

## **Epsom & Ewell Community Councils Second Consultation DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

Date last updated: 2 December 2025.

### **Corporate Priority**

Strategic priority agreed at full council on 6 May 2025: Explore future local governance e.g., a Community Council.

### **Campaign topic**

This would be a second borough-wide consultation on the potential formation of community councils in Epsom & Ewell. This communications plan outlines how, if it goes ahead, a second consultation would be communicated to residents and stakeholders on the potential formation of parish or community councils in Epsom & Ewell.

### **Background**

On 5 February 2025 the government identified Surrey as being on a fast track to local government reorganisation (LGR) to unlock devolution.

Now, government have confirmed that local government in Surrey will be reorganised into two new unitary councils; East Surrey Council and West Surrey Council. All eleven district and borough and the county council will be abolished, and the East Surrey Council will be formed by May 2027.

In May 2025, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) approved an amendment to the Council's Four-Year Plan, replacing it with strategic priorities for 2025-2027, the number one priority being to explore future local governance in Epsom & Ewell.

Community councils provide a vital link between residents and larger unitary authorities. They aim to enhance local representation by providing a direct route for the essential voices of residents and local communities, ensuring that residents are aware of local issues, and are involved in decision-making they are affected by.

This communications plan outlines how EEBC would communicate the community governance review process to residents and stakeholders and how to respond to the second consultation (if agreed at full Council to go ahead).

### **Current timeline:**

9 October 2025	First consultation closed
2 December	Publish report on EEBC website ahead of FCM
9 December	Full council meeting
16 December 2025 (TBC)	Second consultation starts
1 February 2026 (TBC)	Consultation ends
March 2026 (TBC)	Extraordinary council meeting
23 March 2026	Pre-election period likely to start
7 May 2026	Elections
19 May 2026	AGM & Mayor Making

1 December 2026	Publish register of electors
9 February 2027	Full council meeting & decision on precept
TBC May 2027	Elections

## COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

- To ensure residents, businesses, and stakeholders are **aware** of the CGR consultation, understand **why** they are being asked to respond, are **motivated** to submit a response, and understand **how** to submit a response.
- To convey the options for new parish councils, clearly and transparently.
- To garner relevant responses to the consultation from a range of audiences that are of a high quality and offer valuable feedback on whether, in light of LGR, they would like to see the formation of parish areas and parish councils in the borough.
- To ensure Members and staff are aware of the CGR consultation, why it is taking place, an overview of the process that has to be followed in order to create parish councils, and that they can advise members of the public on both the process and how to submit a response.
- To ensure that appropriate channels and messaging are used to ensure that all audience groups, including harder-to-reach groups, can find information about the CGR, understand why it is relevant to them, and can respond.

## STRATEGY

### Audiences

Primary audiences (those who will fill in the consultation):

- Epsom & Ewell residents
- Epsom & Ewell businesses & local organisations
- Community groups
- Stakeholder groups
- Local Political groups

Secondary audiences (those who will help spread the word and facilitate individuals to fill in the consultation):

- Councillors
- Staff
- Media

The borough is made up of many thriving communities with strong local representation through Residents' Associations, civic bodies, and local interest groups. Similarly, the borough has many committed businesses and employers keen to invest in the borough's future, as well as institutions that enrich our communities.

Stakeholder groups to engage with include the following:

#### Local people

Residents of Epsom & Ewell

Resident associations (through Councillors)  
Neighbourhood forums  
Civic society groups  
Local interest groups  
Traveller and travelling showpeople community

#### Local representatives and politicians

EEBC Councillors  
Member of Parliament  
Surrey County Council  
Neighbouring councils  
Epsom primary care network

#### Employers, local business and representative bodies

Business owners and employers e.g. The Jockey Club  
Voluntary groups  
Surrey Chamber of Commerce  
Third sector groups  
BID  
Surrey Police

#### Educational Institutions

University of the Creative Arts  
NESCOT  
Laine Theatre Arts  
Schools and colleges

### **Key messages**

#### Primary messages

- This is your final chance to have your say on whether to create new community councils in Epsom & Ewell.
- From April 2027, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will be abolished, and a new East Surrey Council will be responsible for services currently delivered by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and Surrey County Council. There will be no lower tier of local government in Epsom & Ewell below that of the new unitary East Surrey Council.
- Two thirds of respondents to the consultation on parish councils in 2025 told us they would like to create a new parish council or councils in Epsom and Ewell.
- We are proposing the creation of [two] civil parish areas within which there will be [two] community councils named Epsom Community Council and Ewell Community Council, which would be responsible for [allotments] and could be responsible for more services in the future (where this is agreed with the new unitary East Surrey Council), like caring for parks, playgrounds, and community centres. They would also be a statutory consultee on any planning matters in the area.
- If community councils are created, there would be an increase to household council tax. We estimate that this would be between **£43.52** and **£46.15** for a band D property, if the councils were created to manage the legal minimum.
- Have your say: complete the online consultation, email us, or send a completed paper questionnaire to Epsom Town Hall.

The consultation closes on [1 February 2026] at [23:59hrs].

### Secondary messages

- Elections for new parish or community councils could take place in May 2027.

### Reactive messages

- Why are you continuing with the CGR even though many people in the borough did not respond to the first consultation?

“The majority of residents who responded to the consultation on parish councils last year were in favour of us creating one or two new parish councils in Epsom & Ewell. Following this consultation, at a full council meeting in December 2025, Councillors agreed to continue to the next stage of the Community Governance Review.”

## **Channels and tactics**

The communications strategy must ensure that the council engages with all audiences referenced to gain their views.

We will use a range of engagement methods to bring the consultation to these audiences in an accessible way.

- Electronic copies of the consultation document and associated documents will be signposted on the council's website and available on the consultation website.
- Hard copies of main consultation documents and any key associated documents for reference use will be available during normal opening hours at the Town Hall, in libraries within the local area and in some council owned venues including Bourne Hall and the Community & Wellbeing Centre.

### **Additional notification methods that could be used:**

- Social media incl. paid social media: in the last CGR consultation we found that advertising on social media helped boost the reach of the campaign, particularly the use of video content.
- Pre-recorded speech or speeches for YouTube, the consultation website and social media.
- Printed or digital posters at Bourne Hall, in the Town Hall, the Playhouse, Community & Wellbeing Centre, in car parks, on community noticeboards and in local libraries (with permission).

### **Additional comms channels will include:**

- Press release and pack for local media
  - Pitch for radio interviews on local radio
- Engagement in local Facebook groups
- Email
- Council's e-Borough Insight newsletter (email)
- Dedicated page on council website & carousel on council website
- Regular engagement with Councillors
- Newsletter articles in Resident Association newsletters and local school newsletters
- Banner and poster advertising in key locations
  - Posters to include QR codes
  - Pop-up banners to also include map visual

- Working with local partners to distribute messaging through their networks
- Internal comms with staff
- Community events, run by Councillors, at:
  - The Town Hall
  - Bourne Hall
  - Other venues TBC (plan, timings and locations to be agreed).
- Online webinar for residents and stakeholders
- Notification for people who have registered on Inovem to be informed

**Additional paid promotion could include (if budget is identified – as not accounted for within the budget approved by full Council on 6 May 2025):**

- The use of bin hookies for the first consultation led to a clear spike in responses (est. cost £8K).
- Direct mail
  - Gov.UK Notify charge 59p to print and post a one-page letter, £18,290 for 31K households
  - Royal Mail direct mail to all households in the borough [est. between £8K - £10K]

A budget of c.£19-£27,000 would be required to fund direct mail and further bin hookies.

**Recommended paid promotion if budget can be identified**

- Bin hookies (est. £8K) - launch
- Direct Mail (est. £18.3K) – towards the end of the consultation.

**Branding / look and feel**

We would build on the look and feel for the first consultation so that it looks as though it is a new, but related campaign. E.g. keep the design the same but update the main image and change the colours.

Consistent elements could be used across the following:

- Consultation documentation and visual aids
- Marketing materials including posters, flyers and banners
- Social media graphics.

**Risks and risk management**

The following risks have been identified:

- people may feel that they have already been asked to provide feedback on this issue/or may already have given their feedback
- people may feel they have not been consulted on this before (this has been a complaint about LGR in general)
- people may feel that the community governance review is not good value for money
- if people are not aware of the consultation and what its purpose is, and community councils are or are not introduced, there is a risk that people may feel frustrated that they were not consulted on the decision. There is also a reputational risk in this case.

Risks reduced by:

- clear messaging to include the purpose of the consultation and what the outcomes may be
- clear instructions regarding how to complete the consultation
- ensuring we are transparent around costs and responsibilities of new community councils in messaging and in our FAQs

- clear information about the benefits of community councils and why we are undertaking the CGR
- publishing a timeline on our website with background and process, including where we are in the process, what consultations have taken place and what the purpose of each consultation is/was
- publishing FAQs page on our website about borough councils and community councils
- proactively engaging with staff, councillors, residents and businesses, encouraging them to respond and encouraging others to respond too
- maximising reach to ensure that as many residents as possible are aware of the consultation through our own channels, and ensuring best return on investment for any spend
- effectively managing proactive and reactive press, social media and other enquiries to minimise negative publicity and ensuring responses are prompt.
- signpost to the 'contact us' details e.g. council email and phone number to support anyone who has questions (e.g. how to participate).