion of these individuals

“want a job”. There are persistent skills gaps in key local employment areas, including construction and marketing, with the latter being one of the hardest to fill job vacancy types in the borough.

The council has prioritised supporting the employability and skills of the local workforce by developing a ‘[Skills Hub](#)’. Working with a charity, and a range of partner organisations, funding was secured via a successful bid to the DWP and subsequently through the council’s shared prosperity ‘levelling up’ investment plan.



Figure 5: Inside the Epsom & Ewell Skills Hub, and the logos of the partners that developed the initiative and continue to support the Hub’s operation today.

The council welcomed its first Hub clients, who were a cohort of neurodiverse candidates, on work experience at the town hall in 2023, and is currently developing opportunities to work on arts, culture, and heritage projects for hub clients.

Although generally considered to be an affluent area, the borough has two wards, Court and Ruxley, ranked amongst the most deprived wards in the both the County and the Country. The council works with communities living in both wards to design and deliver projects, initiatives, and interventions to address the multiple dimensions of deprivation in evidence.

Key health partners, who are members of the Neighbourhood Board, are located in Court Ward and offer valuable insights of wider health determinants in less affluent

communities. This helps drive local initiatives in those areas primarily under the stated priority of the Board around Mental Health.

Housing market

The council transferred its' social housing stock to [Rosebery Housing Association](#) (now part of the Town and Country Housing Group) in 1994, as one of the early adopters of the Large-Scale Voluntary Stock Transfer (LSVT) process. The borough's housing stock is predominantly owner-occupied, as the chart below indicates.

Housing in the borough is both desirable (the area regularly tops the polls of 'best places to live' recently having been rated in the top three of places to live in the Country and also [retire](#)) and unaffordable, with house prices at over 13 times median household incomes.

The borough has one of the smallest supplies of social housing in the UK, with just over 2,700 homes making up the entire affordable housing stock (of 30,000 homes in the borough). There are very few empty homes, almost no 'hard to let' social homes and a substantial increase in private rents in recent years has exacerbated demand for all private rented housing in the borough. Currently there are 1,336 households on the council's housing waiting list.

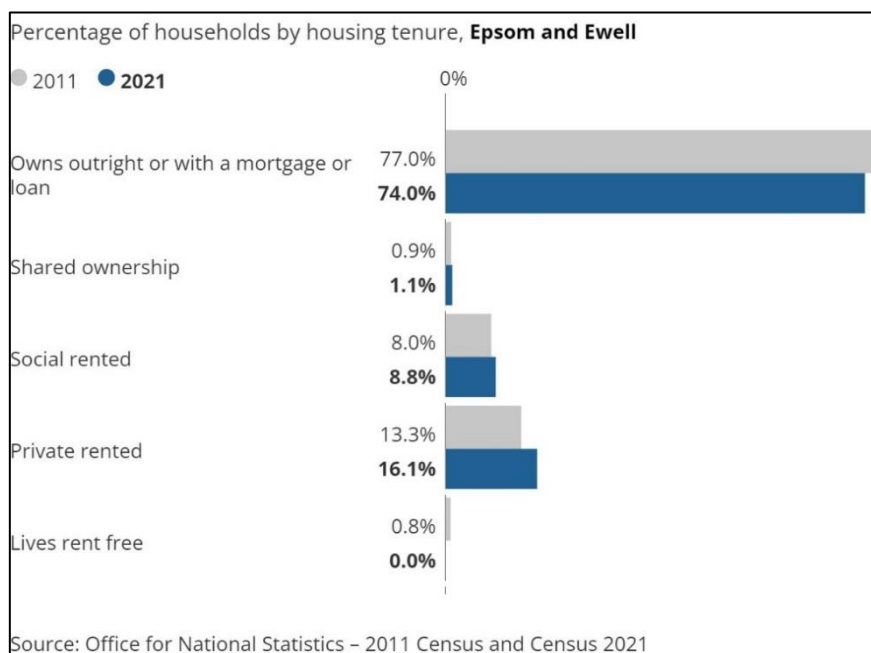


Figure 6: Tenure breakdown of the housing stock in the borough

The numbers of households on the housing waiting list, the associated waiting times (to be housed) and the numbers of households in temporary accommodation are a major concern to the council, both in terms of the impact to the long-term wellbeing of residents unable to access a permanent home, as well as the significant financial impact on the councils' resources of supporting a large population of households in

expensive and unsuitable temporary accommodation. This is often outside of Borough which further separates families from their local schools and support networks.

A Strategic Housing Group, established in October 2022 and comprised of key internal stakeholders, including property services, finance, the Head of Housing & Communities, the Director of Environment, Housing & Regeneration and the Strategic Housing Manager, convenes regularly to develop and consider medium to long-term solutions for reducing homelessness in the borough.

Homelessness prevention and reduction are also discussed, and progress is monitored through the Chair's monthly meetings of the Community & Wellbeing Committee.

Housing is a key challenge for the council, and an area that we have asked the peer team to provide their views on.

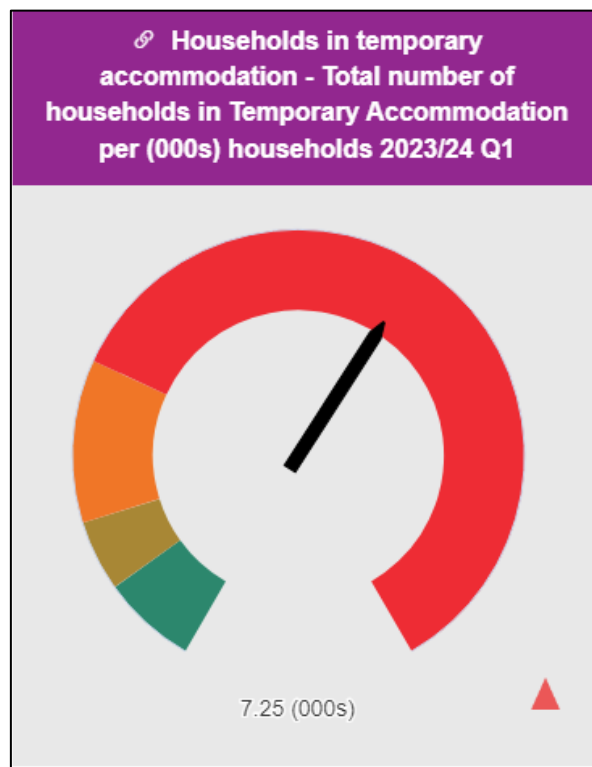


Figure 7: LG Inform dashboard summary of households in temporary accommodation.

Our racing heritage

Epsom is perhaps most famous for being the home of the Epsom Derby, which is Britain's richest flat horse race, and the most prestigious of the five Classics. The training of racehorses is a key 'local industry' and our long-standing association with the horse racing industry are ingrained in the boroughs DNA and is even reflected in the borough crest.

Management of the Epsom & Walton Downs, on which the racecourse sits, is governed by [Royal Assent](#), and overseen by the 'Conservators' which is a joint body made up of representatives of the Jockey Club, the Horseracing Levy Board and EEBC Councillors and officers.

Spa town heritage

The history of the racecourse's growth in popularity is indivisibly linked to Epsom's evolution as a Spa Town in 1618 with the discovery of Epsom Salts within the borough. Lauded for the restorative practice of 'taking the waters' in Epsom, the borough became known as a visitor destination, a place of relaxation, sport and leisure with rich merchants and royal visitors alike.

Market town

First granted by Royal Charter in 1865, Epsom Market has been a defining focal point for the bustling town for hundreds of years. The borough is home to a range of markets, including a new Artisan market, intended to both diversify the retail offer and support local small producers in launching their products.

A new market launched in Ewell at The Grove in August 2022 and supports local traders with the increased footfall to the village. This initiative was developed by the council to create new income streams and in response to the popularity of the Epsom town centre market post pandemic.

A university town, a cultural & creative place

The borough benefits in both educational provision and economic terms from both the rapidly expanding campus of the [University for the Creative Arts](#) - the second largest provider of creative arts education in the UK. From September 2023, all fashion courses are now taught in Epsom, having relocated from the Farnham campus and complimenting the UK's only [business school for the creative industries](#) already sited in Epsom on the UCA campus.

[Laine Theatre Arts](#), a world-class provider of one of the best international dance and drama training colleges for performing arts, is located in the borough many West End performers have trained there. [NESCOT](#), has a strong visual and creative arts curriculum, and compliments the council owned and operated theatre, [The Playhouse](#), with its own dedicated performance theatres. At the height of the pandemic, a dynamic board of local trustees opened [The Horton](#), a dedicated arts centre with a permanent heritage exhibition. As a result, the borough is increasingly being seen as the cradle of arts and culture in the County and beyond.

Natural heritage and greenspaces

The borough is saturated with opportunities to experience arts, heritage, and culture, including natural heritage. Nonsuch Palace once stood within the borough, a one-time hunting retreat of Henry VIII and childhood home of Queen Elizabeth 1st, which had it still stood today, would have rivalled Hampton Court Palace as an international visitor attraction.

A current nationally significant project of which the council is a key partner, will see the creation of series of wetlands to help conserve the [Hogsmill River](#), on the banks of which the famous artist, John Everett Millais, of the Pre-Raphaelite era, painted [Ophelia](#).



Figure 8: Sir John Everett Millais, [Ophelia](#) (1851–2) Image reproduced courtesy of Tate

The council is driving for the inclusion of several of its green spaces within the proposed 'Thames to Downs National Nature Reserve' (NNR). This carries the potential for national recognition, designating the council as an 'Approved Body' known for maintaining its land to the highest environmental standards on a permanent basis. Complimenting the award in August 2023, of the coveted Green Flag Award for Epsom Common, as it was officially recognised as one of the country's best parks.

In October 2023, Nonsuch Park picked up two awards in the 'In Bloom' awards, a prestigious Gold Award for Large Conservation Area, and a Silver Gilt Award for a Heritage Park. Ewell Village kept its Silver Award status in the Large Village of the Year category, and Epsom Town Centre entered the Business Improvement District category and retained its Silver Award status. Each of the awards cited here but achieved through working in partnership with Members, residents, community groups and key organisations such as the Business Improvement District (BID).

The Organisation

Our 280 staff (260.5 full-time equivalent) staff take pride in delivering high-quality services to around 80,000 residents and 3,700 businesses.

Our services include waste & recycling, planning, parking, environmental health, housing, arts, culture, and economic development – the full range of our services can be accessed online at www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk. The services we provide are set out on the website in sections with those aimed at ‘residents’, ‘businesses’, ‘visitors’, and also those delivered as part of the operation of a council as an organisation, such as the support the council provides to the Ukrainian community.

A high number of the services we provide to residents are discretionary, a review of all discretionary services will take place during 2024/ 2025 to determine the future of such service provision in the current adverse economic climate. Providing great value for money to residents is a key part of our culture, with council tax here amongst the lowest in Surrey and a commitment by members to keep the rate at below the Surrey average.

Political leadership

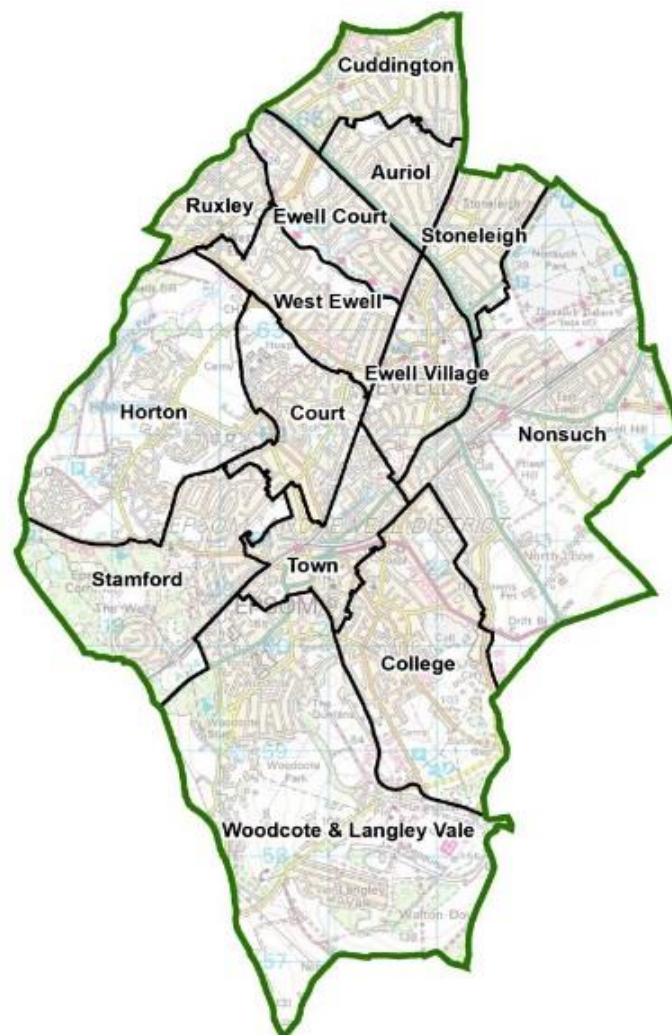


Figure 9: Map of the fourteen wards that make up the borough of Epsom & Ewell following the electoral boundary review.

EEBC has 35 councillors, who govern through a committee structure. As a result of the 2022 Boundary Review, the number of councillors reduced from 38 to 35 and a new ward was created, 'Horton', increasing the total number of administrative wards in the borough from thirteen to fourteen,

The most recent local elections were held in May 2023, with the Residents' Association (RA) retaining majority control with 26 of the 35 seats. The council run an 'all-out' approach to local elections, every 4 years.

The council has had a RA administration since 1937, a feature of the political landscape which lends a uniqueness to EEBC, this being one of only two local councils where the RA have overall control but being one of longest serving political administrations in local government.

The overall political make up of the council is:

Party	Councillors
Residents Association	26
Liberal Democrats	4
Labour	3
Conservative	2
Total	35

Figure 10: Political makeup of the Council.

The impact of the pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic saw officers – supported by Members – rise to the unprecedented challenge of supporting residents and businesses throughout the crisis, while maintaining key service levels.

The council's emergency response included helping vulnerable residents – with food, prescriptions, and other needs – through a Community Hub, putting in place measures to make town centres and public spaces Covid-secure, and helping to sustain the local economy with over £11m grants paid to local businesses.

Our staff worked hard to support those most in need, delivering existing services, many new services, some within days of the announcement such as the new business grants. The impact of having to work at pace and often without any prior warning as to the direction of travel, created additional pressure and strain across the organisation.

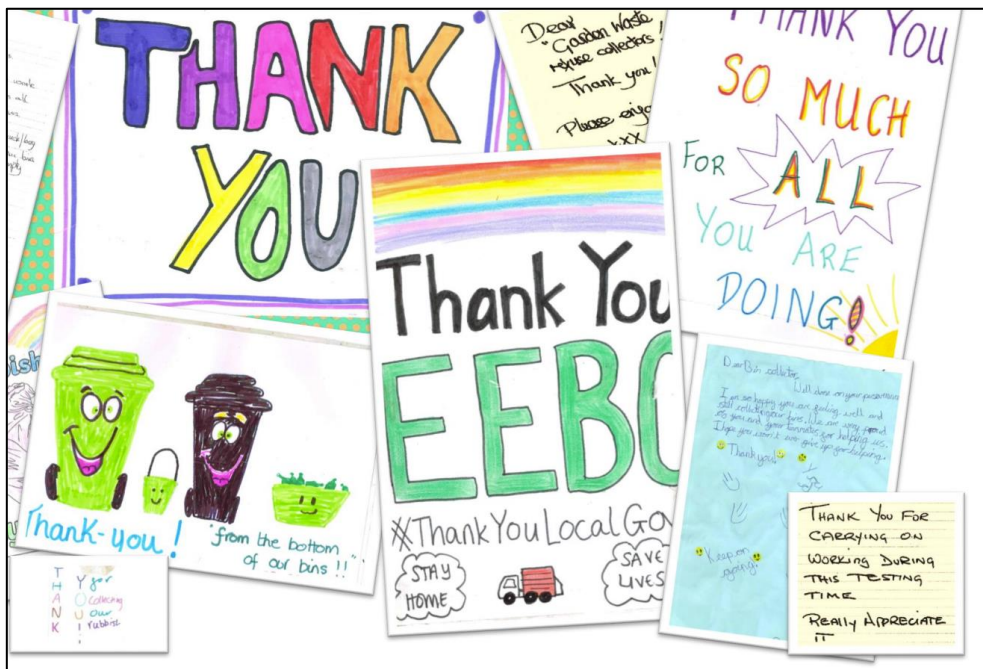


Figure 11: An example of some of the 'thank you' letters and cards received by Members and staff during the pandemic.

The council's response to the pandemic met these challenges face on but over the course of the pandemic, with finite resources, staff teams have suffered from fatigue, the impact of which was felt in staff turnover levels, sickness levels and difficulties in recruiting. All of which have improved significantly in the past twelve months.

The effect of the pandemic has proved to be long lasting and with a multi-faceted impact on our residents, staff, and the organisation as a whole. There have been challenges in dealing with service backlogs, particularly in our planning service, where for a period of time, we struggled to recruit to roles in the planning team. This is reflective of a shortage, Nationally, of qualified and experienced planning officers.

Taking a proactive approach, the council recently (December 2023) applied for and was successful in securing 'Planning Skills Delivery Funding' to help in this regard.

Council budgets were re-based in 2022 to reflect the permanent adverse impact that Covid-19 has had on the council's finances. It is estimated that the annual impact of the pandemic, chiefly due to reduced car parking income and increased demand for homelessness services and accommodation is £1.03m per annum. This remains the most accurate estimate of the financial impact specifically attributable to the pandemic.

Workforce

The council's workforce is employed in one of two Directorates, Corporate Services or Environment, Housing and Regeneration. The breakdown of the workforce by division is set out in the figure below.

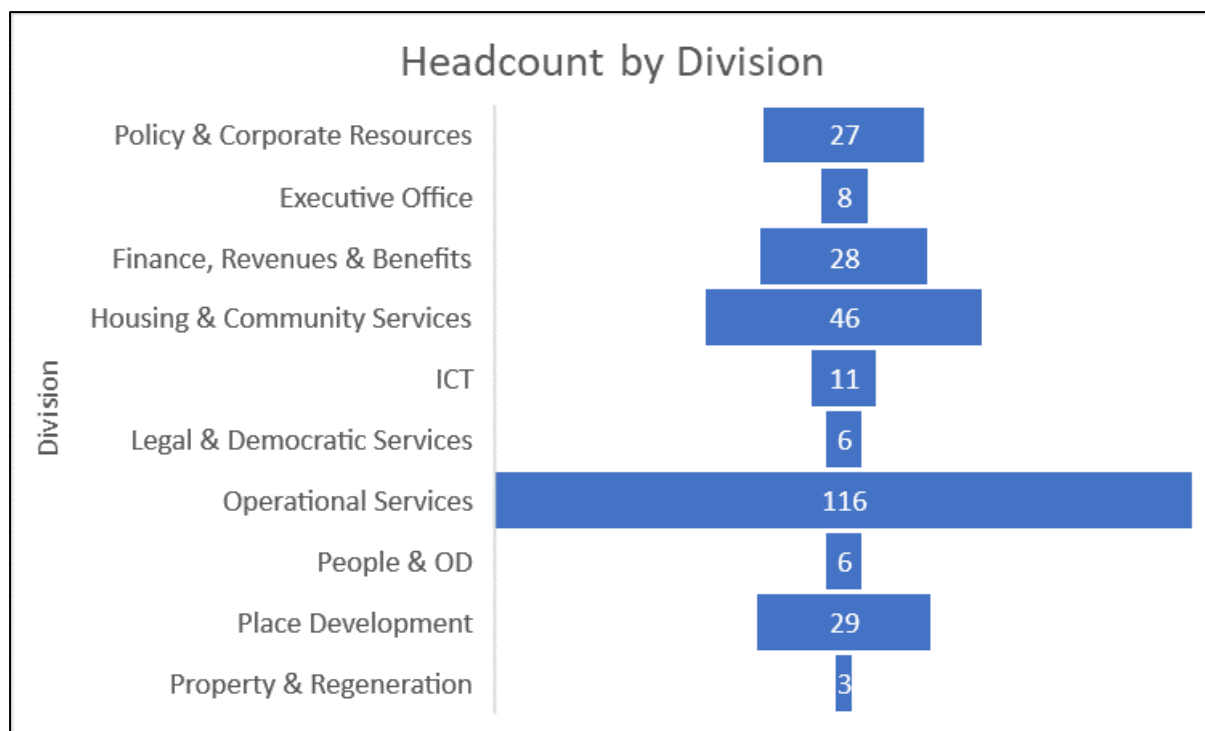


Figure 12: Headcount by service division within the council.

Further information on the council's workforce is set out below, in the 'Capacity for Improvement' section.

Transformation of service provision

The planning (development management) service has recently undergone the first stages of a Transformation Programme including the realignment of roles and resources to address under-performance in the speed of determination of planning applications. The impact of Covid-19 was felt particularly keenly in the planning service with difficulties retaining and recruiting staff, and reliance on agency workers.

The high rate (relative to other Southeast authorities) of ombudsman complaints regarding the delivery of the planning service reflect historic weaknesses and inefficiencies in the delivery of this service, an area that a Service Improvement Plan continues to seek to address.

We now have a full team of permanent planning staff in place and are about to launch a new 'Fast Track' Householder application service, an income generation opportunity that will also address the need for speed in determining these types of applications and an initiative that was derived from a business process re-engineering exercise in the service area.

As a result of the council's actions, service levels and performance on planning applications improved rapidly and significantly. Since early 2022, the council has continued to determine at least 90% of planning applications within the statutory timescale target, compared to the government threshold of 70%:

Apr-Jun 2022 – 95%

Jul-Sep 2022 – 91%

Oct-Dec 2022 – 95%

Jan-Mar 2023 – 96%

Apr-Jun 2023 – 95%.

Jul-Sept 2023 – 90%

Oct-Dec 2023 – 90%

Whilst we have made good progress to address the planning service issues, service improvement work continues. The team applied for and were successful in securing funding to participate in the national 'Planning Service Improvement Fund' and 'PropTech' projects, led by DLUHC, and in collaboration with a range of Local Authorities to design the planning service of the future.

The project is based on harnessing technological advancements and led by user and resident feedback.

In October 2023, the council were informed that government was no longer considering 'designating' the authority for poor performance in the planning department which is a direct result of the extensive service improvement work and markedly improved planning performance.

2. Local priorities and outcomes

The council has a clear vision and view of the future reflecting the priorities of Members and residents alike, and is set out in a long-term vision for the borough – the [2040 Vision](#), the [Four Year Corporate Plan 2020-2024](#) and the [Annual Plan](#).

The Annual Plan is produced each year as a live document which all teams across the council feed into, and from which performance is regularly monitored to measure progress against the over-arching Four Year Plan.

Members in conjunction with officers have recently developed and adopted the [2024/25 Annual Plan](#).

The strategic priorities set out in the Vision and Four-Year Corporate Plan, were derived from the largest ever public consultation exercise conducted by the council. Thousands of residents, businesses, educational institutions, voluntary sector organisations, and multiple partners gave their views as part of the 'Future40' community engagement project.

These strategic plans identify key themes reflecting the borough's identity in the eyes of consultees and our stakeholders as a 'creative and vibrant place'. The over-arching outcome sought from the strategic plans combined is to help keep Epsom & Ewell as 'a great place in which to live and work, both now and in the future'.

The strategic priorities carry through everything we do as an organisation and serve as guiding principles in the development of service specific policy, strategy, and service delivery.



Figure 13: Infographic depicting the strategic priorities set out in the long-term vision for the borough.

At a service level, the Annual Plan is translated into Service Delivery Plans, ensuring that the outcomes sought from the long-term Vision for the borough, through the Four-Year Corporate Plan and Annual Plan, remain focused on delivery as they are jointly progressed and cascaded throughout the organisation.

Alongside the key strategic plans described above, several service area specific Policies and Strategies, with cross-cutting aims and objectives help to shape delivery with partners and stakeholders and are developed with the benefit of community input and insight. A selection of key strategies is included in the data and information pack, supporting this Position Statement.

In February 2020, councillors agreed a [Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020-2024](#) (MTFS) to provide a firm financial foundation for delivering on the key themes and priorities within the Four Year Corporate Plan. The [MTFS](#) has recently been reviewed and is being taken to Full Council for approval in February 2024.

A new [Local Plan](#) is currently being prepared that will set out the spatial vision for the area to 2040. This work is long overdue, and, in its preparation, Members are facing unprecedented backlash regarding proposals to consider development on the greenbelt.

Community, stakeholder, and resident consultation has been extensive, garnering over 1700 responses and included various methods including:

- Face to face workshops and meetings.
- An information stand, staffed by the planning policy team, in the local shopping centre.
- Visits to libraries and public buildings by the planning policy team to engage with the public.
- Online consultation through use of a dedicated [consultation portal](#) developed by Innovem Consult for the council.
- Information articles in [eBorough Insight](#), the boroughs electronic resident's newsletter.
- Developed an [explanatory video](#), shared through the consultation portal.

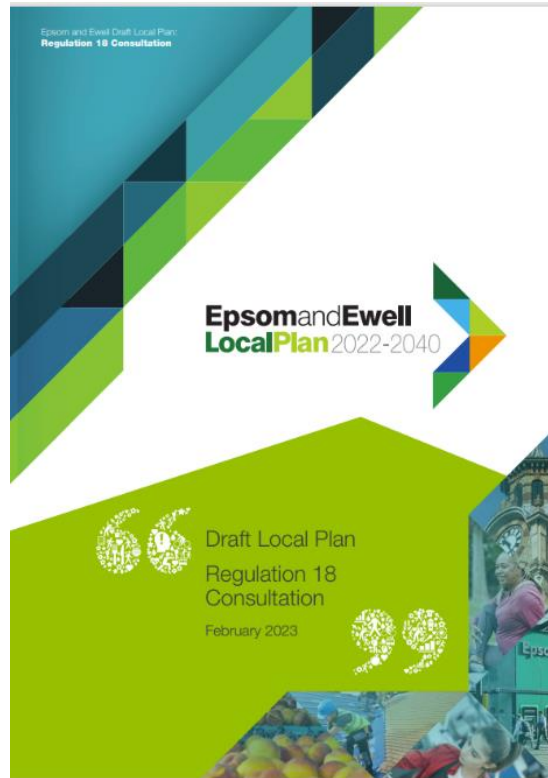


Figure 14: Image depicting the Draft Local Plan – 2022 to 2040.

The new Local Plan includes policies designed to address climate change. The council also adopted a **Climate Change Action Plan** in 2020, setting an ambitious target of becoming carbon neutral by the year 2035 and driven by a cross-party Members Climate Change Working Group, and an Officer Action Group, to support and oversee delivery of the Action Plan.

Carbon reduction considerations are embedded in decision-making process at Epsom & Ewell, since May 2020, climate change impact is discussed in every council committee report and all committee reports include details of any climate and environmental impact of recommendations.

Work to the council's property estate is starting to achieve significant carbon reduction, a driving factor in the recent decision to relocate the main operational headquarters of the town hall to a fit for purpose office block a short walk away in the town centre.

We are working with different community groups and organisations on a variety of community led projects, such as a community solar purchasing scheme 'Solar Together', tree planting schemes and a Repair Café'.

In March 2021, the council adopted a '**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework 2021-2024**', that is monitored through a cross cutting officer group, the Diversity and Equality Forum. The framework sets out the equality principles and themes that the council works towards, including: 'To be a learning organisation, working to make improvements', 'Fulfil our duty under the Equalities Act 2010', 'Engage with

communities, partners and stakeholders’, ‘Require our contractors to abide by the Equalities Act 2010’, and ‘To learn from our mistakes and experience’.



Figure 15: Mayors Civic Celebration of Culture Event, held in September 2023 to celebrate the richness and diversity of the borough. Image depicts Abbira Shanthikumar, solo showcasing of Bharatanatyam. With thanks to Councillor Steven McCormick for supplying this photograph.

Completion of **Community Equality Impact Assessments (CEIA)**, accompanying new or changed policies, strategies, and service provision guide officers towards considering and mitigating for, the impact on communities and individuals with protected characteristics of the proposed policy, strategy, or service change, during the earliest stages of development. The full completion of, and compliance with CEIA is an area that is fully acknowledged requires focus and improvement.

Members are keen to develop strategies which take into consideration as part of their development those who are under-represented, or seldom heard across our community. The recently adopted, **Arts, Culture & Heritage Strategy** takes as one of its core strategic pillars ‘Inclusivity & Access for All’.

Adopted in October 2023, with the support of a range of arts, culture and heritage stakeholders and following consultation, an example of projects that have taken place or are being developed to reach seldom heard groups include:

- An exhibition entitled ‘50 **LGBTQ+** people who changed the world’ in association with a charitable arm of an independent publishing house.
- An arts and well-being event in partnership with local charity **End Stigma Now**, entitled ‘Love Without Labels’

- ‘Virtual Tour’ of a local historic visitor attraction by an arts organisation who will develop a multi-sensory, multi-media tour and resource pack for our **visually impaired** community.
- A project, working with the **Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network** will explore the subject of ‘home’ through a mosaic project with members of the Ukrainian and Syrian refugee communities.
- Arts4 Dementia – a series of art classes that will support residents of the borough with **dementia** to express themselves creatively.
- Community murals, encouraging **young people** to develop artistic skills and practices that may ultimately also encourage a career in the creative industries.



Figure 16: A community mural, designed and delivered in partnership with a group of local secondary school students and an internationally renowned street artist, under the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy core pillar – ‘Nurturing Talent’, funded with Home Office Safer Streets funding.

Levelling Up

We are working closely with key stakeholders and partners on the **levelling up** agenda. The first year’s action plan of the new Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy has been funded with levelling up funds, and alongside this priority, the shared investment plan prioritises delivery of:

- A **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan** (LCWIP)
- A **Liveable Neighbourhood Plans** (LNP)

- **Climate Change** projects to enable improvements to be made to community buildings that would reduce carbon emissions.
- Continuation of a local charitably run **Employment Hub** (Epsom & Ewell Skills Hub).
- **Public realm / infrastructure improvements** schemes detailed in the Infrastructure Plan supporting the Local Plan or the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan.
- **Digital Skills Programme** to complement the work of the Employment hub a digital skills programme will be developed to increase the level of digital inclusion of the borough's residents, and
- **Cultural** activities including a community light festival, art classes for residents living with dementia, installation of community wall murals and a community led sculpture trail, a town art trail, and improvements to existing cultural infrastructure including the theatre.

Performance & Risk Management

Performance and risk management is led from within the council's Corporate Assurance team. Since their respective appointment both the CEx and Leader are keen to ensure that performance and risk is embedded in council processes and reviewed quarterly.

A re-designed Corporate Project Management guide and associated template reports was prepared by the new Corporate Assurance Team who oversee a Community of Practice to share and discuss project management techniques, issues, and best practice.

A dedicated Programmes Team drives delivery of corporately significant projects and programmes, such as the planning transformation programme and complements the work of the corporate assurance team in establishing a cross-organisational project management methodology.

Key local performance indicators are reported to Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), and the policy committee's governing each council service area. A concerted effort is being made to collate, share, and derive insights from Surrey benchmarking data available within LG Inform and beyond.

EEBC participates in quarterly benchmarking with all Surrey district and borough councils to compare performance and share insight with one another on indicators suggesting particularly good practice or areas of concern.

The most recent Corporate Performance Report can be viewed [Appendix 1 - Corporate Performance Report - February 2024.pdf \(epsom-ewell.gov.uk\)](#); and the previous quarter's report can also be viewed [Appendix 1 - Performance and Risk Report - September 2023.pdf \(epsom-ewell.gov.uk\)](#).

Future developments in performance management include the use of Performance Hub (specialist performance reporting software) to seek assurance from all Key Performance Indicator owners on the robustness of their measures (e.g. data collection, methodologies, impact etc.).

Members are keen that work is carried out to understand their appetite to risk and that this is reflected as part of the corporate performance and risk management system.

3. Organisational and Place Leadership

Organisational Leadership

The **Chief Executive** is visible across the organisation and operates an 'open door' policy with a genuinely engaging and 'human' approach as seen in the 'Coffee with Jackie' sessions offered to, and well-attended by staff throughout the year. The Chief Executive joins all new starters on a 'walk and talk' around the borough's Nonsuch Park as part of their induction process, together with the Directors.

Strategic leadership capacity was recently bolstered by the internal appointment of a permanent **Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration** and Section 151 Officer complimented by an **Interim Corporate Services Director**, who together with the Chief Executive, and Head of Legal Services (also the Monitoring Officer), form the organisation's Strategic Leadership Team.

The Chief Executive holds monthly meetings with the Strategic Directors and the Statutory Officers, plus weekly Senior Leadership Team meetings. The CE's own objectives are agreed with the Chair and Vice Chair (who is also the Chair of the Ruling Majority RA Group) of Strategy & Resources Committee at an annual performance review. The objectives of the Strategic Directors cascade from these, and in turn set the parameters for the performance objectives of the wider Corporate Leadership Team and their teams in turn.

The leadership capacity and capability across the organisation is being enhanced through a programme of Leadership Development work with the Corporate Leadership Team, informed by an Insights programme and series of tailored up-skilling workshops. Previous confidential survey and insight work has indicated that the workforce show a strong affiliation with and loyalty towards their individual Heads of Service.

Regular all staff briefings are well attended and popular with staff, which are held face to face and also broadcast over Teams. Written 'Members News' and a separate 'Staff Update newsletter' are regularly prepared to share all council news of interest and celebrate recent organisational successes. The communications team, which reports directly to the Chief Executive, are constantly changing and improving the methods of internal communications. The team have recently upgraded and relaunched the internal staff information hub, drawing on the insight of a staff focus group.

Place Leadership

The council has in place, a range of strong local partnerships to ensure effective place leadership and to inform and bolster collective leadership capacity. Members work with an extensive range of partners to lead their place and enact change in the local area.

Appendix 2 serves to illustrate some of the place leadership related local organisations, groups, and forums that Members support in their bid to lead the local area.

In addition, the [Chief Executive takes the time and opportunity to meet with](#) local partners and regularly spends time meeting with the leaders of local businesses, voluntary organisations, charities, arts, culture and heritage organisations and educational institutions.

A new [Local Plan](#) is currently being developed to shape the growth of the borough as a whole and understand and secure the resources needed to deliver the priorities within it. Extensive public consultation is informing development at each stage and ensuring the Local Plan reflects a truly shared place ambition.

This work is being done in tandem with development of a new [Town Centre Masterplan](#) to replace the 'Plan E' Town Centre Plan in shaping regeneration and growth options for the town centre. Plan 'E' was a successful policy tool in helping to describe a compelling case for change to the town centre's traffic flow.

Following a joint bid and initiative between EEBC, Surrey County Council, the Coast to Capital LEP and local partners, a multi-million-pound traffic improvement scheme was completed in 2021, seeing South Street accommodate two-way traffic again, alleviating congestion into the town centre from Ashted.



Figure 17: Illustrative perspective showing potential public realm improvements along Upper High Street, taken from the Draft Masterplan for Epsom Town Centre.

At a regional level, Epsom & Ewell has been a key partner in shaping and developing the shared place ambition for the County – [Surrey Place Ambition 2050](#), a previous Director at Epsom & Ewell chaired the cross-authority working group during development of the strategy.

The Countywide place ambition identifies Epsom as one of 9 towns, of 27 in Surrey, who play “a key role in serving the wider regional economy” and are “identified as a focus for significant development”.

An effective **Community Safety Partnership**, comprised of:

‘Statutory Partners’:

- Surrey Fire & Rescue Service
- Surrey Police
- Surrey County Council
- Kent, Surrey, and Sussex Probation Service
- Surrey Downs Clinical Commissioning Group
- Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

And Non-statutory Partners:

- Office of the Surrey Police & Crime Commissioner
- Rosebery Housing Association

The CSP meets quarterly to discuss community issues affecting the borough and to create a vision for the future. The partnership is a significant contributing factor to Epsom and Ewell being recognised as one of the safest places in Surrey to live, work and study. Co-location of the Neighbourhood Policing Team within the Town Hall bolsters relationships at ward and neighbourhood level.

In May 2023 a new Crime & Disorder Committee was established and as part of their work plan a new **Community Safety Action Plan** has been developed, which included a recent public consultation exercise, and includes actions around domestic violence and town centre anti-social behaviour, among other priorities.

Support from the CSP and the local **Business Improvement District (BID)**, GoEpsom, along with PubWatch, the organisation representing local publicans, recently helped to lever in funding of over £250,000 from the Home Office Safer Streets Initiative to help address an emerging issue with violence against women and girls in the night-time economy.



Figure 18: The Emily Davison memorial statue, unveiled in 2021 in Epsom Town Centre's newly regenerated marketplace.

With Member attendance at its Board, and regular meetings with the SLT and officer teams at the council, the BID is a key partner in seeking to secure the ongoing vitality of Epsom Town Centre, the principal retail centre for the borough.

The council manages the marketplace in the town centre and recently worked in partnership with the Local Economic Partnership and County Council to transform the public realm in Epsom's historic marketplace. The project culminated with the installation of a memorial to Emily Davison, famous leading light of the suffragette movement who lost her life after she stepped into the path of the King's horse, Anmer, at Epsom Racecourse in 1913.



Figure 19: Epsom town centre marketplace, following improvements to the public realm and a multi-million-pound highways project led by Surrey County Council in partnership with the borough council and Local Economic Partnership.

Economic development

Member representation on, and liaison with local trade bodies, such as the Ewell Traders Association, ensures that the voices of local traders, not represented by a formal BID, feed into the dialogue about future place-based projects, such as the Ewell Village transport project led by the County Council.

The council developed two new markets in the borough, to diversify the retail offer and provide a platform for micro producers of products locally. The new markets, including a Farmers Market in Epsom, and an Artisan Market in Ewell, offer a distinctiveness borough, attract visitors, and highlights the boroughs history as a 'market' town.



Figure 20: A bustling Epsom marketplace on market day

Unlike many areas of the country, the borough's retail sector has remained strong and weathered the impact of the pandemic well, even within the areas that don't benefit from having a Business Improvement District.

High footfall and continued vitality of both the principal retail centre of Epsom Town Centre (which will shortly be boosted with the arrival of several major retailers and restaurant chains including B&M Store, Primark, Giggling Squid and Wagamama) and the Stoneleigh local retail centres where there is only two empty retail units demonstrate the continued vitality of the boroughs retail offer.

Ewell village has suffered higher rates of empty shop units and longer re-let times. A place-based project led by Surrey County Council in collaboration with EEBC will seek to address some of the underlying issues with highway and public realm improvements

seeking to increase dwell times in the local shops. Proposals are currently being subjected to extensive public consultation.

The Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy for the borough includes an aim to leverage the vibrant arts, culture and heritage offer in the borough to achieve economic growth. A recent project with traders in Ewell village and Stoneleigh, saw 'Winter Windows' created in local businesses, highlighting local artistic talent, and encouraging footfall.



Figure 21: Two of the Winter Windows created, working with local traders in Ewell Village and Stoneleigh, with communications led by the local ward councillors and with funding from the Council's UKSPF allocation during 2023/2024 for arts, culture, and heritage.

Economic development and income generation is an area of focus for Members. An adopted [Economic Development Action Plan](#) ensures the organisation takes a strategic lead in ensuring that the infrastructure and conditions for economic growth are in place across the area. Whilst our current action plan requires updating, work has taken place as part of the East Surrey Collaboration with Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge to look at opportunities to work together in this area.

Work on the new plan will commence when the uncertainty over the future position of the Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) is clarified. The County Council are currently recruiting an economic development team, and we look forward to working in partnership with them to drive economic growth in the borough.

In the meantime, while we await clarity of the new iteration of LEPs following the County deal announcement, economic development remains embedded within many areas of the council's work.

From skills development and working with the Epsom & Ewell Skills Hub, to harnessing and highlighting the vibrant cultural offer in the borough to attract employees,

businesses and visitors through the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy to developing policies in the draft Local Plan that seek to secure the long-term economic vitality of Epsom Town Centre, all these workstreams and more combine to create an economic development service.

The horse racing industry and the local economy

Horse racing has taken place in Epsom for over 350 years (the first recorded race days were in the 1640's). As well as being a significant local employer, the horse racing industry brings in around £13 million annually, to the local economy.

We support local horse racing industry initiatives to strengthen and grow within the borough and together with partners supported the development of a future [Vision](#) for the horse racing industry.

A Vision For Epsom

Epsom is synonymous with horseracing and the most famous race of all - The Derby.

The Derby is:

- Over 200 years old
- One of the UK's top ten attended annual sporting events

Epsom racecourse employs 40 full-time - and hundreds of part-time - staff, making a major contribution to the local economy. In addition, the local racehorse training industry adds a further £13 million annually. Yet the Epsom racehorse training industry is hanging by a thread.

This "Vision for Epsom" aims to turn around the current decline and make Epsom a "Globally Recognised 21st Century Centre of Excellence for the Horseracing Industry"

Horses In Training In Epsom Area

Year	Horses In Training
1950	400
1955	500
1960	600
1965	400
1970	300
1975	200
1980	150
1985	100
1990	80
1995	60
2000	50
2005	40
2010	30
2015	20
2021	135
2021 (Target)	250

The decline in training yards and horses-in-training has been driven by increasing urbanisation around the Downs through demand for residential property in a highly desirable area so close to London. In recent years, 28 racing yards have been lost to lucrative residential development.

We have started to reverse this decline, with a target of 250 horses in training by 2021, from the present figure of 135 horses.

The Strengths Of Epsom

- A horseracing history and heritage unmatched anywhere in the world
- Proximity to London which offers huge opportunities in attracting new owners
- Proximity to key racecourses which makes it a great location to train
- Dedicated local partners working together to create a great competitive advantage for the area
- First Classic winner in 47 years with Harbour Law's victory in the 2016 St Leger

£13 million
Annual economic impact of racehorse training at Epsom

Investing In The Future

To create momentum we have brought together all of the representatives of the British Horseracing Authority, the Jockey Club, the Training Ground Management Board and the Epsom Trainers Association.

The Jockey Club is investing £200,000 in improvements to the training grounds on the Downs. We are developing a new partnership with Surrey University and we are looking to partner with other local stakeholders.

Our Plan

- Secure The Future**
Securing permissions for the development of South Hatch Stables, Downs House and Langley Vale Farm are core to reversing the decline of racehorse training in Epsom
- A Global Centre For Horseracing Innovation**
We are working with Surrey University to develop proposals for a Global Centre for Digital Innovation in horseracing at Epsom – with world leading innovation for equine science and racehorse training delivering employment, investment and competitive advantage.
- Ownership**
We need to create a compelling vision for new owners to have their horses at Epsom. We are working on developing syndicates targeted at people in the Epsom area, South-West London & the City.
- The Future Of The Downs**
We will work with partners to conserve and develop the Downs for the local community – working together with organisations like the Woodland Trust, who are planting more than 200,000 trees at Langley Woodland – and create a "racing zone" which will protect some of the key facilities for horse training in the area.
- Future Ambitions**
We will work across the horseracing industry and the wider community to identify further appropriate projects which will help us deliver our vision.

Figure 22: Extract of a Vision for Epsom's Horse Racing Industry.

The Vision is now being brought to life through work to expand the number of horse training yards in the borough, through the renovations of Downs House (once owned by the council) to provide facilities for the equine industry and efforts to increase the number of homes available to employees of the horse racing and training industry.

Efforts are also being made to link the racecourse more closely to Epsom town centre. This year school children will pick the starting numbers for the Derby at the marketplace in the town centre, and the arts and culture team are developing an art

trail, highlighting the many examples of public art in and around the racecourse and in Epsom town centre itself.

Working in partnership with the Jockey Club and the Epsom & Walton Downs Conservators, EEBC secured a grant of £132,000 from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development to support the rural economy by encouraging visitors.

The improvements, which includes new benches, bins, picnic tables, way markers, information boards and counting posts, enhance the visitor experience and allow tourists and residents to enjoy the panoramic views, discover the role of the Downs in the Borough's equestrian history and learn about the unique flora and fauna of the area. It also improves safety for both visitors and the horses by directing people away from training grounds.



Figure 23: Epsom Downs

Participation by Members in the **Epsom and Walton Downs Training Grounds Management Board** ensures the effective management of the racehorse training grounds, and in turn provides support for the horse racing industry, a key local employment sector and feature of the local economy.

The Racecourse is often the host of the 'Business Leaders Breakfasts', convened and organised by the borough council to bring together a wide range of local business representatives to share ambitions for the local area, focusing on economic development, and enables the strengthening of relationships through informal networking.

In Stoneleigh, a transformative place-based project, '**Step Free Access for Stoneleigh Station**', was driven by a local RA Member, supported by officers, and

delivered in partnership with funding from network rail 'Access for All fund and a commitment of Community Infrastructure Levy funding. An associated bid to the Customer and Community Infrastructure Fund, will see the station environment enlivened with locally designed artwork.

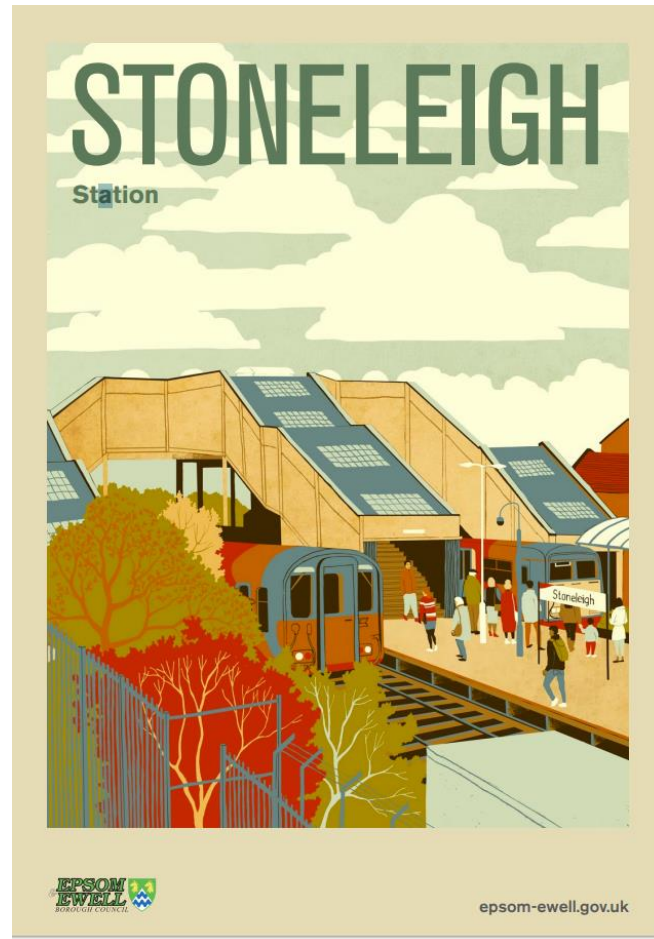


Figure 24: One of a series of bespoke artworks produced to be displayed at Stoneleigh Railway Station, funded with CCIF grant funding from Southern Rail.

Focus of future partnership working

County Deal

In November 2023, Surrey County Council were told that they had received approval for a 'Level 2 County Deal'. Whilst this has no impact on the sovereignty of the council, what this will mean practically and what opportunities there will be for double devolution remains unclear. This will become an increasingly important part of our future partnership working, particularly regarding economic development.

Business Leaders Breakfasts

We are in the process of reimagining the way in which we engage with our business community. Members and the SLT are keen that we refocus the engagement programme to be more around "the ask and the offer" so that we better understand

what business want but also that we outline to them what we bring. We will be refocusing and relaunching in 2024.

Culture Network

Building on the county level work on the establishment of a Surrey Cultural Partnership, we will be establishing a Culture Network, comprised of representatives and practitioners and residents interested in the arts, culture, and heritage sectors to ensure that the local, grassroots voice of the sector is represented at County level and beyond, and ensuring the collectively we drive for a strong and thriving sector at a borough level.

4. Governance and culture

Decision making structure.

EEBC operates a committee structure, a position that has remain unchanged since the council was founded and is illustrated below:

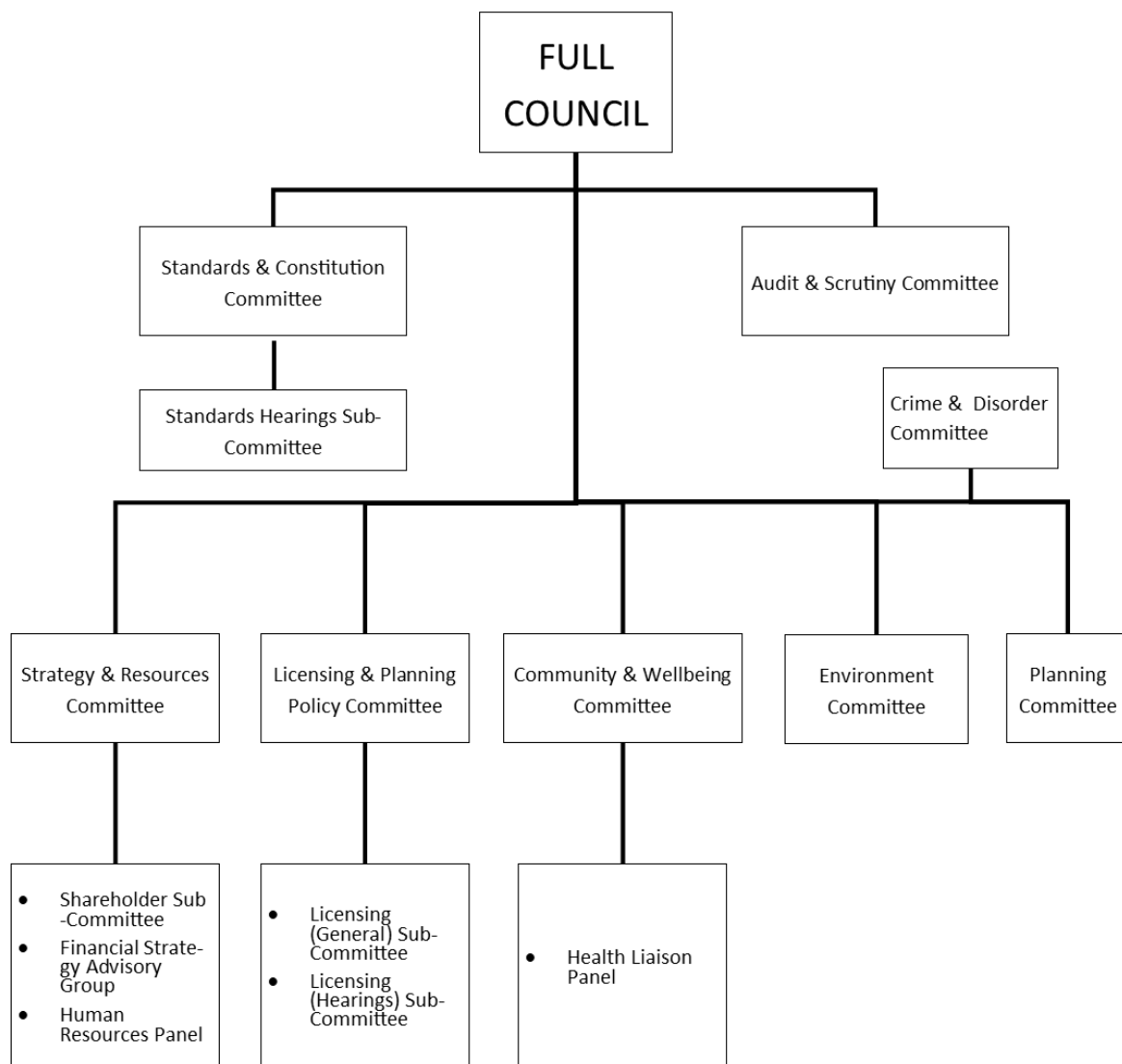


Figure 25: Diagram of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Committee Structure

There are four budget policy committees: Strategy & Resources, Licensing & Planning Policy, Community & Wellbeing and Environment. Crime & Disorder can make policy but does not have its own dedicated budget and is not included as a budget policy committee. In May 2024, the Financial Strategy Advisory Group was established to replace and combine two financial advisory panels.

As a result of reducing from 38 to 35 councillors the numbers of members on all committees were reduced from May 2023.

The council's governance arrangements are developed and overseen within the Directorate of Corporate Resources. The Head of Legal Services (and Monitoring Officer) sits within this directorate and is responsible for legal and democratic services and the elections service.

Following a whole organisation restructure in 2021 a newly created 'Corporate Assurance' team now also brings together responsibility for developing the councils decision-making structures, risk management, audit, scrutiny, performance management, lead the corporate planning, and manage health and safety and resilience processes. Resources were bolstered within the team to strengthen the council's governance functions.

The recent appointment of a new Head of Legal Services has enabled the council to conduct a thorough review of the council's Constitution, Operating Framework, Terms of Reference for Committees and Full Council and the suite of supporting documents underpinning the Constitution and Framework have been reviewed and considered by Full Council.

A Member led working group in conjunction with Officers fed into the process of reviewing the council's Constitution, highlighting from personal experience where they felt decision making processes could be better described and understood, and where possible, reviewed to ensure timely decision making.

The council's [Constitution](#) sets out how the council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure transparency and accountability. Some of these processes are required by law, while others have been adopted at the council's discretion. Much of the council's approach to addressing the principles of good governance is contained within it. More specific details of the way that the council applies the principles in practice are set out in a [Code of Corporate Governance](#), prepared in accordance with CIPFA guidance.

The council's constitution has been a particular area of challenge for the Council. In the summer of 2023, there were some issues raised around the Councils Scheme of Delegation and since then a lot of work has been carried out to resolve this. An amended constitution was adopted in December 2023.

Sitting alongside the Constitution, the [Council Operating Framework](#) includes further information on the functions and structure of the council, and includes several procedures and protocols. Alongside our constitution, the Council Operating Framework is a combination of rules and practices by which we ensure accountability, fairness, and transparency in our relationships with service users, stakeholders, management, employees, and the community.

The documents that comprise the framework came into effect on the 4 May 2023. Chief amongst which is the [Protocol for Managing Member Officer Relations](#) that sets out the expected behaviours of both Officers and Members in working together and drawing heavily on the Nolan principles of public life.

Member Officer Relations

A culture of scrutiny, challenge, and respect between Members and Officers is underpinned by the Protocol for Managing Member and Officer Relations. In many areas, there is a close relationship between Members and Officers, a function of the stability in the longstanding Residents' Association's political administration. This is also due to the many long-serving members of all political parties, and officers who have developed a mutual trust and respect for one another during a track record of successful service delivery for residents.

With many new Members in May 2023, there has been some challenges for both Members and Officers, and on occasion Officers can feel that Councillors do not trust them or the advice they are receiving.

Risk Management

The council has in place a comprehensive [Corporate Risk Management Strategy](#), updated in September 2023. The Strategy sets out guidance for the organisation on:

- Risk management objectives.
- Roles & Responsibilities
- (Organisational) Risk Appetite
- Risk Assessment process and
- Monitoring & reporting arrangements

3. Our risk management structure

We adopt the three lines of defence approach as follows:

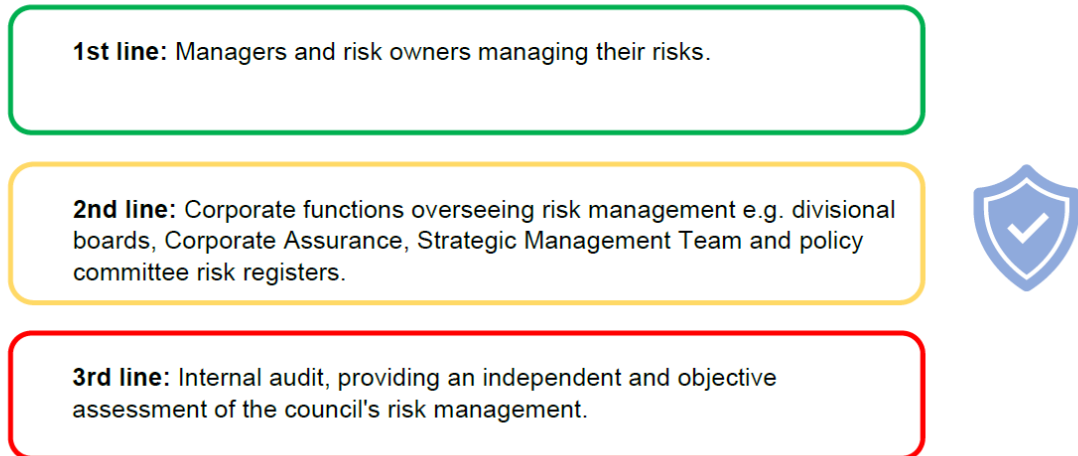


Figure 26: Summary of the risk management structure

A Corporate Risk Register is prepared and monitored, with input from officers across the council, by the Corporate Assurance team. Regular [updates](#) are provided to the policy committees on the status of corporately significant risks. This is reported alongside the performance against the Annual Plan to give Members the full picture of the impact associated with any escalating risk, on performance.

Each quarter the policy committee's Chair and Vice Chairs meet with the Assurance Manager and Corporate Leadership Team to review the Corporate Performance Report and the Corporate Risk Register for their committee.

Committee Risk Registers also capture, and plan for mitigating the risks associated with delivering the work programmes agreed by each committee. An example of which is set out below:

Community and Wellbeing Committee		
Ref.	Risk	Residual Score
HC6	Non-delivery of annual plan objectives, Housing & Community Service, due to response to refugee crisis	12
HC13	Inadequate budget for homelessness over medium-long term	9
HC14	Lack of affordable housing in the Borough	9
HC15	Health and wellbeing worsens in the Borough due to increases in the cost of living	4
PD24	Not producing Arts, Heritage & Culture Strategy	4

The council's approach to strategic approach to risk management is an area that we have asked the peer team to provide their views on.

Transparency

To maintain a culture of corporate **transparency**, the Council has developed a suite of policies including a:

- [Procurement Strategy](#) and associated guide on [How To Do Business](#) with the council
- An [Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy](#)
- Whistleblowing Policy (please see the separate PDF attached) and
- [Anti Money Laundering Policy](#) and
- [Anti-bribery policy](#)

Committee meetings are live streamed to enable public access, and scrutiny and the recent review of the Constitution and Council Operating Framework has widened the options for members of the public wishing to speak at or ask questions at committee meetings.

Any decisions taken under delegated authority by Members, are recorded and reported to the next available committee and included in Member Updates.

Behaviour Framework

An adopted behaviour framework for staff, sets out how we deliver enterprising community leadership and services that are valued by our residents. Developed by staff and following extensive internal consultation, the framework is intended to guide staff on the expected organisational behaviours and engender a 'One Team' approach.

The impact of the pandemic accelerated the feeling of 'One Team' more than any planned for corporate intervention could have, staff have worked together with each, and formed new external partnerships and relationships that continue to bolster service delivery post-pandemic.



Figure 27: Infographic illustrating the council's behaviour framework.

5. Financial planning and management

Summary of Our Financial Position

In February, the revenue budget, capital programme, and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024-2028 will be presented to Full Council for approval. The net revenue budget requirement for 2024/25 is £8.8m, with a capital investment programme totalling £2.0m.

Across the previous MTFS period 2020-2024, the Council has already delivered c.£2.5m of annual savings, efficiencies and additional income.

Looking ahead, MTFS 2024-2028 projects that further annual savings/income of c£1.9m will need to be delivered by 2027/28, to achieve a sustainable revenue budget that does not rely on the use of on reserves to fund day-to-day services. To date, the Council has already identified actions for how £1.4m of the £1.9m future savings target will be delivered, with actions to deliver the £0.5m target balance still to be identified. During 2024/25, the Council plans to continue reviewing its services and assets to identify how the remaining £0.5m target balance could be achieved.

The 2024/25 revenue budget is expected to be supported by c.£0.6m funding from reserves for underlying day-to-day services.

In reserves, the Council holds a General Fund working balance of £3.2m and strategic revenue reserves of £24.7m, as at 31/03/2023.

In addition to these revenue reserves, the Council holds £9m of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and c.£3m of Capital Receipts in reserves, which are used to fund the capital programme and infrastructure projects. The £2.0m capital programme for 2024/25 is mainly to support investment in the Council's existing property and IT infrastructure, as well as delivering Disabled Facilities Grant to vulnerable residents. Licensing & Planning Policy Committee has recently agreed a new CIL Spending Protocol, which sets-out criteria to enable the Council to consider CIL investment proposals in future years.

Returning to the revenue budget, MTFS projections have been updated to address the economic uncertainty and heightened risks brought by inflation. The Council has included a contingency of £500,000 in next year's budget to help manage the impact of elevated inflation on the cost of delivering services. In addition, the budget includes a £500,000 annual revenue contribution towards funding the capital programme to achieve a sustainable capital programme that is not wholly reliant on the use of diminishing capital receipts. The Council's revenue budget position is summarised in the following table:

General Fund Budget Summary	2024/25 Draft Budget	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Forecast	2027/28 Forecast
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Provisional Net Cost of Services	9,433	11,041	11,243	11,502
Funded by:				
Council Tax	7,636	7,904	8,182	8,470
Retained Business Rates	1,749	1,784	1,820	1,856

Revenue Support/Other Gov Grants	403	780	721	735
Prior year Collection Fund deficit	(979)	0	0	0
Sub-Total Funding	8,809	10,468	10,723	11,061
Less use of Strategic Reserves	(624)	0	0	0
Forecast Budget Deficit	0	573	520	441

In the coming year, the Council expects to further progress a number of service and asset reviews, to ensure we remain in a secure financial position, well placed to adapt to the future needs of our residents and businesses and deliver on our Corporate Plan.

The Council has a strong track record of producing its audited accounts. To demonstrate this, 2021/22's Statement of Accounts were the first in Surrey to be signed off by external audit. Officers currently working with Grant Thornton to conclude the 2022/23 audit by the end of March 2024, which would put the Council in a strong position relative to others in the wider sector. Officers will continue to work with the external auditor to aim to deliver accounts within statutory deadlines in future years.

Key Financial Risks

The Council's full budget risk assessment is included within the 2024/25 Budget Papers presented to the Full Council in February, with the key risks highlighted below:

Demand for Housing services - the Council has experienced heightened demand since the pandemic and 'cost-of-living' crisis for housing and homelessness services. The net budget requirement for temporary accommodation is already at an all-time high of c£2.0m (or c.20% of the Council's core spending power) and should demand increase, then all else being equal, the associated budget requirement will also increase. To help mitigate this risk, the Council is pursuing several initiatives including expanding its housing team to have greater capacity to make interventions to prevent homelessness, and to increase its own supply of temporary accommodation options.

Commercial Property – the Council (itself and through a subsidiary company) owns a combined commercial property portfolio valued at £115m (31 March 2023), of which £88m has been funded through borrowing (£24m internal and £64m external borrowing). The portfolio provides annual rental income to the Council of c.£5.7m, which is used to fund services, borrowing costs and contributions to an earmarked reserve to hold funds for managing voids, capital expenditure and related property costs, both foreseen and unforeseen. The portfolio has so far proven relatively resilient, with only one property vacant (which has been identified as the preferred site to become the Council's new civic office). However, the inherent risks associated with commercial property portfolios remain heightened at the current time. The Council

manages these risks through proactive tenant management and reporting, and by holding nearly £10m (as at 31/03/23) in an earmarked Property Income Equalisation Reserve.

Fair Funding Review - as a district council, we anticipate that Government's Fair Funding Review, which has been delayed until 2025/26 at the earliest, may eventually result in sustained reductions to our business rates and New Homes Bonus income. To mitigate this risk, the Council has actively sought alternative income streams in recent years – this included the acquisition of commercial properties – in order to become more financially self-sufficient (independent of government funding) and thereby sustain high-quality services to local residents and businesses. The MTFs has removed reliance on New Homes Bonus (NHB) as a funding source for day-to-day services from 2025/26, with NHB income transferred to reserves for one-off projects).

Budget Monitoring, Financial Management and Decision Making

The Council has a strong track record of robust budget monitoring and of delivering services within, or very close to, the agreed budget envelope. In 2022/23 (the last complete year) the overall revenue outturn position was £264k (or 3%) under budget, with this position assisted by elevated treasury management income.

For 2023/24, projections at Quarter 3 show a £146k (or 1.7%) adverse variance is expected against the overall £8.3m budget, principally due to elevated demands for homelessness services, and reduced planning application/advisory fee income. To address these adverse variances, specific reports have been produced to Licensing & Planning Policy Committee (Planning Fee Income/Budget, November 2023) and Community & Wellbeing Committee (Homelessness Half Year Update, October 2023).

Members of Audit & Scrutiny Committee receive quarterly monitoring reports detailing the financial issues facing the Council. These reports are also shared with committee chairs and all Councillors via Members News. Where significant adverse variances are identified (>£100k) a report is required to the specific policy committee to consider the issue and mitigating actions. Prompt response to in-year projected deficits will continue to be expected from members and senior officers.

All budget managers receive monthly monitoring reports for their particular area. The financial monitoring system covers both revenue and capital expenditure. The Council complies with CIPFA's Financial Management Code and applies all relevant accounting standards. Full governance arrangements are set-out in the Annual Governance Statement, which is available on the Council's website (<https://epsom-ewell.gov.uk/council/about-council/governance>).

The Council participated in March 2021 in an LGA Finance Peer Review, with the Peers' report considered (internally at least) to be a positive reflection of the Council. The Council subsequently produced an Action Plan to address and implement all of the Peers' key recommendations.

The Council's Strategy & Resources Committee, supported by Financial Strategy Advisory Group, oversees the budget setting process and is responsible for considering and approving any new significant expenditure commitments or use of reserves, to ensure plans are affordable.

Throughout the budget setting process, advice is provided at various times concerning the estimates and their underlying assumptions and risks. Policy Committee Chairs, Directors, Heads of Service and Budget Managers are all consulted and involved at an early stage of the budget setting process.

While the Council has managed its finances prudently to date, it is not immune to financial challenges faced across the whole sector. It is expected that the need for savings (or additional income) may shortly necessitate the Council to consider difficult decisions around how it delivers services. Like much of the public sector, the 'least painful' savings and 'most achievable' income generation opportunities have ostensibly already been pursued during 2010's decade of austerity.

The council would welcome the LGA Peers sharing what actions they are aware of being taken by other authorities in acutely more difficult financial positions to re-balance their finances.

6. Capacity for improvement

A learning organisation

The council welcomes the opportunity to achieve service improvements through the scrutiny and challenge offered by external review and has welcomed in recent years Peer Reviews of Finance and of Corporate Communications. The learning and insight gained from these experiences is invaluable in shaping future organisational direction as the current Corporate Peer Challenge will be as we look to refresh our Corporate Plan and several other key strategic plans.

Self-aware of performance issues in the planning, development management service, the council appointed an internally seconded Programme Manager, established a Programme Board, and enacted a Transformation Programme.

The work commenced with a period of rapid service improvement, involved seeking advice from the Planning Advisory Service, engaged a public sector specialist Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) consultancy to assist with a realignment of roles to achieve maximum efficiency, developed an Improvement Plan and was overseen at the early stages by a 'Member Task & Finish Group' to agree the use of resources in clearing the backlog of cases.

The Minister of State for Housing and Planning made a formal decision not to designate the planning authority in October 2023, following a significant period of sustained performance improvement, of which the approach to service transformation was a key factor.

A number of Members hold positions outside of the council including membership of LGA Boards as Deputy Chairs, District Council Network Executive Board and Surrey Police and Crime Panel. Members also attend LGA development programmes, accept invitations to speak at conferences and partake in the delivery of LGA programmes, and use these opportunities to inform their own Member role and the development of the councils' strategies and policies.

The council holds regular Member Briefings on a wide range of topics or areas of policy development. In May 2024, training will be run in partnership with the LGA for all Chairs and Vice Chairs to develop these skills.

Several of our officers participate in the District Council Network and subject specific communities of practice, and willingly share their knowledge to improve our own service provision.

Learning from the impact of the pandemic

In response to the pandemic, the council adopted a Post Pandemic Recovery Plan '[Build Back Better](#)' and enacted a whole organisation restructure, with the intention of realigning staff resources with priorities established in the long term Vision, and also those which emerged during the pandemic. Although the restructure has left an

indelible mark on the organisation in terms of staff morale, something which the Chief Executive, supported by Members is focusing on, an overwhelmingly positive outcome has been the creation and impact of the community development team.

A new Corporate Plan

In the coming year, a new Corporate Plan will be developed as the current Plan comes to the end of its four-year life span. Much has been achieved since the Corporate Plan was adopted, this together with learning from the pandemic, Members aspirations and insight gained through undergoing the Corporate Peer Challenge will inform the development of the new Corporate Plan.

Community capacity

A new **community development** team was created to listen to, empower and co-design service provision with residents and communities. The new team includes a dedicated resource to liaise with the voluntary sector, and the team is now operating its first Neighbourhood Board, chaired by our Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive and Leader recognise that there need to be more opportunities for Members to input into the work with our health and other partners, and this will be a focus for future partnership development work.

Progress has been made in identifying the specific needs of our community, particularly those who are seldom heard from. The team is responsible for providing a social prescribing service (with current developments in green social prescribing in partnership with our Countryside Team), supporting refugees and operating the Homes for Ukraine initiative, and gathers insight and develops support mechanisms to address the identified health and wellbeing needs of residents.

The adopted [Health & Wellbeing Strategy](#) will soon be complimented by a Suicide Prevention Plan, an issue that is of significant prevalence in the borough and of major concern given the rates, particularly among the adult male population. This work is complimented by the focus of the Arts Culture and Heritage Strategy through the provision of arts and culture opportunities to support the mental wellbeing of our residents. We will soon launch an Arts4 Dementia art class within the borough's dedicated (council run) [Dementia Hub](#).

Workforce

The gender split of the council's workforce of 280 staff is 136 females (48.6%) and 144 males (51.4%) broadly reflective of the borough's demographic profile, as is the ethnicity breakdown of the workforce apart from the 'Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh' population, which appears to be marginally under-represented in the council's workforce at present.

The age-breakdown of the council's workforce differs from the LGA public sector picture, suggesting that Epsom & Ewell's workforce is slightly older than average.

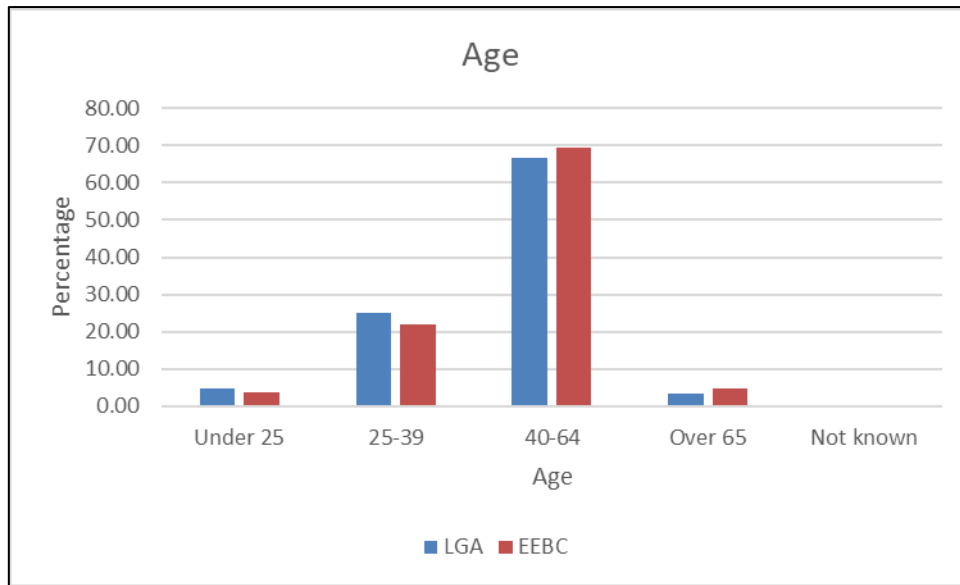


Figure 28: Age breakdown of the council's workforce

Over 50.7% of the council's staff have more than 5 years' service, whilst 33.2% of staff have less than 2 years' service, indicative of the high level of recruitment activity which has been undertaken since the pandemic.

The number of staff leaving the council's employment has steadily decreased during 2022/23, with a significant reduction in the number of voluntary leavers compared to the previous year. Employee turnover is currently 13.4% (voluntary only), which is below the Surrey (district and borough) average of 14.1%.

A key concern for the council and the focus of current and future management and HR interventions is the high level of staff sickness at Epsom & Ewell, although the overall figure is adversely impacted by a few long-term serious cases. The average number of working days lost to staff sickness absence (all absences) is 12.4 days, exceeding the Surrey district and borough average of 7.8 days, and above the CIPD average of 10.6 days per employee for the public sector. The top three reasons for sickness absence are:

- Stress/Depression/Anxiety/Psychological
- Back Pain/Sprain/Strain/Musculoskeletal
- Cancer/Malignancy

Mental health difficulties remain the most common cause of long-term sickness absence. This is broadly in line with the CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work Report 2023, which cites mental health, acute medical conditions, musculoskeletal injuries, and stress as the top causes of long-term absence.

Workforce Development

We have a catalogue of courses available through our e-learning platform that we develop jointly with the other districts and boroughs in Surrey. We are currently developing a leadership development programme and regularly support staff to

achieve further qualifications to support their development in their current roles, including supporting those undertaking degree apprenticeships, and supporting staff on their journey to achieving professional qualifications such as CIPD and MRTPI.

Several of our staff are trained mental health first aiders. A mandatory refresher programme of training is undertaken by our staff each year, including key topics such as equality, diversity and inclusion and health and safety in the workplace.

Digital and data

In September 2022, Members approved a revised strategic direction for the ICT service that focuses on achieving digital transformation and supports the council's ambitions on climate change through delivering the following priorities:

- New Website - End User Experience
- Device Refresh - End User Experience
- Increase Member/Officer Digital Skills – Cyber / End User Experience
- Move Infrastructure to Cloud and simplify - Cyber / Climate Change
- Move Applications to Cloud and simplify - Cyber/End User/Climate Change
- Officer Device Refresh - End User Experience
- Data Fabric – End User Experience

The IT strategy review highlighted that action is required to improve the end user experience. A key piece of work to deliver this is the 'CRM Replacement Project', with the objective of moving more council services and transactions online.

Programme Management and Transformation

The council benefits from having a dedicated Programme Management Team. Projects and programmes of corporate significance, along with bid-writing and the responsibility for delivering the programme Arts, Culture and Heritage activities sits within this team.

The Transformation of the planning service was led, and programme managed by this team, who will shortly be responsible for the overall programme management of workstreams associated with the 'Town Hall Transformation', as the council prepares to move to a new office location within Epsom.

A list of current Corporate Projects and Programmes are included as an Appendix at 1, below.

Whilst we do not currently have an over-arching Transformation Plan as a council, it is a matter that the council would be grateful for the Peer Team's views on.

7. Appendices – Data and Information Pack

Appendix 1: Key Projects (please see Appendix below)

Appendix 2: 'Place Leadership' groups that Members serve on

Appendix 3: [Our Vision Epsom and Ewell](#)

Appendix 4: [Four Year Corporate Plan](#)

Appendix 5: [Annual Plan 2024 2025](#)

Appendix 6: [Annual Governance Statement](#)

Appendix 7: [Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Framework](#)

Appendix 8: [Annual Internal Audit 2022 2023](#)

Appendix 9: [Corporate Performance Report](#)

Appendix 10: [Climate Change Action Plan](#)

Appendix 11: [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 2027](#)

Appendix 12: [Homelessness Strategy Action Plan](#)

Appendix 13: [Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy 2023 2028](#)

Appendix 14: [Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy Action Plan](#)

Appendix 15: [Health & Wellbeing Strategy](#)

Appendix 16: [Procurement Strategy](#)

Appendix 17: [Community Safety Action Plan](#)

Appendix 18: Sharing of successful practice examples (please see Appendix below)

Appendix 19: [Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan](#)

Appendix 20: [Surrey's 2050 Place Ambition](#)

Appendix 21: [Council Operating Framework](#)

Appendix 22: Post Pandemic Recovery Plan: ['Build Back Better'](#)

Appendix 23: [Protocol for Managing Member Officer Relations](#)

Appendix 24: [Corporate Risk Management Strategy](#)

Appendix 25: [Draft Local Plan 2022 - 2040](#)

Appendix 26: PDF copy of Whistleblowing Policy, included as a separate document together with this statement.

Appendix 27: [Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024 - 2028](#)

Appendix 28: [Constitution](#)

Appendix 1: Key Corporate Projects

Ref.	Project name	Project manager	Overview	FYP Theme	Direction of travel	Overview reason
EEP4	Local Plan	Planning Policy Manager	Amber	Green and vibrant	No change	<p>The approval of the Local Development Scheme on 22 November mean that work on the local plan can progress. A critical path is transport modelling commencing by the end of January 2024 which requires a clear steer from members. The core risk is the failure to agree 2 Spatial Strategy by mid-January 2024</p> <p>Extensive Member engagement in the lead up until Christmas and in early January 2024 following the publication of the revised National Planning Policy Framework.</p>
EEP5	Master Plan and Digital Consultation	Principal Planning Policy Officer	Amber	Green and vibrant	No change	<p>The formal public consultation period has closed, and the responses received are now being considered.</p> <p>Key risk is disagreement between members and officers of how to proceed in finalising the Masterplan following public consultation. Resources also changed from Green to Amber but advised that a consultant will be</p>

						engaged to support the finalisation of the Masterplan document.
EEP7	Development Management Transformational Change Programme	Principal Programme Manager	TBC	Effective council		
EEP8	ICT Strategy	IT Service	TBC	Effective council		
EEP9	CCIF Bids (Stations)	Property Development & Regeneration Manager	Amber	Opportunity and prosperity	N/A	Waiting on Railway to confirm when boards can be installed

EEP10	Downs Project (EAFRD)	Property development & Regeneration Manager	Amber	Opportunity and prosperity	N/A	All infrastructure is installed with info boards due to follow. Meeting with Streetcare to get final bits agreed.
EEP14	Climate Change	Environment & Sustainability Project Officer	Amber	Green and vibrant	No change	Annual progress update on the delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan compiled and due to go to environment committee 23 January. Wording for corp. risk being reviewed with the intention to update. We are currently slightly behind target for meeting our 2035 carbon emissions target.
EEP20	CRM – Phase 1. Ops Services MCS implementation	ICT Applications Manager	TBC	Effective council		
EEP21	CRM – Phase 2. Enterprise MCS implementation	ICT Applications Manager	TBC	Effective council		
EEP37	Intranet	Communications Officer	Red	Effective council	Worsened	The missing content from various departments is delaying the schedule. Limited resource from numerous departments. Key stakeholder meeting being held 22/01/24 to discuss. Decision request to CPB: When to schedule launch date?

EEP38	Four Year Plan 2024-2028	Corporate Assurance Manager	Red	Effective council	No change	No progress on the FYP. AP 24/25 has received a lot of discussion and feedback from SLT and Cllrs, and a final draft is expected 16/01/24. Decision request to CPB: When to decide to reschedule the FYP work?
EEP39	Performance Software	Performance & Risk Officer	Green	Effective council	Improved	Project on track, initial meeting scheduling issues have been resolved. The Strategic Review meeting and Site Admin training has been completed with the supplier.
EEP40	Tennis	Programmes Officer	TBC			
EEP41	Corporate Peer Challenge	Principal Programme Manager	TBC		N/A	Added in November 2023 CPB. Project due to start W/C 18th March 2024, although some preparation work will likely be required hence the start date could move forward.
EEP42	Public Protection UNIFORM	Public Protection Manager	TBC		N/A	* PID bring brought to Jan 24 CPB, along with highlight report and presentation by PM at the meeting. Added to LofCP 21/12/23.
EEP43	DMS Replacement for Revs and Bens	ICT Applications Manager	TBC			* First highlighted report expected for Jan 24.

Appendix 2: Place Leadership – External Groups and Bodies that Members and Senior Officers Serve On

Outside bodies			
Body on which Represented	Responsible Policy Committee	No of Reps	Representative(s)
Age Concern (Epsom and Ewell) – General Committee	C & W	2	Councillor Arthur Abdulin Councillor Steven McCormick
Central Surrey Community Action	C & W	1	Councillor Steven McCormick
Committee of Management of Local Citizens Advice Bureau	C & W	2	Councillor Robert Leach Councillor Steven McCormick
Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association Management Committee	S & R	2	Councillor Rachel King Councillor Clive Woodbridge

Outside bodies			
Body on which Represented	Responsible Policy Committee	No of Reps	Representative(s)
Epsom Common Association	C & W	1	Councillor Steve Bridger
Ewell Parochial Trusts	C & W	3	Councillor Christine Cleveland Councillor Humphrey Reynolds Councillor Clive Woodbridge
Friends of Epsom and Ewell Parks	C & W	1	Councillor Steven McCormick
Local Government Association	S & R	1	Councillor Hannah Dalton

Joint Committees / Arrangements			
Body on which Represented	Responsible Policy Committee	No of Reps	Representative(s)
Coast to Capital Joint Committee	S & R	1	Chair of RA Group
Epsom and Ewell Community Safety Partnership	C & D	1	Chair of Crime and Disorder Committee
Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators Already appointed to a Term of Office (4 years, 2023 – 2027)	Standalone Outside Body & Joint Committee	6	Councillor Christine Cleveland Councillor Liz Frost Councillor Bernice Froud Councillor Steven McCormick Councillor Kim Spickett Councillor Clive Woodbridge

Joint Committees / Arrangements			
Body on which Represented	Responsible Policy Committee	No of Reps	Representative(s)
Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee	Standalone Outside Body & Joint Committee	1 (+ Chairman of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators)	Councillor Bernice Froud
Epsom and Walton Downs Training Grounds Management Board	Standalone Outside Body & Joint Committee	2 (+ Chairman of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators)	Councillor Neil Dallen
Nonsuch Joint Management Committee	Standalone Outside Body & Joint Committee	3	Councillor Julian Freeman, Chair (Chair position rotates between London Borough of Sutton, and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council – annually) Councillor Tony Froud Councillor Christine Howels
Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London Adjudication Joint Committee (PATROL)	E & S C	1	Chair of Environment & Safe Communities Committee

Joint Committees / Arrangements			
Body on which Represented	Responsible Policy Committee	No of Reps	Representative(s)
		+ Sub	Vice Chair of Environment & Safe Communities Committee
South East England Councils (SEEC)	S & R	1	Councillor Hannah Dalton
Surrey Environment Partnership	E & SC	1	Councillor John Beckett
Surrey Climate Change Partnership	E & SC	1	Chair of Environment & Safe Communities Committee
Surrey Leaders Group	S&R	1	Councillor Hannah Dalton

Member Champions	
	Champion
Armed Forces	Councillor Graham Jones
Alternative Transport	Councillor Tony Froud
Heritage	Councillor Kim Spickett
Mental Health	Councillor Darren Talbot

Officer/Member Working Groups appointed by Committees		
Body on which Represented	Responsible Committee	Representative(s)
Capital Member Group	S & R	Appointed by Strategy & Resources Committee
Investment Property Group	S & R	Appointed by Strategy & Resources Committee
CIL Panel	S & R	Appointed by Strategy & Resources Committee
Car Park Working Group	E & SC	Appointed by the Environment & Safe Communities Committee
Environment and Sustainability Working Group	E & SC	Appointed by the Environment & Safe Communities Committee

Officer/Member Working Groups appointed by Committees		
Body on which Represented	Responsible Committee	Representative(s)
Local Plan Member Working Group	L & PP	Appointed by the Chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee in accordance with the Terms of Reference agreed by Licensing and Planning Policy Committee on 15 July 2021.

Appendix 18: Sharing of Two Examples of Successful Practice



LGA case study template

Date: March 2024

Local authority: Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

Submitted by: Linda Scott

Case study title: Bourne Hall Community Centre – New Beginnings

Case study synopsis (100 words):

Bourne Hall in Ewell Village is a Grade II listed community hub that includes a library, rooms for hire, a museum and cafe' all set within listed Victorian parkland. Purpose built, and opened in 1970, the building was particularly hard hit by the pandemic, as visitor numbers struggled to recover, along with hirers unable to re-establish the numbers required for a sustainable business, post-pandemic and the café's income dwindled.

After a restructure and a change of management team who worked with Members, staff, and stakeholders to re-establish Bourne Hall as the 'jewel in Ewell'. The café was re-branded and re-launched as the Flying Saucer Café', taking inspiration both from the building's unique architecture and local artist Frank Hampson.

The challenge:

Bourne Hall provides a range of vital community services, it is also a key piece of the borough's cultural infrastructure, incorporating one of the

County's busiest libraries, Bourne Hall Museum (run by the borough council), and a performing arts library. Operating at a loss, an engaging program of events that would generate income in their own right, and a sustainable income stream from café's sales was needed to begin reversing the buildings fortunes.

The solution:

The reimagining of Bourne Hall with the Flying Saucer café' has attracted new audiences. In April 2023, the patio area was refurbished with seating for 60 people which enhanced the offering for the Café users. In 2023, Bourne Hall played host to the Internationally renowned, Satisfied Eye Film Festival. The café's own Meekon, a space alien character in Frank Hampson's, "The Eagle" comic from the 1940's – drawn and illustrated locally in Ewell, provided the perfect backdrop to the festival.

An expanded program of events, drawn from sport (wrestling), arts, culture, and heritage, together with a newly installed adult outdoor gym and a children's sensory play area have all combined to attract visitors, and café' revenue back to Bourne Hall.

The impact (including cost savings/income generated if applicable):

Pre-pandemic, the café and catering service had never exceeded more than £62,000 in any one year. Following the re-launch, and re-branding, the income during 2023/2024 looks set to top £120,000. Hire income is up too, along with enquiries from long-term hirers.

An increase in sales of our catering service and bars since we introduced our own catering hub. Furthermore, we have an increase in the number of multi-cultural weddings and corporate events along with more diverse market stalls and popup stalls.

How is the new approach being sustained?

A cost-neutral internal restructure has released the funds necessary to support the newly expanded program of events, and a busier café. Plans for the future include a 'Bourne Hall Festival of Arts & Sustainability', annual Christmas Grotto and a winter lights festival.

Lessons learned:

Utilizing the space available to achieve greater footfall and reverse the café's fortunes began with the manager deciding that filling the foyer with more comfy sofas would encourage people to dwell longer. Procured through a local furniture recycling charity to keep the costs down, the sofas were a hit and the café's takings began to increase, encouraging staff to try other improvements and leading eventually to the re-launch as the 'Flying Saucer Cafe'.

The lesson we collectively learned was that whilst major investment is needed at Bourne Hall, it was the commercial acumen in staff spotting the opportunity to increase sales, that is leading, ultimately, to the rejuvenation of Bourne Hall.

Contact: Linda Scott, Community Services and Venues Manager
LScott@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

Links to relevant documents: NA



Please attach any imagery associated with your case study and send your completed template to webmaster@local.gov.uk.

LGA case study template

Date: March 2024

Local authority: Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

Submitted by: Emma Hill, Principal Programme Manager

Case study title: Public art as a creative solution to vandalism, supporting local communities, the cultural sector and placemaking.

Case study synopsis (100 words):

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council believes that access to participatory arts activities is an effective means of building the self-esteem of young people and diverting them away from engaging in anti-social behaviour.

A graffiti 'hot spot' located at a main gateway into Epsom Town Centre has been transformed with the installation of a community mural. Working with internationally renowned artists, a group of local secondary children helped to design and install the mural.

Commissioned as a result of the borough's first [Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy](#), the mural seeks to showcase street art as a valuable and transformative artform in the placemaking agenda. Invitations to develop murals at other sites across the borough have followed from this first, successful, initiative.

The challenge:

The Borough of Epsom & Ewell is experiencing a regular and significant issue with tagging and offensive unlawful graffiti. Graffiti and criminal damage in the public realm are inter-related issues that the 'broken window' theory suggests can make communities feel unsafe, hinder development of civic pride and can lead to further acts of anti-social behaviour, with offenders feeling more inclined to perpetrate a criminal offence in an area where graffiti is prevalent.



Above, and below, the subject site on Upper High Street, prior to installation and showing signs of having been painted over many times to cover previous incidents of tagging and unlawful graffiti.



The solution:

Working with partners to create 'Safer Streets' in Epsom Town Centre, the council, supported by the PCC, Surrey and Sussex Police, and Go Epsom secured an allocation of Home Office *Safer Streets* funding

during 2022.

A budget underspend, led to an opportunity for Members to support the newly created Arts, Culture and Heritage team to prepare and submit a grant 're-proposing' proposal to the Home Office.

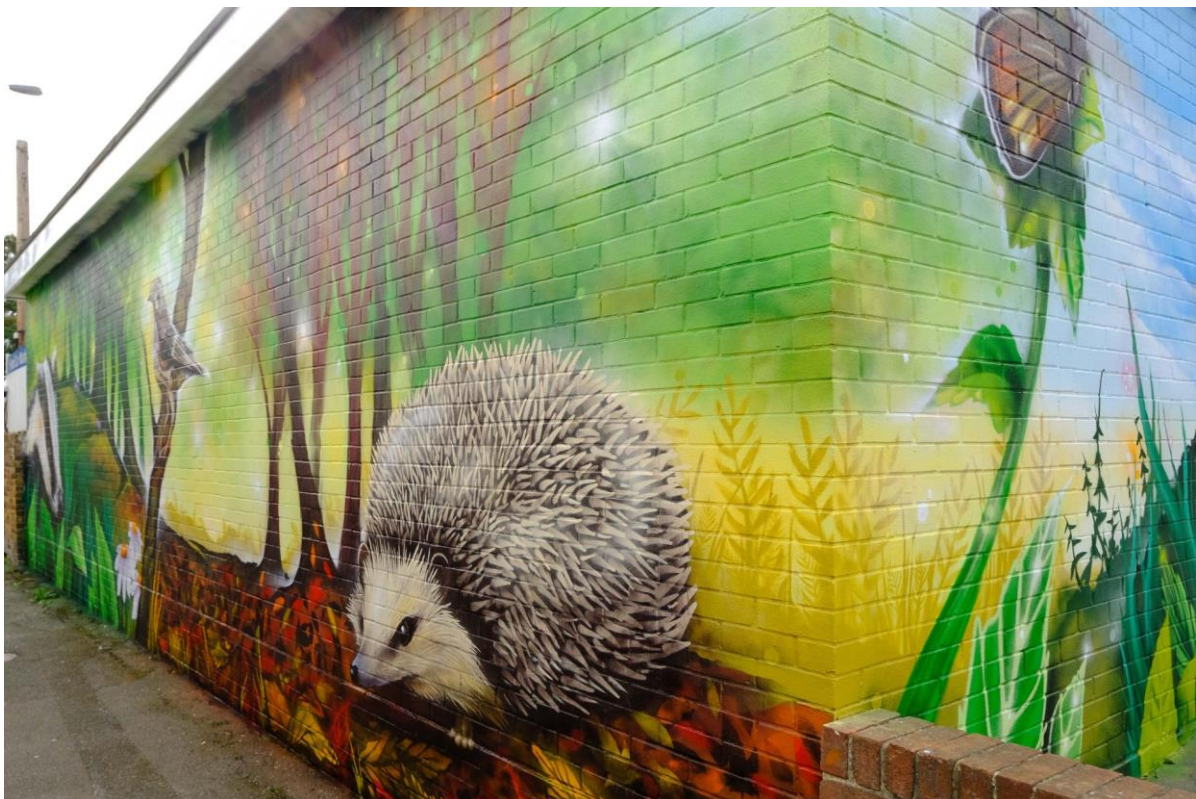
The team proposed to use the underspend to test the concept that arts participatory activities can divert young people away from anti-social behaviour and that high quality commissioned public art installed at graffiti 'hot spots,' can deter future illegal graffiti.

The impact (including cost savings/income generated if applicable):

Installed in September 2023, the mural has not been 'tagged' or defaced to date, and there have been no further incidents of illegal graffiti in the immediate area, a site that the council's graffiti removal team would have visited almost weekly prior to the mural's installation.

Images of the completed mural:





Feedback from the young people involved in the project show the value and importance of art as a method of achieving physical and psychological well-being.

Students' comments included:

'the project gave me a chance to breathe a little easier for a couple of days',

'I always used to see the boys at school and never said hello, now when I see them in the hallway, we say hi and we know each other better',

And

'It was nice to find something I was good at – I'd love to do more murals together'.

How is the new approach being sustained?

The views of the young people engaged in installing this mural, and the overwhelmingly positive feedback from the wider public, have been used to shape and support a bid for funding to tackle more of the borough's graffiti 'hot spots' in this same community led approach.

A local business owner has approached the council offering to share the cost of installing a mural in Epsom Town Centre, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner have invited a bid to roll the concept out to a further site in Epsom & Ewell, and a local school foundation is looking to co-fund a mural initiative at a secondary school in the borough.

The Arts, Culture & Heritage team are training as Arts Award assessors, in order to be able to offer advice and support in art portfolio development and the consideration of the creative industries as a future career choice, all of which helps to deliver the ACH strategy strategic pillars of 'nurturing talent' and 'inclusivity and access for all (to arts, culture and heritage)'.

Lessons learned:

Public art tells a story. In the case of the Upper High Street mural, it tells us of the borough's rich natural habitats and biodiversity, bringing colour to an otherwise urban area. While public art is not totally immune from vandals, in Epsom & Ewell we feel we have demonstrated that it's a start. It adds uniqueness to communities. It sets us apart and tells our story. The Arts, Culture and Heritage team are looking forward to working with more sections of the community to tell their stories of the borough through mural installations.

Contact: Lucy Buckland, Arts, Culture & Heritage Programme Officer

LBuckland@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

Links to relevant documents:

[Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy](#)

Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy Action Plan

Please attach any imagery associated with your case study and send your completed template to webmaster@local.gov.uk.